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ABSTRACT

Within the book of Judges, the figure of Deborah receives exceptional treatment in that her actions are presented first in a narrative, comprising chapter four, then in a poem, chapter five. Read together or separately, these chapters elicit scholarly interpretations aplenty. This article surveys recent research on the accounts of Deborah since 1990 by dividing the discussion into three sections: the two accounts as a single unit, Judges 4 alone, and Judges 5 alone. The first section discusses the function of these chapters within the book and their relationship with each other. The second section further subdivides according to the narrative elements of character or event, while the third section's divisions are based on common scholarly concerns like genre, dating, and structure.

Keywords: Barak, Deborah, Jael, Judges, Sisera, Song of Deborah

> 'No unit in the Book of Judges has engaged more scholarly discussion than Judges 4–5' (Block 1999: 185).

Introduction

The quote above summarizes well the impetus for this article: the accounts of Deborah are the subject of a surfeit of scholarly comments ranging from the highly technical nuances of rare Hebrew vocabulary to the sweeping, generalized notions of leadership. Recently, in fact, the two chapters were used in K. Sakenfeld's (2008) SBL Presidential Address as a test probe for a postcolonial reading of the Hebrew Bible. Additionally, because of the

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abundance of contemporary scholarship on Judges 4–5, it is increasingly difficult to grasp the secondary literature and respond to consensus or outlying readings. Furthermore, the large amount of scholarship does not often repeat itself; many divergent interpretations exist on all possible interpretive topics. So it seems that the two separate accounts of the Deborah story present both an opportunity and a challenge to scholars as they struggle to read them diachronically and synchronically. This article, therefore, surveys many of the contributions made recently to understanding these chapters in order to highlight the interpretive issues and to gather together some proposed solutions.

Judges 4–5 engenders competing interpretations. Scholars depict Deborah's primary identity in varying ways—a prophet, a mother, a warrior, a judge—in order to comprehend her behavior. Moreover, scholarship as a whole is equivocal concerning the figure of Jael; she has been described both as a robust defender of the Israelite faith and a deceptive seductress. Likewise, Barak is portrayed as a frightened, frail character within a story dominated by women, or as the true warrior, the real judge in the story. Additionally, interpreters debate the role of the Israelite deity. Does God have no role within the story, or does he serve as the driving force for the narrative?

To set the chronological parameter of this review at 1990 is not entirely arbitrary. Craig (2003) surveyed scholarship beginning in 1990 on the whole of Judges, citing Bartelmus's (1991) ample and far-reaching review of published literature on Judges, a review which covered forty years and ended in 1990, as his reason for beginning with the new decade. The year 1990 also serves as a bridge between the established 1970s and 1980s commentaries of Boling (1975), Gray (1986), and Soggin (1981), which were reviewed by Bayley (1992), and the recent ones of Lindars (1995), Olson (1998), Amit (1999b), Block (1999), Schneider (2000), Matthews (2004), and Niditch (2008). Although Craig's aforementioned review touches on Judges 4–5, and Wong's recent monograph (2006) briefly surveys previous scholarship, due to the more general scope of the two studies, neither mentions the majority of the scholarly literature, nor addresses fully the major issues within the chapters.

For this review, the material is arranged into three sections: (a) Judges 4–5 read together, which deals with the block of material as a unified whole; (b) Judges 4: The Story of Deborah; (c) Judges 5: The Song of Deborah. This review's further subdivision of the second and third sections does not correspond to the methodologies employed by the scholars, a decision that results in a less fragmented picture of the scholarship. Instead, the article

divides the discussion of chapter four mainly with regard to its major characters, and chapter five's review in connection with traditional interpretive issues regarding the song.

The Accounts of Deborah Together

This section examines the ways in which scholars understand both the prose and poetry sections as one unit, including how they function within the overall book of Judges, the relationship between the two chapters, and finally their role as a single, synchronic unit.

Function within the Book of Judges

Becker (1990) views Judg. 2.11 through 16.31 (with minor exceptions) as the work of the early exilic Deuteronomistic historian/author, who presented a critique of the monarchy by narrating a series of charismatic, God-chosen leaders who function as judges and saviors temporarily. However, Becker does not spend much time dealing with Judges 4–5, apparently because it does not fit neatly his overall concerns for kingship and redaction history. In fact, Judges 5 receives no attention within the monograph.

Sweeney (1997: 527) argues that the story of Deborah, who is from Ephraim's hill country, contributes to an overall theme within the book, a 'Davidic/Judean polemic against the northern tribes' in that she is unable to bring all the Israelite tribes together in war. According to Sweeney, Judges 3–21 forms a major unit within the book, a unit that presents Israel's continual deterioration as represented by the fundamental problem of the intermarriage of Israelites with the Canaanites.

Relationship between Judges 4 and 5

Since Judges 5 is the only extended piece of poetry in an otherwise prose book, the relationship between the poem and the surrounding narrative warrants discussion.

Kawashima (2001) rehearses and supplements Halpern's (1983) conclusion that a 'historian' wrote Judges 4 by using the Song in chapter five. Halpern argues that chapter four misreads the number of tribes involved and the manner in which Jael kills Sisera. Kawashima emphasizes the writer's literary imagination and artistry in the development of the chapter's plot and characterization, over against Halpern's assertion that the author of chapter four is a tradent interested in writing history. Becker (1990) and Fritz (2006) also argue that Judges 5 is the model for the prose account of Judges 4. Fritz (2006: 692) concludes, 'all of the narrative ele-

ments in Judges 4 presuppose the existence of the statements that occur in the song'.

On the contrary, Wong (2006) posits independent traditions, which shaped a set of source materials for their own purposes. Of course, the idea of independent traditions is present already in Richter (1963).

Guest (1998) argues against any sources within the book of Judges and states that one author produced the entire, coherent book. Likewise, Reis (2005: 39) reads chapters four and five 'as synchronous and sequential'; in other words, they represent one person's telling of the same story in two different genres.

Schneider (2000) argues the two chapters complement each other. Although the poem is older, its placement after the prose account within the book modifies its meaning; additionally, the prose must be written 'to accommodate and accentuate' the poem (p. 86). The reader already has a certain amount of knowledge of the story before she reads the poem. Likewise, Younger (1991) suggests they are both preserved because they are complementary. Furthermore, he argues, based on examples from ancient Near Eastern literature, that the accounts stem from a common source and need not be dependent on each other, a position similar to Wong (2006).

