

VALIDATION AND FUNCTION OF THE LITERARY ALLUSIONS IN JUDGES 19–21

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ABSTRACT

Judges 17–21 is not simply an “epilogue” tacked onto the failure of the judges but an integral part of demonstrating the failure of the priests’ leadership in Israel and the rising need for a king. Judges 19 alludes to more than just Genesis 19. In fact, knowledge of the law and Israel’s conquest of Ai is also necessary to interpret Judges 19–21. Noting the literary dependence of Judges 19–21 on Genesis 19, the Deuteronomic law, and the conquest of Ai, the assertion by some that Judges 19 was written before Genesis 19 can be put to rest.

PREREQUISITES OF A LITERARY ALLUSION

BEFORE TURNING TO JUDGES 19, it must be considered whether or not an allusion by Judges 19 to Genesis 19 is possible.¹ With the dating of Old Testament texts constantly in a state of flux and often varying from scholar to scholar, there is certainly no consensus opinion about the date of authorship for Judges or

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¹ As Lasine points out, while some textual relation between Genesis 19 and Judges 19 is widely acknowledged, “there is no agreement about the significance of that similarity. Some commentators are unable to decide whether the Gibeah outrage is dependant upon the Sodom story, or whether the reverse is the case.” Stuart Lasine, “Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot’s Hospitality in an Inverted World,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 (1984): 38. For further discussion on this issue see R. C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 58–59; Susan Niditch, “The ‘Sodomite’ Theme in Judges 19–20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 375; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 218; H. W. Jüngling, *Richter 19—Ein Plädoyer für das Königtum: Stilistische Analyse der Tendenz Erzählung Ri 19, 1–30a: 21, 25*, *Analecta biblica* 84 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1981), 289.

Genesis.² However, only with the most radical dating of the Old Testament texts can it be argued that Judges 19 precedes Genesis 19 in authorship.³ Not only does Niditch argue for the chronological priority of Judges 19, she also argues, “Each version . . . is best regarded as a variation on a theme, used for specific purposes in each context. The international folktale pattern involves weary travelers who seek succor but instead are treated with virulent hostility, thereby casting their ‘hosts’ as the quintessentially antisocial ‘other.’ The Greek tales of the Cyclops and the Lestragonians provide comparable examples.”⁴ In other words, these two passages are similar not because Judges 19 alludes to Genesis 19 or vice versa, but because they simply share the same “tale type.”⁵ However, if it can convincingly be demonstrated that Judges 19 specifically interacts with Genesis 19, then Niditch’s argument is overturned. At this point then, in keeping with the potential dating of these texts, it is certainly possible that Judges 19 alludes to Genesis 19.

DEVELOPING TEXTUAL MEANING IN JUDGES 19:6⁶

THE DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY AND THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Since Noth’s assertion that Joshua–Kings was the work of a Judean historian who can be called the Deuteronomist and therefore

² For developments to the documentary hypothesis, see Rolf Rendtorff, “What Happened to the Yahwist? Reflections after Thirty Years: A Collegial Conversation between Rolf Rendtorff, David J. A. Clines, Allan Rosengren, and John Van Seters,” in *Probing the Frontiers of Biblical Studies* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 39–66. On the dating of Judges, see Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 44–50.

³ For example, Niditch argues that Judges 19–20 predates Genesis 19 (Niditch, “The ‘Sodomite’ Theme in Judges 19–20,” 376–78). Also see David Penchansky, “Staying the Night: Intertextuality in Genesis and Judges,” in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 77–88, and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Book of Judges* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 80–91, who come to the same conclusions. In addition, Van Seters argues that the J document was a product of exilic times. Depending upon how one dates authorship of the Deuteronomist history, such a move could place the Patriarchal narratives after Judges (John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975]).

⁴ Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 192.

⁵ Niditch, *Judges*, 192.

⁶ While theories abound concerning the composition of Judges, the possibility of understanding it as a unity is not to be ruled out a priori. For discussion on critical approaches, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: Including a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (1969; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 680–90.

part of the Deuteronomic history, the Book of Judges has been commonly understood in light of the Book of Deuteronomy.⁷ However, exactly *how* Joshua through Kings should be understood in this light remains an issue of discussion.⁸ Merrill explains, “It is commonplace to refer to Joshua through 2 Kings as the Deuteronomic History, a term that suggests that these books constitute a theological history written with a view to Deuteronomy and to the extent to which Israel (and Judah) conformed to or departed from the covenant principles of that book.”⁹ However, from the discussion below, it seems that even the structure of Joshua through 2 Kings is the result of the leadership set forth in Deuteronomy.

According to Wilson and Sperber’s relevance theory, information provided by an author is of maximum relevance only in a particular context.¹⁰ Thus, the closer the interpreter comes to the correct interpretive context for an assertion or set of assertions (that is, the context within which the author worked), the greater the probability that understanding will be achieved. In the specific case of literary allusion, the closer the interpreter comes to providing the correct interpretive context, the greater the probability that an intended literary allusion will be understood, and the literary allusion will “make the point” via bridging the gap between what precedes the allusion and what follows it. However, the problem when considering Judges 19 is that scholars have struggled to make sense of the so-called epilogue, Judges 17–21.¹¹ Therefore, if

⁷ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, trans. D. Orton, JSOT Supplement 15 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981).

⁸ See Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O’Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

⁹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 413.

¹⁰ The term “author” has been intentionally chosen simply to convey the presumption of unity necessary for understanding. Amit correctly explains, “The reader of biblical literature who is aware of the complex processes of transmission and editing needs to assume, in one way or another, that he is confronting a unified work.” Yaira Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 22. For her full discussion, see 1–24.

¹¹ For example, O’Connell identifies 17:1–18:31 as Dénouement-A and 19:1–21:25 as Dénouement-B. Robert H. O’Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (New York: Brill, 1996), 297–303. Moore titled this section “Two Additional Stories of the Times of the Judges.” George F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Judges*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), 365. Soggin regards the section as an “appendix.” J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 261. For a review of the approaches to these chapters, see Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 80–91. Boling regards chapter 16 as the end of the book. Robert G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).

