

WOMEN FRAME THE BOOK OF JUDGES—HOW AND WHY?
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Disclaimer

This article was originally written for a FS in honor of my friend and colleague Yairah Amit, to be published in 2012. Even at the time of writing, early this year (2011), I intended to rewrite it for the planned T@C volume on Joshua-Judges, although not to present it at this session. I am presenting it since Royce Victor, whose essay is ready and will be considered for publication in the volume, couldn't come to this meeting. I'm filling in his time slot.

This means that I had but little time to think further about the topic. I am hoping that discussion at the session will help me do so. For the time being, all I can add is as follows. The overt and covert links made in the Hebrew bible between female figures and the *Hochpolitik* of government, nationalism and territory don't cease to amaze me. On the one hand, at least theoretically, women are removed from the political arena. On the other hand, they are described as saviors in cases of extreme urgency—or as victims in cases of a lost social order.

Clearly, not all is confident and assured in the patriarchal world order that we often seem to watch in the biblical stories, as if we are in a film unfolding unexpectedly to display [male] heroes and anti-heroes as dependents, and politically active females as either non-females (non-mothers) or ethically deficient, even when on 'our' side. And also, somehow, somewhere, there is a nagging voice that tells me, nags me, that similar views are still inherent in my own culture, in your culture, at least to a degree, in spite of variances in time, space and mentality. So please do help me, from your own contexts: why do women, actually female figures, frame the book of Judges, for better or—more often—for worse?

Ostensibly, the book of Judges is about 'judges'. These 'judges', שופטים, as is widely demonstrated in the book, are persons who effect collective deliverance from [military] danger¹ more than, as more usual for the verb שפט Qal and its nominal derivatives, they engage in legislative and juridical activities.² Mostly the stories and short[er] notes about 'judges' in this

¹So also in e.g. 1 Sam. 8.5-6, when the Israelite elders ask Samuel to 'Give us a king to govern us', according to the JPS and the NRSV, while the KJV has 'to judge us'.

²The juridical and the military functions are at times coupled in biblical literature, viewed as required, complementary attributes of a leader's ability to fulfill the leading role (notably as in 1 Sam. 8.20b: 'Let our king rule over us and go out at our head and fight our battle' (JPS), 'and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battle' (NRSV), 'and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles' (KJV). Here too the term translated 'govern' more recently and 'judge' earlier is the Heb. שפט Qal. And see *inter alia* BDB for the term (where both 'judge' and 'govern' are given unproblematically as head meanings, 1071). For this article this is a minor point, worth referring to briefly simply because for decades now a shift judge→govern, rule or a certain contextual synonymity has been taken for granted in Judges research. It is perhaps worth noting that the only 'judge' in the book of Judges to actually engage in juridical activity is Deborah: 'She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment' (Judg. 4.5, NRSV), 'And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and

book, apart from one, are about male judges and their escapades. However, as has been noticed by many scholars, it begins and ends with stories about women.³ From Achsa (Judg. 1.12-15) and a reference to the Kenites (1.16) and to Yael's group, which will come to fruition in chapters 4–5, to the abducted Shiloh women in ch. 21, woman figures are depicted again and again as major lynch pins in the evolving drama of local stories made national: the drama of attempts to move from local leadership and its overriding discontents, in spite of occasional success, to a more central government that would generate a greater success rate and greater security for its subjects, or partners.