Na'aman (1994) suggests that the final redactor (the Deuteronomistic historian) presents both accounts because he cannot or does not wish to determine which is more authentic. Amit (1999a) suggests that the book's editor placed the song beside the narrative in order to repeat the theme, in a different genre, of God's identity as the sole deliverer. Weitzman (1997) argues that a poem after a prose work provides closure.

Houston (1997) says Judges 4 interprets the intentionally ambiguous poem in a midrashic way; it is not a misinterpretation of the poem as previous scholars have suggested. The prose writer uses this ambiguity to suggest that Jael seduced Sisera in order to kill him.

Ogden (1994) focuses his article on the differences between the two accounts, specifically the rhetorical and discourse features that differ. He notes chapter five's lack of details, background information, and dialogue. All the differences combined demonstrate the different settings of the accounts: 'the story form has entertainment as well as historical and cultural transmission as its primary goals, while in the case of chapter five the poet has created a piece primarily for liturgical use' (p. 117).

Neef (1994, 2002) argues that chapter four is dependent on chapter five because of the presence of clarifying features in chapter four. Likewise, Guillaume (2004) and Becker (1990) argue with the majority that the song is older and the narrative is dependent upon it.

Judges 4 and 5 as Synchronic Unit

Fewell and Gunn (1990) wish to read the accounts together as a single story. Similarly, O'Connell (1996: 102) reads the two accounts together since 'the Judges compiler/redactor evidently intended the two versions to complement each other'.

Gunn's (2005) recent reception history commentary explores ancient (e.g. rabbis, Ambrose), medieval, early modern (e.g. Luther, Hubmaier), and modern readings of both chapters, including the characterizations of Deborah, Barak, Sisera, Sisera's mother, and Jael. His last section on 'Recent Reception' surveys the commentaries of Moore (1895), Boling (1975), and Soggin (1981), and some smaller studies dating mostly to the 1980s. Likewise, the much briefer coverage in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Franke 2005) provides the abbreviated commentary of figures such as Chrysostom, Jerome, and Ambrose. Sakenfeld (1997: 17) undertakes a reading of chapters 4–5 within a cross-cultural context and notes that these chapters concern 'overcoming an enemy to bring to an end a long period of oppression', a situation she, as a white North American, has never experienced. Finally, the entire story of Judges 4–5 was inspiration for a three-act libretto by Neville (1995).

Two scholars compare Judges 4–5 to other portions of the book. Sasaki (2001) highlights similarities and differences between chs. 4–5, read together, and the Gideon narrative of chs. 6–8, and argues that the war of Deborah and Barak was a 'just war' (in contrast to an 'aggressive' or holy war), with the purpose of the restoration of peace in Israel. Kaswalder (1993) looks at the geographical position of the tribes in chs. 4–5 and Judg. 1.1–2.5.

Judges 4: The Story of Deborah

This section of the review divides into the following sections: the narrative in general, Jabin, Deborah, Lappidoth, Barak, Heber the Kenite, the battle, Jael, and Sisera.

The Narrative in General

Several scholars proffer a structural analysis of the fourth chapter of Judges. Block (1999) divides the chapter into six sections: vv. 1-3, 4-10, 11-16, 17-21, 22, 23-24, and argues that it follows the paradigm of all six deliverance narratives of the book. Fritz (2006) organizes the passage into three sections: vv. 4-10, 11-16 and 17-22 plus the usual Deuteronomistic formulas in vv. 1-3 and 23-24. Lindars (1995) divides the narrative into

two redactional layers: a 'source' (vv. 4a, parts of 6-7, 8-9, 13-14a, part of 15, 18, most of 20-22) and a 'historian's' editorial matter, e.g. vv. 1-3 and 23-24. He argues that the original narrative focuses on a single issue, that of Sisera's defeat by a woman. Becker's (1990) redactional-critical study argues for the literary unity of the passage, excepting verses 4.11 and 17b, which speak of Jael's tent location.

Amit (1999a) divides the narrative into six sections: vv. 1-5, 6-9, 10-13, 14-16, 17-22, 23-24. Each of these sections obfuscates the identity of the true deliverer by continually adding additional characters as possibilities and narrating characters that never unambiguously provide deliverance. This ambiguity is cleared somewhat during the battle scene when the deity is characterized as the deliverer; however, the issue of Deborah's prophecy, i.e. riddle, in v. 9 about a woman remains unresolved until later in the narrative, with the appearance of Jael. In the end, multiple figures help bring deliverance to the people, although divine salvation is emphasized most of all: 'God…is the savior of Israel. A savior who makes use of human protagonists as if they were pieces in a game whose rules were determined by him' (p. 218).

Three scholars comment on the relationship between this chapter and other sections of the book of Judges. Assis (2006) notes the affinity between the Ehud narrative in Judges 3.2-30 and the Deborah narrative of Judges 4 with regard to structure and shared motifs (detailed assassination scenes, treachery). Marais (1998) detects the theme of the victory of an underdog throughout the book of Judges. Therefore, he sees the Deborah and Barak story as being primarily about underdogs vs. bullies, notably as it relates to gender concerns. Schneider (2000) argues that this chapter continues a downward spiral present throughout the book. In order to demonstrate this decline, the narrator allows Barak's responsibilities to be co-opted by a woman, thereby assuring that he is not the primary hero of the passage.

The affecting portrayals of women like Deborah and Jael within chapter four do not escape scholars in their analysis of the text's authorship. Dijk-Hemmes (1992) uses narratological, intertextual, and gender analysis to conclude that ch. 4 is a Male text. Van der Kooij (1996) supplements this thesis by observing the role of Barak, who, as the military leader, is dishonored in ch. 4. He concludes that the chapter is written from a male perspective 'which is not in favour of dictatorship…or of leadership based on military strength' (p. 141).

Olson (1998) contends, along the lines of Amit above, that three characters serve as 'judge-like figures' in this chapter—Deborah, Barak, and Jael; none of them stand alone in delivering Israel. Furthermore, unlike

Dijk-Hemmes and Van der Kooij, he does not see a gendered perspective in chapter four, noting that Barak does lose some of the glory, but remains victorious in the end. Additionally, Barak is not shamed because of the help he receives from Deborah and Jael, just as Joshua is not shamed by the help of Rahab in Joshua 2.

Na'aman (1990: 427) notes that Judges 4 represents 'the only geographically detailed story that we have from the north of Israel'. However, the geography is completely confused and contradictory, leading Na'aman to conclude that a late Judean redactor, ignorant of the topography of the north, created the confusion by filling in incorrect details like the location of Deborah, Jabin, Sisera, Barak, and Jael, thereby adding a 'Galilean oriented redaction' (p. 433).