Judges 19 really is an allusion to Genesis 19, and if Judges 19 is meant to bridge the meaning gap between what precedes the passage and what follows it, then validating this allusion will also assist in understanding the epilogue of the Book of Judges.

DEVELOPING TEXTUAL MEANING AND THE EPILOGUE OF JUDGES

Judges 2:11–23 explains the cycles of judgment that occurred when *וַיַּעַשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה*, “The sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of the LORD.” When they became “severely distressed,” the Lord would raise up judges to deliver them.¹² However, the nation would not listen to the judges, and when the judge died, the Israelites would increase their disobedience. For this reason, the anger of the Lord burned against the nation, and he would no longer drive out the nations. He did this to test Israel to see if they would walk according to the word of the Lord (that is, do what was right in the eyes of the Lord). Judges 3:5–6 provides a summary for the prologue: Instead of eradicating the Canaanites in the land, the Israelites intermarried with them and eventually served their gods.¹³

After the prologue to Judges, chapters 3–16 begin to tell this story by presenting the increasing rebellion of the sons of Israel, which is paralleled by the increasing failure of Israel’s judges to establish righteous judgment in the land.¹⁴ The last judge in the book, Samson, acts in accordance with what is right in his own eyes (cf. 14:3, 7) rather than what is right in the eyes of the Lord.¹⁵ The point here should not be overlooked—every man, *even the judges*, is now doing what is right in his own eyes. Certainly, the book has shown the downward spiral of the judges. By this point the Israelites are no longer crying out for deliverance and the judges are no

¹² Several have undertaken the task of evaluating the identity of the *שֹׁפְטִים* in Judges 2:16 and their relationship to the *שֹׁפְטִים* identified in Deuteronomy 16:18.

¹³ Thus, the actions of the Israelites are in direct violation of Deuteronomy 7:4–5. This point, calling specifically for the destruction of the Jebusites, plays a significant rhetorical role in Judges 19–20.

¹⁴ Several have pointed this parallel out. For a good chart illustrating this, see Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 146–7. For an extended discussion on this point see O’Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 19–57.

¹⁵ Israel was to operate according to the word of the Lord. That is to say, they were to operate according to what was “good” and “right in the eyes of the LORD” instead of what was “evil in the eyes of the LORD.” In Deuteronomy 12:8, 28, a contrast is established between each man in Israel doing whatever was right in his own eyes (*אִישׁ כְּלִי־הַיִּשָּׁר בְּעֵינָיו*) and the nation doing what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord (*תַּעֲשֶׂה הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה*). Olson argues that *אִישׁ כְּלִי־הַיִּשָּׁר בְּעֵינָיו* (Deut 12:8) is equivalent to *וַיַּעַשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה* (Judg 3:7). Dennis T. Olson, “The Book of Judges,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 864.

longer providing it. In other words, both the Israelites and their judges are failing to operate according to the word of the Lord.

The repeated conclusion of the book is straightforward as well—there was no king in Israel, every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. While this refrain has been variously understood, what cannot be denied is a connection between there being no king in Israel and Israelite rebellion against the Lord.¹⁶

For Niditch, “Judges 19, like the two previous and two subsequent chapters, departs from the judge-centered format of the tales in chapters 3–16 and lacks the frame of the theologian that now introduces the tales of the judges.”¹⁷ Further, she argues, “The tale as told also emphasizes the ways in which women, the mediating gender, provide doorways in and out of war.”¹⁸ In other words, she fails to see how chapters 17–21 fit together with chapters 3–16 and therefore rejects them as a continuation of the same narrative. Certainly, Niditch is not alone in failing to see how Judges 17–21 connects Judges 1–16 to 1 Samuel.

While Niditch rejects the assertion that an allusion to Genesis 19 is present in Judges 19, claiming that they both borrow from a common “weary traveler” tale type, others like Soggin provide a different context for Judges 19 for source critical reasons and leave the text fragmented. For example, Soggin sees no reason why identification of the man as a Levite is relevant: “The fact that the young man is a levite is unimportant for the purpose of the narra-

¹⁶ Some argue that God was Israel's king. So the Israelites were rejecting God (Boling, *Judges*, 293–94). Block argues that the point being made here is that Israel was capable of sinning even before they had a king to lead them in their sin (*Judges, Ruth*, 475–76). Satterthwaite says the point is that Israel needed a “Deuteronomy 17 obedient king” to establish righteousness in Israel. Philip E. Satterthwaite, “No King in Israel: Narrative Criticism and Judges 17–21,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 87–88. Also see O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 268–304. O'Connell provides an extensive bibliography of those who also hold this view (268–69, n. 2). Block rejects this notion, stating, “Rather than lifting up the kings as an ideal above the confusion of the period, the addition of ‘everyone did as he saw fit’ in 17:6 and 21:25 reduces the population to the moral and spiritual level of Israel's kings in later years” (Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 59). The key phrase in Block's argumentation is “in later years.” It was not supposed to be that way—the judges, priests, kings, and prophets were intended to ensure it. Further, the kings were later evaluated with the same language (cf. 1 Sam 15:19; 2 Sam 12:9; 1 Kings 15:26, 34; 16:25, 30; 22:53; 2 Kings 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19). When the king failed, the result was that Israel sinned. However, if the judges, priests, and kings had carried out their responsibility to establish righteousness in the land, then every man in Israel would not have been reduced to doing what was right in his own eyes.

¹⁷ Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, 191.