The roles woman figures fulfill in the individual sections (such as the Achsa story) or in larger units (Samson's biography, chs. 13–16), as well as in the overriding plan of the book, the ideological 'national' framework, vary. They may be defined in traditional terms, i.e. as daughters, wives or mothers, that is, as male-relational figures. Achsa, Jephthah's daughter and the young women of Shiloh/Yabesh Gilead are introduced as daughters, as are Samson's Timnite wife and her sister) and the Levi's runaway wife (ch. 19). The latter is primarily a wife, albeit a secondary one (*pilegeš*); and wives are also Achsa, Yael, Gideon's Shechemite wife (also defined as a *pilegeš*, 8.31), The wife of Jephthah's father, Manoah's wife; and according to many interpreters, ancient and modern, Deborah too—the only female 'judge' in this book—is wife of Lappidoth, her absent husband—or of Barak.⁴ Let us not forget the mothers: Sisera's mother, Abimelech's mother (= Gideon's Shechemite wife), Jephthah's Mother, Samson's mother (wife of Manoah), Micah's mother; and last but not least, the metaphorical mother, the 'mother in Israel', Deborah again. Woman figures can also appear as independent agents, for better or for worse, with no male filiation. Such are the wise women in the court of Sisera's mother, the woman from Thebez who kills Abimelech, the whore from Gaza and Delilah. Most of these female figures are nameless as well as male-relational: they are important for the plot and message, may even assume male knowledge, functions or roles (Deborah and Yael, Samson's mother), but are depicted as socially marginal because of their social dependency on males or their namelessness. Whatever the individual story or case may be, all these descriptions are enveloped in two rubrics, both repeated several times, both editorial. The first repeated comment covers chs. 2–16 (end of Samson's biography): 'And the sons of Israel [sic!]r#y ynb] did/continued to do what was bad in Yhwh's eyes' (2.11; 3.7,12 ; 4.1; 6.1; 10.6; 13.1). The second comment frames the last five chapters of the book, appearing at the beginning of the last section and at its very end: 'In those days there was no king in Israel, each man [sic! ז"נ] would do what was right in his eyes' (17.6; 21.25).⁵

In this article I attempt to assess the ways female figures and typecasts are used in Judges for the purpose of either supporting or else negating the alleged need for central leadership, or kingship, so as to uphold a thriving social order. In this I wish to go beyond the basic recognition that woman figures indeed feature largely in Judges and in an evaluative manner, for instance as phrased by Tammi Schneider in her 'Introduction' to her Commentary

Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment' (KJV); and somewhat obscured in the JPS: 'She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for decisions', and the NIV: 'She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim,

and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided'

³See for example Lillian Klein Abensohn in the FS for Yairah Amit (forthcoming early 2012).

⁴Cf. Shulamit Valler's article in the FS for Yairah Amit (forthcoming early 2012).

⁵Both translations are mine, AB.

on Judges (1999: xiv):

One of the major components affecting the evaluation of the judges is the role of women in their lives. With the exception of Ehud, Tola, Jair, Elon, and Abdon, the stories of the individual judges contain some reference to a woman, either by name or description of relationship to them, who heavily affect the judge's character and actions.

Or in her 'Conclusion' (pp. 288-9):

Men in Judges often receive a negative evaluation because of the women in their lives, and the roles those women take, though the characters of the women themselves are not always seen negatively...Achsa could be considered a vehicle for a slightly negative evaluation of Othniel...In Judges the focus is not on the women as characters evaluated in their own right but as foils through whom the men, especially the judges, are tested...Women also serve to reveal the impact of Israel's actions on the nation of Israel at large...The Shiloh women's tragic plight demonstrates how Israelite society strayed so that women were institutionally raped and the system of protection was intentionally destroyed.

I find Schneider's position absolutely correct and balanced, in as far as it goes, in that she demarginalizes woman figures by pointing out clearly some of their functions as a literary device, while simultaneously emphasizing their marginal status—as indicators for assessing males and their behavior—in the biblical text itself. However, I would like to take this further, especially because, crucially, woman figures open and close the book of Judges, framing it on both ends.

That the book of Judges almost begins and certainly ends with woman figures is a given fact and an indication of their importance to it. They appear as individuals and in groups, in various roles, as agents and as objects, as autochtones and as allochtones, in stories as well as in short notes. Let us look again at the list of female figures earlier categorized into daughters, mothers and wives, but this time from another perspective: that of the order they appear to our view within the book. Achsa stars already in ch. 1, at least in the fragment about Judah, a rare reference in Judges (vv. 12-15). Then come Deborah and Yael as 'national' saviours, as against the unnamed mother of Sisera and the group of her companions (chs. 4-5). Gideon has many wives, among them a secondary wife from Shechem, Abimelech's unnamed mother (8.31). This wife and mother from Shechem is not an actor or an agent in the stories depicting her husband and son. However, her community of origin is instrumental in Abimelech's attempt to secure dominance and eventually his downfall and death—at the hand of a woman (9.50-55). Remember Dinah and Shechem (Genesis 34)? If you do, you know already at the beginning of ch. 9 that it will end in tragedy. Abimelech is killed by an unnamed woman and his attempt to institute kingship is thus aborted. Jephthah's mother is an unnamed *zōnāh*, 'harlot'—which is difficult to understand, since it is implied that Jephthah's paternity is recognized by his hostile half-brothers (11.1-3); his daughter is nameless too (11.30-40). The daughter is sacrificed to Yhwh after Jephthah's vow, willingly on her part—believe it or not. In Samson's saga (chs. 13—16) women seem as important as Yhwh's spirit and the Nazirite condition, even more so perhaps, as motivation and cause for the stories to unfold: from his mother, so much more proper and intelligent than her bumbling husband (ch. 13); to his first Philistine wife the Timnite and her barely mentioned sister (14.1-15.6); to the Gaza whore [all