Five scholars focus on the narrative qualities of the text. A narrative analysis of Judges 4, according to Wolde (1995 and 1996: 288), demonstrates that vv. 1-5, which form the beginning of the narrative, and vv. 23-24, which form the conclusion, share main characters—the sons of Israel, Jabin, and YHWH—thereby creating 'connecting points of one link in the chain of the Book of Judges'. Brenner (1993), searching for the narrative structure of the chapter, notes the three pairs of characters. Each pair comprises a side of a narrative triangle, with the first character in the pair acting as the initiator (Deborah, God, Jabin) and the other acting in an inferior role (Barak, Jael, Sisera). O'Connell (1996), however, delineates three plots within the narrative: Plot A concerns the Israelite deity's deliverance of Israel through Deborah's prophetic word; Plot B concerns Barak's lack of glory in battle because of his disobedience to the deity's command; Plot C concerns the exaltation of Jael, who engenders God's plan to deliver Israel. Fager (1993) underscores the element of chaos and unpredictability within the narrative, especially regarding gender, geographical, and hospitality expectations. Finally, McCann (2002) notes that the gender issues within the narrative create humor.

Only one interpreter offers a precise compositional date for ch. 4. Guillaume (2004) argues that the chapter was produced by the editors of the Book of the Saviours, a collection of stories from Judges 3–9 that dates to 720 BCE and originates in the town of Bethel. These editors based the story on the older song, now given in ch. 5.

Fewell (1992) suggests that some of the relationships in this story parallel the relationship between Yahweh and Israel: the deity's authority is questioned, like Deborah's; in a crisis the people appeal to Yahweh as Jael appeals to violence; Yahweh does what needs to be done to save Israel, like Jael; finally, both are praised for their actions to save Israel.

Jabin, King of Canaan

Judges 4.2 introduces the first focal character of the chapter, King Jabin. The scholarly discussion focuses mainly on his title, 'King of Canaan', and his previous appearance and death(!) in Joshua 11. Block (1999) asserts that Jabin is the main character in the first three verses of the chapter. While the archaeological evidence states that Hazor, the city of Jabin's reign, was in ruins during this time, Block suggests that a remnant of the Hazor dynasty, i.e. Jabin, survived the destruction wreaked by Joshua and returned to the city to reestablish rule. Schneider (2000) surveys the possible interpretations regarding this king and posits that his presence in Judges functions literarily as a demonstration of the negative changes that have taken place since the book of Joshua. Niditch (2008) argues that the kingly title adds to the legendary stature of Jabin.

Hamlin (1990) notes that Jabin stands as the northern equivalent to Adoni-bezek, a king from the south (Judg. 1.5-7), in that he symbolizes Canaanite political strength. Likewise, Hess (1999) reads Jabin as the king of all of northern Canaan with Hazor as his capital.

Lindars (1995: 165) argues that Jabin is imported into this narrative from other materials that later constitute the book of Joshua 'to enlarge the significance of the events' and to set up the usual pattern of oppression found throughout Judges. Additionally, the author of chapter 4 may have identified this battle with the battle against Jabin at the waters of Merom recorded in Joshua 11.

Deborah

The figure of Deborah receives much attention in recent literature. All aspects of her complex character are noted and emphasized as each scholar proposes a new reading. Most of the divergent interpretations stem from her traits as a woman (is this significant for the narrative?), a prophet (which actions are prophetic?), a wife (is she really married to a man named Lappidoth?), a judge (in what way does she judge?), a deliverer (is her judgeship about deliverance?), a military leader (why can she initiate the battle?), a warrior (does she really participate in the battle?), and a mother (can her title from chapter five help with her characterization in chapter four?).

Alter (1992) comments on the abundance of feminine words in the introduction of Deborah, noting that gender, a main feature of the overall story, is highlighted from the start. Goldingay (1995: 24) identifies her as the first proper prophet and judge, the 'greatest figure in the book'. Bellis (1994) provides a helpful overview of the feminist interpretations available when

she wrote, and argues in the end that Deborah's actions are defensive since they are a response to twenty years of oppression.

Schneider (2000) notes that Deborah's primary role, as noted in her introduction in v. 4, is as a prophet, an affiliation which should be separated from her role as judge. Furthermore, her role as judge is unique: 'she was one of only two people to whom people went for judgment, the other was Moses when the Israelites were in the desert' (p. 68). Lindars (1995: 182) calls her a 'war prophet', meaning she has a unique role of inciting the people to war. He designates the phrase 'was judging Israel at that time' to a later historian who utilized source material that presupposed Barak as the leader of the organization.

Matthews (2004: 64) describes Deborah as a 'liminal female', an 'elder', and a 'postmenopausal female', who because she no longer menstruates can serve in an authoritative position. He also views her as a prophet and a judge, the only character in the book who truly serves in a judicial role. However, Block (1994) questions both the legal and deliverer role of her judgeship. He considers her too good to be a deliverer since the others (e.g. Samson) are generally apostate. Furthermore, he argues against assigning the verb שׁפט a judicial interpretation; he offers a more general meaning of 'to govern'. Above all, Block (2001) emphasizes, like Schneider, her role as a prophet, a representative of YHWH in the narrative.

Yee (1992) argues that the character of Deborah is used within chapter four by a male author in order to shame Barak. Although wartime, pre-monarchic Israel would have allowed women leadership because of the blurring of domestic and public domains, the metaphorical representation of Deborah as a warrior would still be an anomaly. Therefore, Deborah-as-woman-warrior becomes a 'strategy of entitlement' for the author in order 'to cope with the tension between the normative maleness of the military and the apparent involvement of women in war' (p. 114).

Assis (2006) notes that the peculiarities of ch. 4, when compared with the entire book of Judges, stem from the unique characterization of Deborah; she is a woman, a prophetess, and a judge (in the judicial sense). The lesson of the story—God is responsible for victory—results in Deborah's characterization. Her role as judge renders her anti-charismatic, while the focus on her gender demonstrates her inability to go to war. Since her only activity involves prophecy, she serves as a representative of God, thereby eliminating her 'individuality' and allowing for the victory to be credited to God (p. 118). McCann (2002) also highlights Deborah's multiple roles by emphasizing the legal functions of her role as judge, her prophetic actions such as telling Barak the deity's commands, and her role in the battle of

deliverance. Fewell (1992) notes that in her relationship to Israel, she has religious, judicial, and familial dimensions. Additionally, with the allusion to the other Deborah from Genesis, she can be seen as a 'nursemaid to a politically incapacitated Israel' (Fewell 1992: 69). Finally, Patella (2006) hints at the possible cultic role of Deborah, given her geographical proximity to Bethel.