¹⁸ Niditch, 193.

tive.”¹⁹ However, while Soggin and other source critics recognize no relevance in the fact that the man is a Levite, this is the very point of the whole section. If the Book of Judges is not only pointing out the failure of the judges (local officials in every town), but also the need for a righteous king to appear (one leader to judge the nation), then one logical question remains—are the Levitical priests failing as well? Is it possible that after demonstrating the failure of the judges to establish *נְשִׁפֹּט־צְדָק*, “righteous judgment” (Deut 16:18) in the land, a failure that resulted in everyone doing what was right in his own eyes, the focus of Judges turns to the Levitical priesthood in chapters 17–21?²⁰

DEUTERONOMY AND THE OFFICES OF JUDGE, PRIEST, KING,
AND PROPHET

Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 makes clear the duty of judges, priests, kings, and prophets to establish righteousness in the land.²¹ Two key questions arise when considering the relationship between the Books of Deuteronomy and Judges. First, are the judges introduced in Deuteronomy the same as those raised up by the Lord to deliver Israel from their enemies? Second, is there a discernible relationship between the offices of judge, priest, king, and prophet introduced in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22?

Concerning the first question, several factors should be considered. First, the same term (*שֹׁפֵטִים*) is used in Judges 2:16–18 and Deuteronomy 16:18 (also see Deut 17:9, 12; 19:17–19; 21:2; 25:1–2; 1 Sam 7:15–17; 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kings 3:9, 28).²² Second, Deborah

¹⁹ Soggin, *Judges*, 284.

²⁰ Block points out, “In both accounts (chs. 17–18 and 19–20) the crisis was precipitated by the actions of a nameless Levite” (Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 474). Additionally, Judges 3:7–16:31 contains no mention of either a “priest” or “Levite.” However, in chapters 17–21 the picture is very different. The word *כֹּהֵן* occurs repeatedly in chapters 17–18 (17:5, 10, 12, 13; 18:4, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 27, 30), as does *לֵוִי* in chapters 17–20 (17:7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 18:3, 15; 19:1; 20:4). Further, 18:30 identifies Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses, as the Levitical priest leading the tribal idolatry in Dan; and Judges 20:27–28 places Phineas, son of Eleazer, Aaron’s son, in the center of the controversy ending the book. Finally, there is no use of the root *שֹׁפֵט* in any form in chapters 17–21.

²¹ It is common among commentators to divide the text along these lines. For example, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 159; J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 278–306; Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, *New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 217.

²² The cognate Ugaritic term *t’ft* appears in the sense of judge, king, and ruler. See Svi Rin and Shifra Rin, *Acts of the Gods* (Philadelphia: Inbal, 1979), 36–36, 63–65, 107, 154, 230, 360, 379, 400.

fulfills the same function (administering judgment in a legal sense) as the judges set forth in Deuteronomy 16:18 and 17:8–9.²³ Third, by way of deduction the judge was the logical choice to fulfill the role of deliverer. Before a king was in Israel, only the offices of judge, Levitical priest, and prophet had been established. Since the Levites were not men of war, it is reasonable to conclude that the Lord would not raise up Levites to deliver Israel from their enemies.²⁴

Concerning the second question, there is an ascending order to these offices. Deuteronomy 16:18 explains that local judges (שֹׁפְטִים) were to be appointed “in all the towns which the LORD your God is giving you” for the purpose of judging the people in מִשְׁפַּט־צְדָק, “righteous judgment.” If a case was too difficult to decide at the local level, it was to be taken “to the Levitical priest or judge who is in office in those days” (17:9). As McConville explains, “The day-to-day responsibility for the rule of Torah falls . . . to the judges in the cities of Israel, who are appointees of the assembly (16:18), and to a high court at the main sanctuary, consisting of a judge (or judges) and priests (17:8–13).”²⁵ So an ascending authoritative relationship existed between the offices of the local judge and the Levitical priest/judge occupying the higher court.²⁶

The next office in the hierarchy was that of king (17:14–20).²⁷ Aware that kings had unrestricted power, McConville points out,

²³ Not all agree with this conclusion. Block sees the action of Deborah as one of providing prophetic oracles. See Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 195–97; Klaas Spronk, “Deborah, a Prophetess: The Meaning and Background of Judges 4:4–5,” in *The Elusive Prophet*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 236.

²⁴ Deborah was the first after the Book of Deuteronomy to be called a prophet (or in this case prophetess). Further, she was both a prophet and a judge. Interestingly, *she* did not deliver Israel. Instead, she commissioned Barak to deliver Israel. Therefore, Deborah prophesies about Barak’s deliverance of Israel (that is, she exercises the office of prophet) rather than undertaking the deliverance of Israel herself (and so to act as judge in the same manner as the others in the book).

²⁵ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 305. Part of the Levite’s role in Israel was to administer the word of the Lord by rendering verdicts concerning the law. The penalty for not listening to the judgments of the Levite was death (cf. Deut 17:8–9).

²⁶ The ascending authority structure between these two offices is widely acknowledged. See Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 251–53; S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 206–9; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 371–77; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 163–64; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 261–63.

²⁷ For a discussion on the role of the king in Israel, see McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 278–306.

“It is the limitations placed on the king (17:16–20) that makes the laws on the administration of Israel so radical.”²⁸ McConville goes on to state, “The king is emphatically subject to the real authority, the Torah, which is administered by the assembly, and watched over by the prophet.”²⁹ However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the king had no authority over the judge or Levite in Israel (cf. 1 Kings 2:26–27, 35; 2 Chron 19:5–6).