of them unnamed] (16.1-3), then to Delilah who delivers him to his fate and glory in death (the rest of ch. 16). Micah's mother, of the Ephraim hills, uses her money, stolen then returned to her by her son, to establish a local temple round a statue and an ephod; these are eventually taken, together with the appointed Levite priest, by the Danites on their migration to the northern Laish/Dan (chs. 17-18). The secondary wife of the Levite, again unnamed (as is her husband, apart from his tribal tag), is raped by the men of Gibeah, perhaps ultimately murdered by her husband when she returns in the morning⁶ (ch. 19). In the ensuing civil strife the Benjaminites are nearly extinguished (ch. 20). To circumvent the decision not to allow exogamic wives to Benjamin men, two solutions are found: 400 virgins are imported from Yabesh Gilead, after all other locals have been killed; and the other Benjaminites are encouraged to kidnap Shiloh girls dancing in the vineyards and to marry them. These last two groups are unnamed as well and there is no doubt that the young women are illegally taken by the Benjaminites (the root גזל, *g-z-l* Qal, 'to rob'⁷ is used in 21.23 for this action). This is the end of the civil war and of the book: 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his eyes'. Thus, we begin by reading about a well-established daughter in Judah, newly married and working for the success of her marriage (see Klein in this volume), outside the natural habitat—so to speak—of the 'judges'; and we end our reading with a two groups of daughters=young women, coerced this way or the other to marry the corrupt Benjaminites, with neither their fathers nor they themselves having a say in this matter.

A quick analysis of this list will show that:

[1] Most of the woman figures, be they individuals or groups, are unnamed. The only named female figures are Achsa, Deborah, Yael, and Delilah.

[2] Most figures fulfill traditional male-relational roles: mothers, wives, secondary wives, daughters, or a combination thereof. There are two categories of exceptions: saviours and sexual objects. Abimelech's killer, Deborah and Yael are saviours—although, in the case of the last two, they boast absent husbands in the biblical text and/or in its interpretation [Deborah]; Delilah is a temptress, another of Samson's women is a *zōnāh*, 'prostitute', and others are sexual objects in addition to being wives and/or daughters (in the Gibeah story and in its aftermath).

[3] A fair number are allochtones in some degree: so are Yael, Sisera's mother and her companions, Abimelech's mother and Abimelech's killer, Samson's women apart from his mother, and the Yabesh Gilead women.

[4] All female figures are involved in events presented as of inter-tribal or national import. And, finally,

[5] Only a minority—the 'saviour' category together with Samson's mother, perhaps also Achsa, perhaps also Jephthah's daughter—are depicted as wholly or mostly positive

⁶It is not at all clear whether the woman was dead in the morning, or died thereafter. The text is somewhat opaque: 'Toward morning the woman came back; and as it was growing light, she collapsed at the entrance of the man's house where her husband was. When her husband arose in the morning, he opened the doors of the house and went out to continue his journey; and there was the woman, his concubine, lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands on the threshold. "Get up," he said to her, "let us go." But there was no reply. So the man placed her on the donkey and set out for home' (vv. 26-28, JPS; emphasis mine, AB).