Ackerman (1998: 31) assigns Deborah to an 'advisory role' in chapter four and the role of 'Israel's chief military commander' in chapter five. Although she admits that Deborah only exhorts Barak to go fight in ch. 4, and ch. 5 does not mention Deborah having weapons or fighting, she concludes, in the end, that Deborah is a warrior. Meanwhile, Williams (1991) does not treat Deborah as a judge at all. Viewing the entire book as 'carefully constructed according to the cycle of the solar year', he relates Deborah's story to the spring season because of her assocation with the Exodus (and therefore Passover) and because of the meaning of her name (p. 85).

Exum (2007) describes Deborah as the nurturing mother, while Barak is the little boy. Klein (2003: 39) sees Deborah's actions as stemming from the deity and constrained by men, especially Barak: 'her actions are entirely honorable and culturally acceptable, for she never directs males as a female: she speaks as an emissary of YHWH'.

Sakenfeld (1997) notes that some readers consider Deborah as performing a male role in her military leadership, because it is unacceptable for women to initiate killing. However, this type of reading leads to the question of 'why we do not regard killing as equally reprehensible when done by men' (p. 18). She notes that some Filipino women view Barak's request for companionship as a possible model for male-female cooperation. In addition, Sakenfeld observes that some Korean women see Deborah as a model for women in Christian ministry. Blessing (1995) reads the two chapters together and notes the long list of roles for Deborah: 'judge, prophet, military leader, wife, mother, woman' (p. 34), all of which provide inspiration to her as a woman in her contemporary setting.

Finally, Brown presents some contrasting ancient interpretations of the figure of Deborah. In her book subtitled *First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women*, Brown argues (1992: 40) that Pseudo-Philo in his *Biblical Antiquities* upgrades Deborah to 'the feminine counterpart to the greatest leader in all of Israel's history—Moses'. According to Brown, Josephus, however, abbreviates Deborah's story (*Jewish Antiquities* 5.202-209). Josephus omits the entirety of ch. 5, and characterizes Deborah more negatively than does the biblical account.

Lappidoth

The interpretive issue regarding Lappidoth concerns the very existence of a person. Is the noun personal or common? In other words, is 'he' Deborah's husband, or is Deborah a single, 'fiery woman'? Furthermore, does the Hebrew word, which means literally 'torches', relate to Barak's name, which means 'lightning'? Block (1999) notes the parallels with introductions to other female prophets to argue for the existence of a husband, and does not connect Lappidoth with Barak, because they are from two different geographical areas. Lindars (1995) also argues for the existence of a person here. He notes that naming the husband is the usual way of identifying a married woman. He also does not connect Barak and Lappidoth. Lowery (1992c) assumes that the noun is a person in his short *ABD* article, but, like Block, he does not associate him with Barak, because of geography. Niditch (2008: 60) translates the phrase 'a woman of fire', and notes that the alternative translation may obfuscate the charisma of Deborah. Finally, Matthews (2004) takes the phrase literally, but notes the lack of a male household in the story.

Fewell and Gunn (1990) think it better to read the phrase as a 'woman of fire' or 'spirited woman' (p. 391). Likewise, Schneider (2000) thinks the name of the husband is suspect because of its unusual, feminine form and its single appearance as a proper noun. Finally, Ackerman (1998: 38) describes Deborah's marital status as 'ambiguous' and calls it 'striking' that the text does not mention any children.

Guest (2005: 152-53) argues that translating אִשַּׁת לַפִּידוֹת as 'wife of Lappidoth' demonstrates a 'heterosexualization' process since the phrase is ambiguous and could easily be translated as 'woman of flames'. This latter translation focuses properly on the female sex instead of a male relative.

Barak

The scholarly literature generally addresses two related concerns: first, Barak's tentativeness about going to battle, and second, his relationship to Deborah.

Lindars (1995) notes the meaning of Barak's name, 'lightning', but is not certain about whether the narrative plays on this meaning. Marais (1998: 101) calls him 'the first instance of a hesitant judge'. This display of reluctance points to the fact that the leadership within the book is beginning to deteriorate. Likewise, Wong (2006: 156) argues for 'progressive deterioration' in the middle of the book, and asserts that Barak stands first in a line of judges who have little faith in YHWH. However, Wong also posits that Barak, not Deborah, should be understood as the 'primary military/deliv-

erer judge in the narrative' because of his participation in the battle and Deborah's principal role as prophet (p. 243). Similarly, Matthews (2004: 65) finds no biblical model for Barak's appeal and compares his 'demur' at God's plan to Saul's failure to destroy utterly the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15, a passage that also includes a prophetic rebuke.

Exum (2007: 71) labels him childish because of his hesitancy: 'he is the little boy who still needs his mother'. Fewell and Gunn (1990) suggest that his famous response to Deborah ('If you will go with me, I will go…') is a questioning of her authority. Barak is telling Deborah that if she is willing to stake her own life on this word from YHWH, then he will too. Niditch (2008: 65) argues that Barak's actions are not the result of cowardice; instead 'he is wise to know that victory comes with the presence of God's favorite'. Lowery (1992a) suggests Barak may have been a judge in the north because of his military position, although he admits the text never specifies this role.

Heber the Kenite

The scholarly literature generally asks two questions regarding Heber. First, why is he introduced seemingly randomly at this point in the narrative? Second, what is his identity?

Schneider (2000) suggests that this random introduction of a character builds suspense within the story because it does not seem consequential until the introduction of Jael. Marais (1998) suggests that Heber is mentioned randomly in v. 11 to add suspense, since his shift in alliance sets up Jael's shift later in the chapter.

Lindars (1995) notes that the name Heber means 'association' so that it could be a generic name for an unknown member of the clan. Margalit (1995: 633) suggests: 'Heber the Kenite is a nomadic mercenary in the service of Jabin…charged with keeping the peace at the vital juncture' near Khirbet Kērak. This aids in the explanation of Judg. 4.17, which informs us that King Jabin and the house of Heber are at peace. Furthermore, Margalit draws out the parallels between a Ugaritic story and Judges 4, including the common geographical setting, the nomad-settler confrontation, and the 'homicidal heroines' (p. 636). However, in Judges 4 the heroine is nomadic, while the Ugaritic story portrays the heroine as sedentary. Ackerman (1998) argues that Heber is a priest through his association with Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. Although Moses' father-in-law's actual name is confused in different biblical texts, his status as priest is certain. Therefore, Judg 4.11 signals that Heber is a priest without actually stating it; furthermore, one woman among this clan of Reuel/Jethro/

Hobab, Zipporah, seems to act as a cultic functionary, opening the door for the interpretation that Jael is part of the cult.