The final office is that of prophet. McConville explains, “As the final section in 16:18–18:22, it completes the laws about Israel’s institutions. Following the laws concerning judge, priest, and king, we now have the law of the prophet, or, better, about the true way of hearing the voice of Yahweh. The climactic final position of this section stresses the primacy in Israel’s affairs of the divine word.”³⁰ In other words, the judge, Levitical priest, and king were to render judgments according to the word of the Lord, and this word came from the prophet, who was not chosen by the people but raised up by God. Christensen argues, “The law of the king (17:14–20), together with the law of the prophets (18:9–22), stands at the structural center of the book of Deuteronomy as a frame around the law of the Levitical priest (18:1–8). This fact suggests that a primary concern of the book of Deuteronomy, and perhaps the Pentateuch as a whole, is the matter of leadership of the people of God.”³¹

The implication for understanding the Book of Judges is apparent. If the order of offices is ascending, does the Deuteronomic history (Josh–2 Kings) follow the same outline? In other words, is the whole of Judges explaining Israel’s movement toward a king. If this is the case, then the books of Samuel and Kings continue the progression from the failure of the judges (Judg 3:7–16:22), Levites (Judg 17–1 Sam 8), and kings (1 Sam 9–2 Kings 25) to establish righteousness in the land of Israel. If this is the case, then Samuel functions not only as the last judge (1 Sam 1–7, especially 7:7, 15–17), but more importantly the prophet (1 Sam 9:9, 11, 19) who introduces kingship in Israel.³² While all of this may sound good in theory, does Judges 17–21 support such a conclusion?

²⁸ McConville, 283.

²⁹ McConville, 305. Also see Psalm 72.

³⁰ McConville, 285.

³¹ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 381.

³² Not only does the literary movement seem to support this, but the repeated phrase “there was a man” begins each of these main sections (cf. Judg 13:2; 17:1; 19:1; 1 Sam 1:1; 9:1)—the last of which introduces the first king in Israel.

Judges 17–18. While some divide chapters 17–18 into three distinct accounts, it seems better to regard them as one story in three parts (Micah, 17:1–6; the Levite, 17:7–13; and the tribe of Dan, 18:1–31), since the conclusion (18:30–31) condemns Micah, the Levite, and the tribe of Dan. In other words, a Levite and direct descendant of Moses was leading the whole tribe of Dan in an idolatrous rival cult.³³ The evil of the Danites was not rejected by the Levite, but rather led by him. The first part of this passage (17:1–6) tells of a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim who steals eleven hundred pieces of silver from his mother and returns them to her after she pronounces a curse on the thief.³⁴ A portion of the returned silver is then used to make a פֶּסֶל וּמַסֵּכָה, “a graven image and a molten image,” that remains throughout the story.

The second part of the passage (17:7–13) introduces a Levitical priest for hire who is setting up graven images and leading the Danites in rejection of the Lord’s allotment of land (Josh 19:40–48) by moving north to take the city of Laish and set up a rival idolatrous cult.³⁵ Surely everyone, even the Levites, is doing what is right in his own eyes. Moreover, the literary effect of keeping the identity of this Levite from the reader until the very end of the pericope serves to highlight how serious the situation in Israel has become. Even more appalling, however, is that the Levite who was

³³ While the Hebrew text identifies the Levite as “the son of Manasseh” (with the nun suspended), a few medieval Hebrew manuscripts and Greek witnesses read “the son of Moses.” This reading helps explain the suspended nun. For more on this issue, see C. F. Burney, *The Book of Judges, with Introduction and Notes, and Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings, with an Introduction and Appendix* (New York: KTAV, 1970), 434–35; Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Judges*, 401–02; and Steve Weitzman, “Reopening the Case of the Suspiciously Suspended Nun in Judges 18:30,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 448–60.

³⁴ “There was a man” introduces several passages relevant to the present discussion (Judg 13:2; 17:1; 19:1; 1 Sam 1:1; 1 Sam 9:1). These take the story from the last judge in the Book of Judges (Samson), through the failure of the Levites (17:1; 19:1), to the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 1:1), who introduces Israel’s first king. Moreover, Samuel remains in the story until David (presented as a Deuteronomy 17 ideal king). Block agrees: “The introductory ‘Now there was a man’ hints at a new focus. In the following chapters the narrator will offer the reader a series of glimpses at how ordinary Israelites fared in the dark days of the ‘judges’ (governors).” Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 474. However, after the Samson narrative (chaps. 13–16), judges are not mentioned again in the book. In fact, the root שָׁפַט is not used again in the book. Finally, Block points out that one of the commonalities between chapters 17–18 and chapter 19 is the presence of Levites in both (474–75).

³⁵ Block explains that the Levite in Judges 17–18 is a “parody on Moses’ instructions regarding Levites in Deut 18:6–9.” Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 486–87. Moreover, taking bribes was specifically addressed in Deuteronomy 16:19.

leading the Danites in their worship of a graven image was Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses (Judg 18:30). By the beginning of chapter 18, just when the reader believes that the rebellion against the Lord could get no worse, it does.

Judges 19:1–27. After the repeated refrain “there was no king in Israel” in 19:1 (cf. 17:6; 18:1; and 21:25), the narrative will now tell of the depths of depravity and rebellion that the nation has reached. In 19:2, the reader is introduced to another Levite. While the actions of the first led to the idolatry of the whole tribe of Dan, the actions of this second Levite lead to civil war and the near annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin.

Leaving the father’s house in the evening, the Levite intentionally passes by Jebus, stating, “We will not turn aside to this city of foreigners who are not sons of Israel, we will travel on to Gibeah” (19:12).³⁶ Once the small band of travelers enters Gibeah, in the land of Benjamin, they are not met with a welcome reception.³⁷ Instead, they sit in the town square, and no one invites them home to spend the night. Finally, an old man who was a temporary resident in Gibeah briefly questioned them and invited them to spend the night in his home.³⁸ The old man warned the Levite not to stay in the open square.³⁹ After arriving at the old man’s house, they ate and drank and were having a good time when the men of the city, sons of Belial, surrounded the house and demanded that the Levite be turned over to them.⁴⁰ However, the old man went outside to plead with them in order that they would not do such an evil act against the Levite; instead, he offered them his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine. The Gibeites reject-

³⁶ The mention that Jebusites were still in the land points to the failure of the Israelites to obey the Lord. Per Deuteronomy 7:1–5, they were to be utterly destroyed. Moreover, the sons of Israel were not to intermarry with them. Ironically, this whole section (chaps. 19–21) will leave Gibeah, not Jebus, going up in smoke like the city of Ai; and it will lead to the Israelites not giving their daughters to the Benjamites, not the Jebusites.