⁷גזל Qal and Nif. and derivative nouns such as גזלה ('robbery' or 'something robbed', BDB: 159-60) appear in the Hebrew Bible over 40 times. The English translations seem to have shied away from the strong definition of the Benjaminites' action. Thus the translations of this term are softer: 'carried off' (JPS, NIV), 'caught' (KJV), 'abducted' (NRSV).

characters. The others are painted either negatively or indifferently, or else as nameless victims.

On this occasion I happily exempt myself from asking, or answering, questions about the historical *truth* content of such stories. The narrated time is indeed that of the last quarter of the second millennium BCE; but this has no bearing whatever on the historicity or veracity of the narrated tales. The narrating time is what counts: and this is unknown although much investigated and much speculated upon. To the connection between woman figures as framers and meaning bearers of this biblical text, and the narrating or editing or composition time, we can now turn.

In what follows I shall use as guides, or hermeneutical keys, two sets of studies. The first is the work done by Yairah Amit on biblical literature in general and in particular on Judges, and especially on the book's editing, important work in Hebrew and in English that features largely in this volume (1999a [Hebrew 1992]; 2000 [2001]), and her work on biblical literature, polemics and ideology (1999b; 2001; 2009). The second is work in progress of my PhD student Ingeborg Löwisch, first in Amsterdam and now in Utrecht, on female genealogies in the Hebrew Bible, especially in 1 Chronicles 1—9 (Löwisch 2009).

Amit ultimately views Judges as the end product that is a unified editorial composition displaying a method, a frame, a purpose, and a plan. She shows us that attributing parts of the book to Deuteronomistic editorial activities is not enough to explain the book as a whole. Without going into her arguments or conclusions in detail, let me just state her position: she views *Judges 'as extant'*, in her repeated phrase, as anchored in the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom and the existential crisis it produced; that is, she attributes the book as edited principally to the last quarter of the 8th century BCE, and posits it as inspiration to the Deuteronomic school rather than a derivative of the latter (Amit 1999: 358-83, especially pp. 367-75; Amit 2009).

For my purpose here, leaving the date of composition/editing aside for the duration, accepting that Judges is a more or less unified editorial entity highlights the fact that it not only abounds in female stories but also that such stories frame it at its beginning and at its end and this, in turn, highlights the editorial status. Looked at from the other side of the same prism, that Judges begins and ends with female stories—let us be more precise, with daughters' stories (Achsa and the daughter of Yabesh-Gilead and Shiloh)—supports the idea of its compositional/editorial unity.⁸ This framing, in a highly—even deliberately—organized and artistic composition, can hardly be incidental.

By way of illustration, let me compare this phenomenon of framing a biblical book by female figures to another biblical book, of another genre, where the situation is similar. In Proverbs, the first section (chs. 1—9) is indicated as such by its own title (Prov. 1.2) and by the title of the next section (10.1), among other things. This section has female figures—personified Wisdom in her various guises (Prov. 1.20-33; 2.1-15; 3.13-18; 4.5-13; 8.1-21; 8.22-36; 9.1-12), the זָרָה (*zārāh* [other? Strange? foreign?]) woman (2.16-19; 5.3-20; 6.24—perhaps to v. 35]; ch. 7), and Woman Folly (9.13-18) —at their centre. The last section of Proverbs (chs. 30—31) also has various female figures and figurations: there are sayings about female matters or in which females play a prominent although not a positive role (30.15-28); instruction from the otherwise unknown Lemuel's mother to her son-king concerning women and wine (31.1-9); and this last collection of Proverbs, as well as the whole book, culminates in the acrostic poem about the אִשָּׁת חַיִּל, 'woman of valour', that ends it.

⁸This of course does not imply a denial of the probable history, perhaps a long one, oral and/or written, of individual sections, or even a proto-Judges composition.

Proverbs, beyond any scholarly doubt, is an edited work constructed of shorter and longer components, of various dates and provenances. Editing, as Amit has shown us, has ideologies to promote. An act of editing shapes a text, especially when the text harks back to variable sources, styles and beliefs. Departures and accidents may occur in editing, but would not be expected in major points, such as the all-important beginning or end. Therefore, neglecting to view the arrangement of female-figure frames as meaningful in some way, perhaps time- and place-related, may be an ideologically motivated mistake made by critics and readers, for their own ends. This must be true for Proverbs, where the 'female' content of its beginning and end and the significance thereof has been analyzed at great length (for instance Camp 2000). Having examined the 'cosmic qualities assigned to both Woman Wisdom and the Strange Woman', Camp suggests that:

...more than moral pedagogy is at stake. In these two figures lies a fundamental and multidimensional expression of religious self-understanding...a paradigm through which other literature may be read' (324).