The Battle

Schneider (2000: 74) notices the brevity of the battle description, an element that pervades the entire book of Judges: 'the battles are recounted briefly, indicating that the battles were unimportant, compared to who fought them, why, and for whom'. Hauser (1992: 52) also notes the short battle scene and suggests that Israel's victory is portrayed not by describing the battle, but by the scenes in which Sisera is killed 'ingloriously' (see also 1980, 1987). Amit (1999a: 209) notes that the description of the battle 'lacks a realistic element', which is replaced by God's direct involvement. Lindars (1995) believes the legendary accounts still preserve a historical event. Goldingay (1995: 28) describes the battle as a 'piece of theological poetic justice' because the power of lightning and stars and rain, which the enemies attributed to their goddess, Anat, is here attributed to Yahweh.

Jael

The primary disagreement in the scholarly literature concerning Jael centers around her identity as portrayed by her actions. She has been labeled a judge, a warrior, a host, a temptress, and a religious functionary. Other interpretive issues include her unique name and her relationship to the other woman of the story, Deborah.

Wolde (1995, 1996) notes her masculine name, a *yiqtol* third person masculine singular from the root הלע, which means 'to ascend', and argues that all five of her actions are related to the male sexual act. Therefore, her proper name is 'symbolic of the nature of her actions' (1995: 245). Layton (1997) disagrees and sees a common *qatil* noun, meaning 'mountain goat'. Therefore, the word fits into the category of personal/animal names not unlike Deborah's name, 'bee'. Additionally, he does not see any wordplay between the personal name and the verb הלע, since Jael is never associated with it in the chapter. Block (1999) doubts her name has special significance. Furthermore, he argues that her 'actions and character are patently ambiguous' (p. 209). In the end, 'her actions are not only deviant and violent but socially revolutionary, challenging prevailing views of female roles in general and the relationship of husband and wife in particular' (p. 210).

McCann (2002: 53) calls her 'the toughest, cleverest warrior of all' and argues that the narrator thinks Jael's actions are completely justified because of the wrongdoing of Sisera. Matthews and Benjamin (1992) argue that Jael, functioning as a judge and hero, warns Sisera against raping her.

She is not a host, since only males act as hosts in the anthropology of biblical hospitality, and therefore cannot be seen as disobedient to the ancient ways of hospitality.

However, Yee (1992) argues that the author of ch. 4 characterizes Jael in such a way as to reinforce a negative stereotype of women as temptress/deceiver. She is not a warrior protecting her people. Frymer-Kensky (2001b) notes the difference in presentation between the chapers and labels her a 'stealthy heroine' in ch. 4 and a 'fierce warrior' in ch. 5, both of which are 'dramatic inversions of motherhood' (p. 98). Bellis (1994, 1995) seeks to justify Jael's violence by demonstrating the dire circumstances in which she found herself. Furthermore, a theological reading shows that Jael is oppressed, and God is always on the side of the oppressed.

Assis (2004) compares Jael to Rahab in Joshua 2, describing both as Gentile women who assist Israel against the Canaanites. She lists eight analogies between the two characters, demonstrating that the deity works in 'surprising and unexpected ways' (p. 89). In the end, she notes that Jael's motives for killing are never revealed, a pecularity that allows the reader to focus on the prophet Deborah: 'Yael's role in the story is to materialize Deborah's prophecy' (p. 89). Additionally, Assis (2005: 4) argues that Jael functions as 'an extension of Deborah', as Deborah's 'hand', in that she fulfills the prophecy uttered by Deborah earlier in the chapter, thereby strengthening Deborah's prophetic character. So, although the depiction of Jael's murder of Sisera is detailed and lengthy, it functions, in the end, 'to demonstrate the realization of Deborah's prophecy, and to emphasize her prophetic personality' (Assis 2005: 11-12).

Ackerman (1998, 2000) argues that the word 'Kenite' within the poem of chapter 5 signals that Jael is a religious functionary and that her tent is a sacred place. Chapter 4 shares this understanding of Jael by noting her priestly heritage, her location under an oak tree, and her proximity to Kedesh. Furthermore, she is a non-Israelite who, despite her ethnicity, aids the Israelites.

Klein (2003) suggests that Jael is an Israelite because of her actions. Furthermore, she suggests that 'Jael has used her feminine wiles to entice and seduce Sisera in order to put him to sleep' (p. 38). In contrast to Deborah, Jael works independently to save her people.

Chalcraft (1990: 182) argues that the narrator presents Jael's actions as 'legitimate' and 'worthy of emulation and social approval' on the one hand, while on the other hand her actions are 'potentially deviant' because of her status as a woman in a patriarchal society, and because she breaks the hospitality code. In the end, because her deviance benefits Israel, it is reckoned acceptable.

In a more extreme reading of Jael's autonomous actions, Reis (2005) argues that the entire Jael-Sisera episode is about sex. She suggests that Sisera is really seeking refuge with Jael's husband, Heber the Kenite, when Jael comes out of her tent, which is close by, and entreats him to stop at her tent. Once inside the tent, Jael assumes the male sexual position with Sisera by lying on top of him. Then, after offering Sisera milk to drink, Jael initiates sex for a second time by covering him again. Next, she kills Sisera by climbing on top of him again, striking him, and then dismounting onto the ground. Finally, she goes outside again, apparently to lure another man, at which point Barak 'goes into her', i.e. has sex with her. According to Reis, all of these actions are possibly politically related; however, the real reason for this depiction is 'the xenophobic nature of the Bible; non-Israelite women are, ipso facto, immoral' (2005: 36).

Wijk-Bos (1991) argues that the text reverses the stereotypes of patriarchy by characterizing Jael in three ways: (a) as independent from her relationship with men and their alliances, (b) as leaving the proper sphere for women of home and family, (c) as not limited by the expectation on women to serve only. Sakenfeld (1997) argues that Jael's action of murder may be considered an act of humiliation for Sisera from a male-centred perspective, but can also be read as rejection of rape, a protest against rape.

Fewell and Gunn (1990: 396) proffer a pragmatic reason for Jael's actions: 'her desire for survival drives her to wield the authority of violence'. She knows the victorious Israelites will be coming, and she needs to demonstrate her allegiance. It is not about honor or commitment to YHWH or even Israel. On the contrary, Lowery (1992b: 611) suggests that since no personal motives are given in the text, her motives are political; she is caught between 'conflicting loyalties'.