³⁷ This is in contrast to the reception they received from the concubine’s father in Bethlehem of Judah (19:3–9).

³⁸ Here the events become reminiscent of the story recorded in Genesis 19. The “old man,” like Lot, was only a temporary sojourner in the city. This point is made so that the reader begins to identify the roles that each of the participants play in the story. Here in Judges, the old man is playing the role of Lot.

³⁹ Similar language is used by the old man in Judges (בְּרָחוֹב אֶל־תֵּלֶן) and by the visitors in Genesis 19:2 (לֹא כִי בְּרָחוֹב גֵּלִיָּן).

⁴⁰ The phrase “sons of Belial” (בְּנֵי־בְלִיעַל) is used here (19:22) and again in the next chapter (20:13) in describing the men of Gibeah, and it is also used of Eli’s sons (1 Sam 2:12). This phrase connects these passages involving escalating evil.

ed the old man's plea and offer.⁴¹ The Levite then seized (חזק) his concubine and caused her to go out (יציא) to them (אֱלֵיהֶם).⁴² The men then raped the concubine and brutalized (עלל) her until morning. After the men were finished with her, they sent her (שליח) away. As the day began, the concubine came (בוא) and fell at the door (פתח). The Levite, her master, arose early the next morning to find his concubine lying at the door and commanded her to rise (קום). When there was no answer, he took (לקח) her home, cut her into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel.

STABLE TEXTUAL MEANING OF THE ALLUDED TEXT

CONTEXT AND INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 18:16–19:29

The deliverance of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah begin in Genesis 18:16 and continue through 19:29.⁴³ Genesis 18:16–33 records Abraham's intercession on behalf of Lot for his deliverance from Sodom.⁴⁴ Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed by the Lord because of their wickedness (18:20). However, Abraham interceded on behalf of the צַדִּיק, "righteous," arguing that they should not be destroyed along with the רָשָׁע, "wicked." Chapter 18 ends with the Lord and Abraham in agreement that the righteous will not be swept away with the wicked.

Chapter 19 begins with the two angels' entrance into Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.⁴⁵ Lot immediately rose to meet them and bowed to the ground. Lot then urged the two angels, whom he assumed were travelers, to spend the

⁴¹ Missing here when compared with the Genesis 19 story is that there is no threat made to the old man (cf. Gen 19:9). The explanation for this lies in the fact that the angels in Genesis 19 went to Sodom, at least in part, to deliver Lot (the one being threatened). In Judges 20:5, the Levite recognizes only the threat to himself.

⁴² While the Hebrew is unclear as to the identity of the "man," it is clearly the Levite for several reasons. First, the old man's virgin daughter is not put out with the concubine. Second, the third person pronominal suffix points to the Levite. Third, the Levite is vague and deceitful on the exact details of what happened in the next chapter (Judg 20:4–7). Lasine correctly points out that the actions of the Levite in Judges 19 are to be understood in contrast to those of the angels in Genesis 19 (Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19," 52n5). As will be seen below, it is these actions that serve to condemn the Levite. Not only does the Levite fail to play the role of the angels, his actions are directly opposite theirs.

⁴³ A most common mistake in evaluating this allusion is to confine the scope too narrowly in both Genesis 19 and Judges 19.

⁴⁴ Cf. 18:16–33 and 19:27–29.

⁴⁵ The angels' visit to Sodom was twofold: to deliver "righteous" Lot (cf. 2 Pet 2:7) and to bring destruction upon the cities.

night with him. When they refused, Lot urged them strongly, warning them not to stay in the town square.

After the two angels accepted Lot's invitation and entered his house, he prepared a meal for them and they ate. When the men of the city, both young and old, surrounded the house to bring the two men out so that they could have relations with them, Lot entreated them not to act wickedly. When they persisted, he offered his two virgin daughters so that the men could do to them whatever was right in their eyes (עשו להן כטוב בעיניכם). However, this was not a satisfactory substitute for the men of the city, and they began to press hard against Lot and the door. The two angels sent forth (שליח) their hands and brought (בוא) Lot back into them (אליהם). The angels then struck (נכה) the men of Sodom with blindness, leaving them wearying themselves to find the door (פתח).

At this point the two men (angels) revealed that they were sent to destroy (שחה) the city. Lot responded by pleading with his sons-in-law to take their wives and flee the city because the Lord was about to destroy it, but they refused. In the morning the angels urged Lot to rise (קום) and take (לקח) his wife and family, lest they be swept away in the judgment of the city. When Lot hesitated, the two angels seized (חזיק) Lot, his wife, and his two daughters and brought them out (יצא) of the city. The next morning Abraham rose early, went to the place where he had stood before the Lord, and saw the judgment of the Lord that was poured out on the city: fire and brimstone had rained down from heaven, leaving smoke rising from the land like smoke from a furnace. Interestingly, Genesis 19:28 ends with smoke rising from the land (עלה קישר הארץ), and in Judges 20:40 smoke is rising from Gibeah (לעלות מן העיר עמוד עשן), though the wording is closer to that of Joshua 8:20 (עלה עשן העיר) at the defeat of Ai.

LITERARY MARKERS IN AN ALLUDING TEXT

Two areas need to be evaluated in order to identify the literary markers in Judges 19: the structure of the narrative and the language of the narrative. Once evaluated in this manner, what will be seen is that the allusion to Genesis 19 actually extends from Judges 19:14–20:48.

Narrative structure. Westermann asserts, "There is much agreement in sentence structure and word usage, and complete agreement in structure."⁴⁶ By "complete agreement in structure,"

⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, trans. John J. Scullion, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 297.