The same applies to Judges, again a many-layered composition eventually edited into a whole according to a plan. Why does such an editorial plan require a framing by female figures, some of which are not simply reflections or refractions of bad, bad male behavior, even when the female figures are depicted as relational? At least Achsa, Yael, and Delilah are tricksters: they trick men. Is this only a reflection on men that is attributed to woman tricksters and to their actions, in view of trickster mythology (Tannen 2007, Landay 1998) out of and in the bible (Jackson 2002⁹) and in Proverbs? Tricksters have elements of godliness in them, apart from being liminal; this is common to many cultures. A female trickster, like a male trickster in this respect, is more than a reflection: she plays a transformative role in being an agent for social change.

Furthermore, with a little bit of creative arithmetic, we can also arrive at 12 major individuals or groups of females in Judges, discounting for the time being marginal figures such as Abimelech and Jephthah's mothers, and Samson's Gaza whore. Somehow and perhaps unconsciously, twelve woman figures over and against twelve judges? Or, perhaps consciously? At any rate, interesting.

So far there are three factors that point to a more prominent role, beyond reflections of male behavior, for female characters in Judges as an edited whole: the beginning and end framing, the trickster and savior roles, and the quantity of female figures. Let us move on with the investigation by discussing the implied editorial envelop of Judges not only in connection with, but also beyond, the woman issue.

Is the edited Judges a propaganda manifest for the kingship, covertly for Davidic kingship to be more precise, assessing pre-monarchic modes of government as inadequate and leading to anarchy, to individual rather than collective-motivated behaviour which destroys the fabric of society? This is a possibility, and such propaganda would be more apparent in chs. 1 and 19—21 because of the Judah story and pre-monarchical anarchy, respectively. (Another framing device?). With such a possibility, with such an ideology, women will be foregrounded as a mostly negative example, in the sense that where women run society, or are allowed too much freedom, or motivate, or provoke male action, chaos follows; and the women, ironically, are among the first to get hurt. Or, put differently: where men are weak, when women get a

⁹Jackson meanwhile completed her PhD in Oxford about female tricksters in the Hebrew Bible (degree awarded 2008), with a chapter on the topic of the 2002 article. Although I have seen the dissertation, I was unable to consult it at the time of writing.

chance to prevail, catastrophe will not be late in coming and often will first affect the women themselves. Thus the proper social order is transgressed almost beyond repair. A reading such as this will be in keeping with general notions of morality and gender norms in the Hebrew bible. It will explain why most of the female figures in Judges are nameless – they are not in fact important enough to have names, even fictive ones (and see Schneider 1999: 289). Almost all of the Judges female figures are traditionally male-related anyhow, or victims; and the large amount of ‘negative’ or victim figures would support such a view. In that case, feminist scholars have argued, that female figures frame Judges is no reason for feminist celebration; it is just one more proof that women, in biblical times, were socially inferior and that their judgment in sociopolitical matters was considered suspect. Just by the way, the framing of Proverbs by female figures can be similarly explained as non-complimentary to women, by attributing the framing to the editorial claim of the book to be addressed to ‘a son’ or ‘sons’ who are the learning targets; what is better than positing sexual figures, or mother figures, as metaphors for learning or acquiring learning, for at least capturing the attention of the young, privileged, metrosexual ‘students’?

And this reference to Proverbs may lead to yet another conjecture. Is perhaps the book of Judges, according to Amit a ‘history book’ (1999a: 382-3), designed to teach ‘boys’ such as those of Proverbs, again using woman figures to attract those presumably heterosexual privileged boys to the task of learning? That the composition was later, at some time, posited as part of Israel’s first ‘history’ *cycle* (Joshua to the end of 2 Kings), or ‘saving history’ according to some, is a moot point. This too is worthy of consideration; which, according to my knowledge, has not been done in biblical scholarship thus far.