Sisera

Schneider (2000) notes his secondary nature to Jabin, a power structure that is paralleled in Barak's secondary stature vis-à-vis Deborah. Furthermore, Sisera's inferior title as official or ruler is ironic, because later his mother has her own female officials or rulers (Judg. 5.29). Reis (2005) believes that Sisera calls himself a 'sissy' in his instructions to Jael since she is to tell any passerby that a man is not present in the tent. She argues that the 'sexually insatiable' man has become a woman, a transformation that elicits humor for the reading audience. Matthews (1991) argues for a seven-point protocol of biblical hospitality; then, he applies it to Judges 4 to show that Sisera consistently violates the code, thereby justifying Jael's murder. Exum (2007: 71) notes Sisera's flight from the battle and states

that he resembles 'a frightened little boy, seeking the security his mother provides'. Lindars (1995) and Matthews (2004) follow Albright's suggestion that Sisera belonged to the Sea Peoples.

Summary

One of the major elements of this narrative is its complex cast of characters, people with uncertain and shifting roles. Therefore, the discussion above of ch. 4 focuses principally on these different characters as they are read by contemporary scholars. To review succinctly the literature review: Jabin, who often receives meager treatment in the scholarly discussion, raises the question of ch. 4's relationship to the book of Joshua. Scholars have clearly spilt the most ink on Deborah, struggling to understand her different roles in the chapter. How one translates a two-word phrase determines whether Lappidoth exists at all. Barak generally receives a negative evaluation from scholars, who usually read him within the context of his relationship to Deborah. Heber creates confusion for the reader both because of his random appearance early in the narrative and because of his unknown identity. Jael, who also receives much discussion, can only be discussed as the perpetrator of a courageous or cunning act. Finally, scholars generally agree that the text portrays Sisera in a negative way.

Judges 5: The Song of Deborah

The so-called Song of Deborah, which follows immediately the narrative of chapter four, provides another account of the battle. Its complex poetry makes translation—not to mention interpretive—work difficult. Any discussion of chapter five generally touches on the traditional topics of its dating, historicity, genre, and relation to the prose account. The following discussion is divided as follows: general comments, structural analysis, dating, genre, only ten tribes?, and mother in Israel.

General Comments

This section of the discussion gathers together various scholars' general reflections on topics such as the song's author, the author's gender, the attribution of the song to Barak and Deborah, the placement of the song within a thoroughly narrative framework, and the ancient Near Eastern influences on the song.

Dijk-Hemmes (1992) identifies ch. 5 as a Female text. In other words, chapter five makes prominent the role of the women, Jael, Deborah, and Sisera's mother; therefore, the female voice dominates the narrative. Addi-

tionally, a paradigm of cooperation among the women is featured within the chapter (like in the book of Ruth), which leads Dijk-Hemmes (1993) to label it an F-text. However, an element of competition between Deborah and Sisera's mother exists also, a notion that demonstrates the unavoidability of competition between women, and prevents the conclusion that all F-texts have only the cooperation paradigm, while all M-texts have only the competition paradigm.

Asen (1997) relates ancient and modern knowledge of apiculture to the accounts in Judges 4–5 by contending that the author of Judges 5 used knowledge about the life cycle of honeybees to describe a historical battle. This imagery explains Deborah's name, her rise, Barak's reluctance, Sisera's death, and why Deborah is a mother.

Weitzman (1997: 32) argues that the purpose of the song is 'to promote allegiance to God'. The attribution of the song to Deborah and Barak is an act of intepretation based both on the contents of the song and the requirements of the story in ch. 4, for it is there that Barak does not understand that God will bring victory. By having him as the co-singer, the author demonstrates that Barak ultimately recognizes God's role. Barak undergoes a transformation within the chapters, just as the reader is also encouraged to do. Similarly, Álvarez Barredo (1998a) argues that victory or salvation within the song is exclusively because of God's intervention; Israel is passive.

Watts (1992: 96) argues that this is the earliest 'placement of a psalm in a narrative context' within the Hebrew Bible. By adding the psalm, the author was able to 'express feelings of praise, condemnation, and delight which were denied to the narrator by the conventions of narrative discourse' (p. 97). As for the question of why a psalm was added here and only here in the book, Watts suggests that the psalm already existed when the narrative was written.

Petersen (2004) points out the rhetorical devices and poetic features of the poem, paying special attention to different points of view including ideological, spatiotemporal, psychological, and perceptual. Matthews (2004) notes the emphasis on the deity's role as warrior, the battle details, and the praise of Jael as the most blessed of women.

Fewell and Gunn (1990) state that Deborah and Barak unite in ch. 5 to sing a song from the perspective of the victors. In this song, YHWH's role is 'tenuous' and the battle, in the end, is won by the stars, not the divine warrior. Becker-Spörl (1996) likewise emphasizes the elements of the waters and stars within the battle, arguing that the Israelite deity does not play a role (cf. Hauser 1980).

Ackerman (1998: 59) argues that Judges 5 is dependent on Canaanite myths of Baal and Anat in its portrayal of Deborah: 'Deborah's characterization in Judges 5 seems to have been powerfully influenced by the sorts of militaristic attributes associated with Anat in Canaanite myth'. Furthermore, the characterization of Jael in ch. 5 shows influence from the Anat stories, in that both stories mix 'militaristic imagery with imagery of sexuality and seduction' (p. 59). Additionally, Ackerman (2003) explores a more historically-oriented type of biblical feminist scholarship and notes that Judges 5 demonstrates that during Iron Age I someone in Israel was able to imagine a woman in military leadership. This, of course, raises the possibility that other women during this time period exercised significant leadership positions.

Rakel (1999) argues for an intertextual relationship between Judges 5 and Judith 16 with regard to structure, content, and theme. She posits that the song of Deborah becomes 'a stuctural matrix' for Judith's hymn of praise (p. 35). Likewise, White (1992) brings together all the similarities between the stories in terms of plot, structure, characters, and song in order to argue that the author of Judith used the Deborah-Jael story as a model. Additionally, Wilson (2006) reflects on the allusion to Judg. 5.24 and Jdt. 13.18 within the opening chapter of the Gospel of Luke. She argues that Luke radically changes the meaning of blessedness, since Jael and Judith both kill enemies, while Mary believes the Lord and has a son.