Westermann refers to the events of the narrative (see Table 1). As Block states, “Anyone familiar with the narratives of Genesis will hear in this account (i.e., the Judges 19 passage) remarkable echoes of the depravity at Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.”⁴⁷

Table 1⁴⁸

| | Genesis | Judges |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| arrival and reception | 19:1–3 | 19:15–21 |
| attack and repulse of attack | 19:4–11 | 19:22–25 |
| attack, with demand to hand over | 19:4–5 | 19:22 |
| offer by householder | 19:6–8 | 19:23–24 |
| rejection and threat | 19:9 | 19:25a |
| repulse of attack by guests | 19:10–11 | 19:25b |

However, the question is not whether there is an echo present in Judges 19, but whether there is an allusion in Judges 19 in that there must be a rhetorical relation between the two passages as well as meaning that is to be imported into the alluding passage. In other words there is a difference between recognizing an allusion and understanding an allusion. Authors utilize allusions to make a point. In order to validate an allusion, the interpreter must be able to explain and defend the point being made by the allusion.

As a writer of narrative, the author of Judges 19 has available to him characters with which to build an allusion to Genesis 19, in

⁴⁷ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 532. The reason for the truth of Block’s statement in this instance is not only that the context (type of meaning) is the same (the wickedness of men in a city), but that the *same events* take place in both narratives. Thus, while there are surely lexical connections that can and should be made, it is the likeness of events that first alerts the reader to the connection between the two accounts. None of the strongest allusive literary markers typically utilized to allude to the Genesis 19 story are present here (e.g., “Sodom,” “Gomorrah,” “fire,” “brimstone/sulfur,” “salt,” “overturn,” “Lot”). The reason for this is genre. Because Genesis 19 and Judges 19 are both examples of narrative literature, the author of Judges 19 has available to him all of the literary devices and distinctives of narrative literature, such as characterization, setting, and plot. Therefore, what Alter and other have titled “type scenes” (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981], 47–62) are literary allusions intended to make a point. In other words, narrative literature can allude via a “type scene” (i.e., similar/matching events in a narrative), while other genres such as legal documents (e.g., Deut 29:23; 32:32), prophetic books (e.g., Isa 1:9–10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Ezek 16; 38:22; Hos 11:8; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Rev 11:8), Psalms (e.g., Ps 11:6), Gospels (Luke 17:28–29), or epistles (2 Pet 2:7) must, because of genre limitations, be more direct via the utilization of stronger allusive literary markers.

⁴⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 297.

addition to narrative structure and events.⁴⁹ The characters in Judges 19 play the same “roles” as the characters in the Genesis 19 passage. Obviously, the role of the Sodomites is played by the Gibeites. The role of Lot, the temporary sojourner of Sodom, is played by the old man “from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was staying in Gibeah” (Judg 19:16). This leaves the role of the angels to be played by the Levite. Finally, the old man’s daughter and the Levite’s concubine play the role of Lot’s two virgin daughters.

The events of the Judges 19 narrative follow those of Genesis 19 up through the setting and tension. However, the resolution to the tension in the two stories is very different. Both stories involve strangers coming to a city. In both accounts a foreigner living temporarily in the city exhorts travelers not to stay in the open square and instead entreats them to stay in his home. In both accounts the host feeds and cares for his guests. In both accounts the men of the city surround the house of the host and demand that the travelers be brought out to them so that they can have relations with them. In both accounts the host goes outside to the men of the city to entreat them not to do such a wicked thing, offering instead two female substitutes. In both accounts the men of the city reject the offer of the host. Until this point in the Judges 19 narrative, the old man has played the role of Lot perfectly. Likewise, the Gibeites have performed their role as the Sodomites according to script.

Now both the angels and the Levite act. However, their actions are very different. The angels act to save Lot and his family. The Levite acts to save himself. The contrast in action between the Levite and the angels is presented in the tables below. Table 2 points out key lexical connections between the two passages. In order to make the connections more clearly seen, Table 3 considers just the verbs that present the actions, commands, and results of the angels’ and the Levite’s actions.

In Genesis 19, Lot was delivered and given rest (נִחַח) via the actions of the angels while the Sodomites were struck (נָכַה) with blindness and Sodom was destroyed (שָׁחַה). Conversely, the concubine was abused (עָלַל) and fallen (נָפַל) via the actions of the Levite who saved himself (cf. Judg 20:5). What is missing is the destruction and punishment due to the Gibeites for their actions. Amaz-

⁴⁹ For an introductory discussion on narrative, see H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Here, Abbott uses the term “entities” or “existents” instead of characters (19); also see Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); and Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

ingly, all five of these verbs appear in three verses, Judges 20:42–45, describing the judgment poured out upon the Benjamites.

Table 2

| Angels' Actions and Results | Levite's Actions and Results |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| the men sent forth (שליח) their hands | the Levite seized (חזק) his concubine |
| brought (בוא) Lot into the house to them (אליהם) | caused her to go out (יצא) to them (אליהם) |
| struck (נכה) the men with blindness | outside (חוצץ) the house |
| left them wearying themselves to find the doorway (פתח) | men of Gibeah raped and ravished (עלל) her |
| informed Lot of coming destruction; commanded Lot to arise (קום) | sent her away (שליח) |
| leave (לקח) | she came (בוא) |
| destruction (שחת) was imminent | fell (נפל) |
| when Lot hesitated, they seized (חזק) Lot and his family | at the doorway (פתח) |
| caused him to go out (יצא) | Levite woke, and morning light revealed results of failure to judge |
| caused him to rest (ניח) | commanded concubine to arise (קום) |
| outside (חוצץ) the city | when there was no answer, he took her (לקח) home |
| Abraham woke, and morning light revealed results of judgment—destruction (שחת) | |

Further, these verbs appear more broadly in the passage as well and are carefully assigned. Because of the wickedness in both camps, the verb (שחת) is used to describe the destruction that came upon the Israelites and the Benjamites (cf. 20:21, 25, 35, 42). Instead of receiving deliverance and “rest” (ניח) via the actions of the Levite in the same manner that Lot received rest from the actions of the angels, the concubine was abused (עלל) and fallen (נפל). These words appear again in Judges 20 (עלל in 20:45, נפל, 20:44, 46, and ניח in 20:43) and are used to describe the retribution due the men of Gibeah for their treatment of the concubine. They were pursued, found no rest (ניח), were caught (עלל), and were fallen (נפל) (cf. 20:45). In addition, the judgment that was dealt to the men of Sodom by the angels (being struck with blindness) is described by the verb נכה, which is also used of the judgment that came upon the Benjamites (cf. 20:37, 39, 45, 48). Therefore, the retribution and punishment that was due the Gibeites was poured out in the third battle by the Lord.