And there are other possibilities still. Can Judges, or Proverbs for that matter, be read as female-authored literature, because of the emphasis on woman figures and the framing by such figures on both ends? Such a reading will be important, even empowering, for female readers but, because of the reasons listed—relationality to males, namelessness, victimization, negative portrayal, ensuing social chaos more than positive portraits—such a possibility does not seem to this reader feasible, not to mention the difficulty of defining female authorship in the bible in general, including the most ‘natural’ candidate for female authorship in the bible, the Song of Songs. So let us move further.

Ingeborg Löwisch reads genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1—9 and elsewhere for traces of female active participation in such genealogies, for stories as well as for fragments. In her understanding, genealogical narration about women—as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, ancestors, leaders, builders of cities and so on – signifies an act of memory, of archival effort (Löwisch 2009: 228-56). This conscious act of memory dialogically supports the exclusive social order, a regular patriarchy, while also revealing its weaknesses and actual inclusivity. Furthermore, Löwisch assigns the composition or insertion of female material, an effective act of commemoration and memory creation, to times of social or political crisis, post-trauma times, when old orders are endangered and new ones need to be reformulated. Such is the situation, in her view, for 1 Chronicles 1—9, once again a collection of various materials carefully edited into a unified whole. In the later Persian period, say from the late 5th the early 4th century BCE, a period of uncertainty politically and culturally and economically for the small, reformulated Jerusalem/Judah/Benjamin community, new memories must be found and recorded, all weapons must be enlisted for this effort. Women—even foreign women—may be considered more elevated community members in such emergencies; and information about them, authentic or invented, is included and recorded. Such is the situation in 1 Chronicles, as Löwisch shows, specifically in the case of past, long-ago Judah genealogies, where women play a relatively foremost role, because of the apparent need to [re]create Judah memory for

the present and future (and see the story about Achsa in Judges 1, again a Judah story).

Applying Löwisch's insights to woman figures in Judges will lead to the following tentative conclusions. The *narrated*, and edited, Judges collection is about crisis events as told, to be sure—political, military, ethnic, religious and social crises. Women are always more visible in (narrated) times of crisis, then and now, whenever 'then' might have been. Crises, local or otherwise, bring women to the foreground of social activity and even politics, then and now; and this will account for the presence of female figures in individual stories, or in cycles. But: Who and when would have been interested in centering women to the point of framing the entire composition by woman figures? While assessing women's contributions as largely motivational for men or secondary in themselves, this framing nevertheless constitutes an act of de-marginalizing women, of recall, of inclusion as much of or perhaps more than exclusion. Clearly, a composition date of crisis, a *narrating/editorial* date of crisis, is to be sought here, a time for memory, when the northern tribes that feature largely in Judges and the royal order ostensibly introduced to solve the problems of that era, were no longer in existence.

Traditional bible scholarship points to a Deuteronomistic or DTR editorial frame for Judges, that is, in a time when the northern kingdom was no more and the memory of northern groups and locals would have already been necessary and subjected to Judahite purposes. This is certainly, once again, a possibility, with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem serving later as initializing further crisis point. When both the territory (the North and Judah) and the monarchy are gone, it is urgent to memorize, recall and manufacture their essence as imagined, or idealized.

And yet, there is also one more option. Even Amit, who advocates the 'art of editing' as the cohesive element that holds Judges together, admits to the possibility that the book's editorial frame could have been created in 'waves' so to speak, that parts of it might have been younger than the tentative date she assigns to its main part. I would like to suggest that the final, last editorial effort for Judges, the one that posited chs. 17—21, or at least 19—21, at the end of the book, be considered alongside the similar frame of Proverbs, and alongside the inserted women's stories in the 1 Chronicles 1—9 genealogies. Here too we should read Amit's assessment of Judges and its last chapters. For her, chs. 19—21 are not the proper editorial ending to the book but a departure, an 'artificial' ending. She states the reasons for this analysis, then concludes:

...the editorial tendency, that appended Chapters 19—21, is not consistent with the implied editing of Judges. Hence the book is to be seen within the boundaries of Chapters 1—18, while Chapters 19-21 are an editorial deviation, whose purpose is to relate to the needs of the broader context. On the other hand, one should note that this appended editing used various sophisticated techniques in order to obscure the fact of its appending and to create the impression of a natural continuation (Amit 1999a: 357).