Finally, other scholars focus on minutiae. Neef (1995b) argues that Meroz, the village that is cursed in v. 23, is located in the immediate vicinity of the battle, although the exact location is unknown.

Structural Analysis

The exact division of the song into sections or stanzas is heavily debated, with the number of proposed structural outlines rivaling the number of scholars working on this issue. All commentators agree that the song proper begins in v. 2; however, many disagree as to its ending.

Vincent (2000) surveys and critiques various commentators' proposed structures before arguing for the literary unity of the Song using two stanzas (vv. 2-8 and 9-22) that are marked with a beginning refrain and include other structural and literary parallels. He also mentions some of the poetic characteristics of the Song such as parallelism and assonance. Brenner (1993) argues for a literary structure of two triangles that form a rhombus. The first triangle contains all females and symbolizes milk and nourishment; the second contains males and symbolizes water. Niditch (2001: 181) divides the text into three 'major narrative thrusts': vv. 1-11 serve as an introduc-

tion to the Divine Warrior and provide a historical setting; vv. 12-23 are a 'catalogue' of participants; and vv. 24-31 contain the tale of Jael. Later, Niditch (2008) proffers a thematic structure: vv. 1-3 are an introduction; vv. 4-5 provide the 'divine warrior's march'; vv. 6-13 give 'historical setting; human heroes and enemies'; vv. 14-18 contain a 'catalogue of Israelite warriors'; vv. 19-22 provide 'battle/mythic allusions'; vv. 23-30 contain 'human heroes'; v. 31 serves as the conclusion.

Lindars (1995) omits vv. 2-5, 9-11, and 31a in order to create nine divisions in the original: vv. 6-8, 12, 13-15a, 15b-17, 18, 19-22, 23, 24-27, and 28-30. The battle in vv. 19-22 serves as the climax. Block (1999) also finds nine stanzas: vv. 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-11c, 11d-18, 19-23, 24-27, 28-30, and 31a. Bakon (2006) divides the chapter into five scenes: vv. 3-11, 12-18, 19-22, 23-27, and 28-30. Fritz (2006) divides the original song into four scenes: vv.14-17, 19-22, 24-27, and 28-30. Finally, Auffret (2002) divides the text into eight sections as follows: vv. 2-5, 6-8, 9-13, 14-18, 19-22, 23-27, 28-30, 31.

Fokkelman (1995) divides the Song from largest unit to smallest as follows: three sections (vv. 2-8, 9-23, 24-31ab), seven stanzas (vv. 2-5, 6-8, 9-13, 14-18, 19-23, 24-27, 28-31ab), twenty strophes, 50 lines, 108 cola, 352 words, and 864 syllables. Each section begins with a call for praise and has a buildup of 2-3-2 stanzas; each stanza consists of about three strophes. Scherer (2005) argues for the literary integrity of verses 19-22 with the following poetic meter: v. 19a is a tricolon; 19b- unicolon; 20- bicolon; 21a tricolon; 21b unicolon; 22 bicolon.

Dating

A majority of scholars have long held that this chapter represents very old, possibly the oldest, biblical material because of its archaic language and genre. But does Albright's (1936: 26) claim—'nearly all competent biblical scholars believe that the Song of Deborah is the oldest document which the Bible has preserved in approximately its original form'—still ring true?

Block (1999) dates the poem to premonarchic times and even attributes it to Deborah herself. He notes the absence of Judah from the list of tribes, the archaic nature of the language, and the poet's recognition of 'chronological simultaneity of Jael's and Shamgar's times' (p. 215). Lindars (1995: 215) suggests that the list of ten tribes provides the best means of dating the poem (as compared to other means such as linguistics and similarities to Exodus 15): 'some time in the early monarchy would be suitable'. More specifically, Neef (1995a) dates the song to c. 1025 BCE, about one hundred years after the actual event, on the basis of stylistic features like repetition

and enjambment. Niemann (2002) dates the core of the song to the time of Saul and Ishbaal and relates Judg. 5.19 to 1 Kgs 4.8-17. Guillaume (2004) provides the most extensive history for the song. He dates the earliest form to Iron Age I and attributes it to Zebulunite folklore. Then, at the end of the tenth century, the song becomes Israelite while Yahwistic elements are added in the eighth century. Around 720 BCE, it was added to the Book of Saviours, and the narrative was created based on it.

Not all scholars, however, believe the song represents the oldest literature of the Bible. Waltisberg (1999) dates it to a period between the fifth and third centuries BCE, based on Aramaisms within the poem. Diebner (1995) also dates the Song late—to the time of the Hasmoneans—by highlighting some of the late features in the text like the names, which parallel Greek mythological stories about the birth of Zeus. Finally, Levin (2003) dates the poem to the postexilic period, and argues for its dependence on ch. 4.

Genre

Clearly, Judges 5 is poetry. But how much more specific can one be about the genre? The majority of scholars also describe the poem as a victory song, although a minority see a liturgy within the poem. Some, however, label it generically as a specialized genre such as polemic or vaunt.

Wong (2007) argues against identifying Judges 5 as primarily a 'victory song' like Exodus 15. Instead, he contends that the poem is 'a piece of political polemic dressed up as a victory song' (p. 3). He uses rhetorical analysis to emphasize the theme of participation/non-participation in: the refrain (vv. 2 and 9); and the subsequent section (vv. 10-24). When the song praises those who participate and censures those who do not, it engages in polemics against those Israelites who did not participate in the military campaign against their enemies. After exploring heroic poetry in detail, Echols (2005, 2008) concludes that Judges 5 is a 'heroic victory song' (2008: 184) that downplays the presence of God because of its original non-religious setting.

Brettler (2002: 69) surveys the possibilities, rejecting the genres 'victory song' and 'liturgy', before suggesting that the chapter functioned as 'a poem recited before war' in order to assemble the troops for battle. The poem therefore contains liturgical elements, but serves primarily to 'convince groups of people to volunteer' (p. 72). In its current form, Block (1999) identifies it mainly as a victory hymn of praise but also notes the mixed quality of its genre. Niditch (2001) labels it a victory song, comparing it to Exodus 15 and noting that the songs are frequently associated with women. Schulte (1990: 190) sees it as 'liturgical-dramatic'.

Lindars (1995: 216) argues that the victory song, thanksgiving hymn, and festal liturgy categories 'fail to convince', and scholars should attend simply to the poetry of the Song. Likewise, Olson (1998: 787) identifies the chapter simply as a poem with elements of 'a hymn of praise and a ballad'.