Table 3

| Angels' Actions, Commands, and Results | Levite's Actions, Commands, and Results |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gen 19:10 (שלה) | (חזק) Judg 19:25 |
| 19:10 (בוא) | (יצא) 19:25 |
| 19:11 (נכה) | (עלל) 19:25 |
| 19:15 (קים) | (שלה) 19:25 |
| 19:15 (לקח) | (בוא) 19:26 |
| 19:16 (חזק) | (נפל) 19:26 |
| 19:16 (יצא) | (19:27) Levite woke, and morning light revealed results of failure to judge |
| 19:16 (גיד) | (קים) 19:28 |
| 19:27 Abraham woke, and morning light revealed results of judgment | (לקח) 19:28 |

RHETORICAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE ALLUSION

In his commentary on the Book of Judges, Block states, “There can be little doubt that the narrator was composing this text with Genesis 19 in mind and doing so intentionally that a reader might experience a sense of *déjà vu*.”⁵⁰ Per the discussion above, this rhetorical relationship is becoming readily apparent. Lot and the “old man” are one and the same; the Gibeites have become the Sodomites and are deserving of judgment; and the Levite has failed to play his role matching the angels as judge and deliverer.

However, one question remains: Why did the Benjamites *and the Israelites* receive the judgment of destruction (שחת) from the Lord? In other words, if Judges 19, 20, and 21 should be understood as related scenes with one leading to the next, then the judgment that the Israelites received must have been deserved because of the events that occurred before the first battle. Four points need to be raised in response to this question.⁵¹

First, the Levite is just as culpable for the destruction of the concubine as the Gibeites. Before the story began, it was clear that “every man was doing right in his own eyes.” Moreover, this had become true of the judges also, being made explicit in the Samson

⁵⁰ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 534.

⁵¹ While the allusion to Genesis 19 is powerfully at work in Judges 20, allusions and references to other passages are being made in Judges 20 as well (i.e., Josh 7–9; Deut 17:6–7; 19:15–21; Num 35:30).

story. Judges 17 and 18 tell not of a Levite who was following the word of the Lord, but of one who was leading the tribe of Dan in rebellion against the word of the Lord. Chapter 19 shows that while the Levite ought to have played the role of the angels of Genesis 19 by standing up against evil and even judging it, he was just as evil and callous as the Gibeites. The actions taken by the Levite in Judges 19:29 highlight this point. The Levite entered (בוא), took (לקח) a knife, seized (חזק) his concubine, cut (נחה) her into pieces, and sent (שלה) her parts throughout the land.

Second, it can be argued that the Levite is an עֶד־הַקָּטָן, “malicious witness” (cf. Deut 19:15–21).⁵² Merrill explains:

In the event there were only one witness, however, and he wished to prosecute the case, he could do so; but he himself would undergo as close a scrutiny as the person he had accused. Such a witness might be reliable, a contingency not addressed here, but more often than not he would be motivated by malice (Heb. *hāmās*), that is, with intent to do violent harm to an innocent party. In any case, where a single witness was involved, both he and the one against whom he was pressing charges must appear “in the presence of” the Lord (v. 17). What this means (as in 17:8–12) becomes apparent in the appositional phrase “in the presence of the priests and the judges.” These representatives of the Lord (cf. 16:18–20; 17:8–9) acted judicially on his behalf in investigating (lit., “seek thoroughly”) and prosecuting the case brought before them. If the result showed the witness to be a liar, he was to suffer the punishment that would have been dealt to the one whom he had implicated (v. 19a). Only in this way could the evil (*rāʿ*) be purged (*biʿar*) from the community (v. 19b; cf. 13:6; 17:7, 12; 19:13; 21:21; 22:21–22, 24; 24:7 for other occurrences of this technical phrase in Deuteronomy).⁵³

The Levite’s testimony in Judges 20:4–7 served to exonerate him while at the same time condemn the Gibeites. Yet, if he had not seized her and forced her out to them, then they would not have been able to rape her—at least not before doing the same to him first! His testimony glosses over the fact that *he* was the one who handed her over to them and was thus guilty as well.

Third, the case was not handled in the manner set forth in Deuteronomy 17:1–7 or 19:15–21. While the Gibeites surely deserved to be put to death because of their actions (22:22), they were to be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses—not

⁵² See “הַמָּטָ” I. Swart and C. VanDam, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2:177–80; “הַמָּטָ” H. Haag, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 4:478–87.

⁵³ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 280.

one.⁵⁴ Further, a witness must be qualified (not a malicious witness). The reversal of roles here is stark. Israel is “the congregation gathered as one man,” **וַתִּקְהַל הָעֵדָה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד**.⁵⁵ The *Levite* delivers the testimony and then commands the *people* to deliver the verdict in Judges 20:7. However, in Deuteronomy 17:9 the witnesses were to deliver the evidence and the Levite was to deliver the verdict. Further, the hand of the witness was to be the first to put a man to death, yet here the “witness” had not seen the crime. Instead, the Israelites only responded to the malicious witness.