And, a little earlier on the same page—

Their appearance is the result of editorial reworking that had an interest in connecting our story to the composition of the book, as if Chapters 19—21 serve a compositional function of closing the circle of the entire book.

From the perspective that I have been attempting here, excising stories in whose

centre stand female figures, albeit victims in the case of the last chapters, would detract from the book's structure, in the same way that taking away chs. 30-31 in Proverbs would. Furthermore, judging three chapters (or five) out of twenty-one as an appendage that is somehow alien to an overall editing envelop makes the implied editing irrelevant to a large chunk of text; and if we add the number of verses that can be labeled Deuteronomistic, the implied editing part will become even smaller.

It therefore seems to me that, if 'editing'/'implied editing' is to be retained as a cohesive factor for the book of Judges, it must be assigned to at least two 'waves'. Amit is perhaps correct in assigning the first 'wave' to the last quarter of the 8th century BCE, a time of grave crisis; or, maybe, the proponents of the Deuteronomic provenance are in essence correct. At any rate, the hallmark of this editing is the assessment of a period as the period of 'judges', and of theological disloyalty to Yhwh (chs. 2—16, perhaps also 17—18 with no 'judge' in them but the associative connection with Samson's tribe, Dan). Be that as it may, a second editing 'wave' that includes the factors concerning women figures —framing it at beginning and end, tricksterism, relationality, large-scale namelessness, negative as well as positive social roles (chs. 1, 17—21 or 19—21)—is implied not only from reading Judges on its own but also by reading it in parallel with Proverbs. And the principle of crisis as a push for memory composition, also as apparent in 1 Chronicles 1—9, is probably valid for Judges as much as it is valid for Proverbs and Chronicles—perhaps in the same Early Second Temple period?

Quite a number of allocthonous women are mentioned in Judges, not always kindly. This may be in parallel to the exogamy/endogamy battles featuring in Ezra/Nehemiah, among other things. And creating a memory of what is no more, is a third room, in Homi Bhabha's idiom, where women are allowed, in whatever capacity, whether or not they were ever in actuality allowed opportunities and influence in times past.

To summarize. In this short article I tried to understand why in the book of Judges woman figures feature so largely; moreover, why they actually frame the book front to back, as it is ultimately transmitted to us. It is almost customary to view chs. 17—21 or at least 19—21 as 'additions' to the 'original' book, since no 'judges' are mentioned in them. Excluding those chapters from the as-is composition would not undermine its framing by woman figures (Delilah in ch. 16, and the cheated and idolatrous mother in ch. 17!), but is hardly justified. First, no known version of Judges exists without those chapters. Second, much material in this collection is indeed woman-focused. Third, the book's name, together with the name's influence on interpretation, is late-editorial. The names eventually given to biblical books were at times arbitrary or non-descriptive, derived from their opening words, then changed in translation according to contents, as borne out by *תולדות*=Exodus, *שמיני*=Leviticus, and so on and so on—who knows what the original name of Judges was, or its name in any stage of its edited coming-into-being? 'Women and men in God's Service' is a possibility, one of many. Fourth, the book's placing between Joshua and Kings makes it a 'historical' book, whereas its original purpose, or context, might have been completely different, not to mention the purpose and content of its individual components, short or long.

Basically, I used four hermeneutical keys, two biblical and two bibliographical. The biblical ones were the textual facts that woman figures abound in Judges and Proverbs, both complex and heavily edited collections, to the point of framing these two biblical books, and varied roles they perform in them. The bibliographical keys were studies by Amit on Judges and Löwisch on 1 Chronicles 1—9, considering editorial framework in the case of the former;

issues of female inclusion in the latter; and crisis, ideology and memory in the work of both. Possibilities of interpretation were offered as reflections, the only rejected interpretation being – and regrettably so – that of female authorship/editorship of Judges (or Proverbs, for that matter).

‘Judges’, women, framing, editorial activities, ideologies, memory manufactured or (re)produced, times of composition. I rest my case, certainly to be continued.

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