Miller (1998) identifies the poem as a vaunt form with a riposte pattern; it functions as a piece of literature that responds to a stereotype given by an enemy, embracing part of the stereotype while reversing the honor-shame value of it, thereby insulting the enemy. Here the stereotype is: 'the Israelites are backward hill people who lack culture, refinement and sophistication; who adhere to absurd norms of hospitality; and whose men are dominated by masculine women' (p. 121). These characteristics are partially accepted by the Israelites in the Song, and shown to be honorable and desirable.

Only Ten Tribes?

One of the details within the poem that puzzles many scholars is the mention of only ten tribes. Furthermore, the traditional tribes of Judah, Simeon, Levi, Manasseh, and Gad are ommitted. This oddity has led to multiple theories about the significance of the tribes in the song.

Schloen (1993) provides a historical event as the background for the song and the list of tribes—the Midianites/Israelite caravans had to pay high taxes as they passed through the Jezreel Valley, thereby creating a crisis in which only the affected tribes, i.e. those that were a part of this particular caravan route, needed to respond. Ahlström (1993) emphasizes that the chapter relays an *ad hoc* event, thereby preventing one from proposing a ten-tribe amphictyony or confederation for this time period. He also notes that the chapter does not yet know of the traditional twelve tribe system.

De Moor (1993) actually proposes a different reading for vv. 13-14, which adds only a few *matres lectionis* to the consonantal Masoretic text, in order to represent all twelve tribes.

Guillaume (2000) argues for a list of seven tribes at an early stage of composition with the tribes of Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali as secondary. He also suggests that the poem celebrates Saul's son, Ishbaal's, expansion into the Jezreel (cf. 2 Sam. 2.9-10).

Finally, Schneider (2000) notes the participation of tribes in unison is a theme throughout the book of Judges. Earlier in the overall narrative, only two tribes fight in a battle (Judg. 1.3). In Judges 5, tribes are reprimanded for the first time for not fighting. The theme culminates in Judges 21 when an entire clan is annihilated because they did not take a vow like the others.

Mother in Israel

The song bestows upon Deborah a new, rather odd, title, a designation she does not have in ch. 4. Judges 5.7 calls Deborah 'a mother in Israel'. A few commentators have elaborated on this description.

Olson (1998: 787) argues that 'mother in Israel' is an office, not just a nice, poetic title. However, Frymer-Kensky (2001a: 67) suggests 'mother' is an 'honorific title for an authority figure'. Likewise, Helyer (1998: 36) calls the title 'the highest accolade a Hebrew woman might receive'.

Bronner (2004) labels Deborah a 'metaphorical mother' because of her depiction in Judges 5. This is an important role for Deborah that is often overlooked in scholarship because of ch. 4's emphasis on the roles of judge and prophet. She mothers her people with her 'persuasive words' (p. 82).

Glancing Back to Look Ahead

The above review of recent scholarship (from 1990 to the present) concerning Judges 4–5 demonstrates a sustained interest in the accounts of Deborah. Over a hundred studies, ranging from full-scale commentaries to two-page reflections, analyze the narrative and the poem using a plurality of methodologies and following a variety of interests. Many of the publications represent a scholar's sustained attention to the book of Judges. Other contributions represent the power and allure of these two chapters to draw comments from scholars who previously have not written on the judges.

The larger paradigm shift within biblical scholarship away from traditional historical-critical methods to more literary methods is discernible in this review, although the older questions are certainly not disappearing. For example, Judges 5 still challenges scholars as they seek to date and provide a genre for it. Moreover, many scholars are still interested in the historical period of the judges and whether this text can provide any reliable information for accessing that period. So, while many scholars have turned to evaluating the ways in which the characters are depicted by the narrator or author, many remain interested in the plausibility of the geographical places mentioned.

The above review highlights another interesting feature: most scholars still treat the chapters separately. Excluding the commentary writers, the scholars cited in the discussion of ch. 5 are basically different than the ones cited earlier for ch. 4. The marked difference in genre seems to be the largest hurdle for scholars in reading the text synchronically.

The most obvious area of scholarship with explosive growth is feminist scholarship. Not only do these chapters provide some fascinating female

characters who act in surprising ways (in fact, the entire book of Judges mentions a great number of women), but the accounts also seem to focus on the role of gender. The two main women, Deborah and Jael, perform astounding acts, leading scholars to ponder their significance in the ancient world (and for some scholars, in the modern world too). Furthermore, most of the astonishment at these feats relates directly to the issue of gender. The Bible knows of numerous male prophets and male judges but only one woman (and 'mother'!) combines both roles. Furthermore, biblical literature relays many tales of graphic violence including one-on-one killing; however, only one woman kills a man with a tent peg. These fascinating tales provide feminist biblical scholars with ample texts on which to concentrate. However, feminist scholarship often offers contradictory readings of Deborah and Jael. Is it because, as Yee (1992) argues, they are liminal figures?

This discussion of ch. 4 concentrates on the fascinating personalities found there, portraying a plethora of characters in order to present its case. In summary: King Jabin, frequently ignored by scholars, highlights a possible link between this chapter and the previous book of Joshua. Deborah, who is definitely not ignored by contemporary scholars, receives much conflicting commentary concerning her primary role within the narrative. The existence of Lappidoth hinges on the translation of two Hebrew words. Barak, who is read primarily in relation to Deborah, receives an overall negative appraisal. Heber engenders interpretive confusion, since he appears in the narrative apparently at random, and his full identity is unknown. Jael, like Deborah, creates an abundance of scholarly commentary with competing interpretations. Is her action inside the tent courageous or cunning? Finally, Sisera's characterization is fairly easy to discern, and most scholars view him negatively.

The discussion of chapter 5 addresses more traditional interpretive issues such as dating, structure, and genre. Scholars differ concerning the compositional date of the song, although most consider it to be among the oldest pieces of literature in the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, each scholar reviewed above generally presents his/her own unique structure of the passage. Additionally, scholars debate on exactly how many divisions to create and how specific the divisions can be. Although some scholars are satisfied to identify ch. 5 as a poem, others wish to specify the genre based on its content. Finally, many interpreters comment on the relationship between the narrative and the poem, with some suggesting a dependence of the former on the latter.

The accounts of Deborah, recorded in Judges 4–5, are exceptional for the book of Judges in that the story is told twice—first in a narrative, then in

a poem. Whether one reads these stories diachronically or synchronically, they elicit numerous scholarly interpretations. This review has surveyed the research on these two chapters since 1990, organizing the material according to the issue of characterization in ch. 4 and the frequent scholarly concerns of genre, structure and dating in ch. 5.

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