Fourth, the judgment of Judges 20 turns into an ironic replay of Joshua 8. While in Genesis 19 the destruction of the Lord leaves smoke (קִיטָר) going up from the earth like the smoke of a furnace (כִּיטָר הַכִּבְשָׁן), the picture in Judges 20 is that of Joshua 8. In Judges 20, smoke (קִיטָר עֲשָׁן) is going up from the city (הָעִיר), not the land (הָאָרֶץ).⁵⁶ In addition, the Lord commands Israel to go up (עָלָה), for he has delivered (נָתַן) the enemy into their hands. This occurs only twice after a loss in battle (Josh 8:1 and Judg 20:28).

The similarities in these two passages are too distinct to overlook. In both passages Israel is defeated in battle. After the two defeats in Judges 20, the Israelites implement the same strategy as the one utilized in Joshua 8 to defeat Ai—draw the enemy away from the city, come into the city from behind, set the city on fire, and attack the enemy from the front and rear. Further, just as the Israelite defeat at Ai was because of the actions of one man, so also can the defeat of the Israelites at Gibeah be blamed at least in part on the actions of the one Levite.⁵⁷ Finally, in Deuteronomy 7:1–5 and 20, Israel was to eradicate (“utterly destroy,” הִחָרֵם הַחָרִים) the Canaanites from the land. One of Israel’s initial failures was not consulting the Lord, leading to the Israelites making a vow not to destroy the Gibeonites (Josh 9). At Mizpah, in their plan to deal with the Benjamites, they rashly vowed not to intermarry with the tribe of Benjamin (Judg 21:1).

⁵⁴ Also see Numbers 35:30.

⁵⁵ Block makes the point that הָעֵדָה, “the assembled group” has the same root as עֵד, “witness.” Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 551.

⁵⁶ Compare עֲשָׁן הָעִיר עָלָה, “Behold, smoke going up from the city” (Josh 8:20–21).

⁵⁷ For a discussion of possible reasons for the Israelites’ loss in battle, see Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 193; Robert G. Boling, “In Those Days There Was No King in Israel,” in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. Howard N. Bream, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1974), 43; Olson, “The Book of Judges,” 885.

The Israelites were to utterly destroy the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites as well as not intermarry with them (Deut 7:1–3). However, through their rejection of and rebellion against the word of the Lord they had vowed to spare Canaanites (Josh 9) and wipe out one of their own tribes (Judg 19–21). Moreover, they had now vowed not to intermarry within their own nation! Apparently, they believed that their only way out of their predicament was to violate the law even more (and murder, kidnap, and then blame the Lord for the results (Judg 21:3, 15). Moreover, when they began to conquer the land, smoke rose from the destroyed Canaanite cities (Josh 8:20), but now the smoke is rising from the conquered Benjamite city (Judg 20:38). Their actions result in the near eradication of the tribe of Benjamin via war and a vow not to give any of their daughters to the Benjamites, and the way that the Israelites avoid Benjamin's extinction is to engage in the same types of actions that caused them to be outraged in the first place.

IMPORTED MEANING IN THE ALLUDED TEXT

Block states, “The echo of Genesis 19 in this text is intentional. By patterning this account after the earlier story, the narrator serves notice that, whereas these travelers had thought they had come home, finding safety with their own countrymen, they have actually arrived in Sodom. The nation has come full circle. The Canaanization of Israel is complete.”⁵⁸ Block's words are correct. However, the Book of Judges not only serves to demonstrate how wicked the nation had become, but also that the nation's wickedness was largely due to the failure of the judges and Levites to establish righteousness in the land. Further, the Israelites were not destroying the Canaanites in the land—they were destroying themselves.

After learning that the nation had ceased to seek deliverance from the Lord and that the judges were doing what was right in their own eyes instead of establishing justice in the land (Judg 3–16), the attention of the reader is then directed toward evaluating the priests in order to see how they are faring (17–21). Upon only brief observation, the reader learns that the situation has gone from bad to worse: the descendants of Moses are for hire, perverting justice, and leading the Danites in idolatry (17–18). Israel has become steeped in harlotry, idolatry, perversion of justice, rape, murder, incest, deceit, and civil war.

⁵⁸ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 544.

The increasing wickedness of the nation and the failure of its judges and Levites introduce a new tension to the Deuteronomic history. The nation needed a king. However, not just any king would do. They needed the righteous king of Deuteronomy 17 to appear and establish righteousness in the land of Israel.

In conclusion, each of the steps for the validation of a literary allusion has been walked through, and the claim that a literary allusion to Genesis 19 is present in Judges 19 has been validated. It should be remembered that for an interpretation to be valid does not definitively prove that it is correct. It does, however, establish grounds upon which the interpretation can be compared with other valid interpretations. Moreover, the exact points of disagreement among interpretations can be identified and debated.

Judges 17–21 are not simply chapters that have been tacked onto the end of the book. Instead, these chapters serve as a condemnation of the failure of the Levitical priesthood to lead the nation and to operate according to what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord. The literary allusions to both Genesis 19 and Joshua 8–9 help make the author's case.⁵⁹ The nation's depravity has sunk to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah with the result that an Israelite city, not those of the inhabitants of the land, is suffering destruction. The priests, along with the judges, have failed to establish righteousness in the land. As a result, every man (including the judges and priests) is doing what is good and right in his own eyes. The failure of the judges is highlighted in Judges 3–16 while the failure of the priests is highlighted in the stories of idolatry (17–18) and civil war (19–21). In light of the failures of both the judges and the priests, the need for a king arises. However, what ensues in 1 Samuel is the nation's desire for a king "like the other nations," rather than a desire for a Deuteronomy 17 righteous king. What follows in 1 and 2 Samuel is the failure of the kings and then the prophets to establish righteousness in the land, as explained in 1 and 2 Kings.

⁵⁹ One of the main presuppositions of relevance theory is that every statement made by a speaker is of maximum relevance in communicating his cognitive goal. As Merrill points out, "The Old Testament on close inspection betrays itself for what it really is, a pulsating, life-changing narrative that has a beginning, a plot, a dénouement, and a (at least tentative) conclusion." Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 2.

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