THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHARACTERIZATION
TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE
JUDGES 19-21 NARRATIVE:
A LITERARY ANALYSIS

BY

DON MICHAEL HUDSON

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE Th.M. IN OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
APRIL 12, 1991
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Recently in Biblical scholarship, focus on the analysis of the text has shifted dramatically from reading the Scriptures as an attempt to prove or disprove its historicity or atomizing the text to determine its authenticity to accepting the text as a literary unit and approaching that text as literature. The Evangelical assumes the integrity of the text but historically he has been wary of most attempts to read the stories of the Old Testament as they really are—stories. While assuming the historicity of the text, the Evangelical can utilize modern and ancient conventions of literature to better read and understand the text.

One most prominent literary convention is that of characterization. This paper assumes a two pronged methodology of analyzing and utilizing modern conventions of characterization as applied to the Biblical text and then allowing that particular text (Judges 19-21) to inform the reader as to the narrator’s utilization of characterization to present his pertinent ideology. The assumption is made that the narrator carefully and artfully portrays the characters to substantiate, support, and augment his theology.

The conventions of characterization will be discussed and then the text of Judges 19-21 will be analyzed with these particular literary conventions to better understand the meaning of the text.

Lastly, many of the particular and disparate ideas revealed by analyzing the characters in Judges 19-21 are understood in light of an overall theological framework.
Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree Masters of Theology

[Signature]
Advisor
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INTRODUCTION

Is. 34:16

The Benefit of This Study

New literary criticism is, to this author, one of the most promising critical methodologies to break upon the scene of Biblical scholarship. With the advent of the Renaissance and its concomitant "scientific methodologies" came historical criticism and its philosophical and theological tendencies to denigrate and atomize the Biblical text. However this fact does not preclude the careful conscious utilization of such "higher critical" methodologies in tandem with a respect for the Biblical text in its present form. Furthermore, this is not to say that "Higher Criticism" is to be completely rejected in spite of its errant philosophical assumptions and its manifest past abuses.

Brevard Childs, in his book Biblical Theology in Crisis, addresses the scholar's tension between reliance upon the scientific methods on the one hand and the importance of deriving theological import from the text on the other hand. "Right at the outset, those who were suggesting the need for
a theological dimension in interpretation made it absolutely clear that this appeal was not a repudiation of the historico-critical method. If the Liberals were to be blamed for the loss of theological perspective, so also were the Fundamentalists at fault for their denial of valid criticism.¹ Childs continues to note that the interpreter should be able to analyze the Biblical text for its theological relevance while utilizing the historical critical methodology as a "handmaiden". Historically the higher critics have brought their methodologies to bear upon the text with the result of no significance for man and his existential situation, and they have continually used their approaches to reduce entire literary texts to "canons within a canon".

Childs calls the academic world back to a Biblical theology derived productively from the tools of the scientific methods. "Childs entirely accepts in itself the historical principle, that one can validly and most necessarily consider previous stages of the books, that one must consider their relations with writings outside of the Biblical canon, and that the books can be understood in terms of their origins and background".² However, he notes further that the


Historicocritical approach in general must be modified. The interpretive task must now inculcate the entire Biblical text as it stands. In the past, while the Historical critics and the Fundamentalists have been wrangling primarily with historical issues of the text, the "teaching" of the text has slipped into obscurity. It is not that historical issues are invaluable or unnecessary for the interpreter, but as Childs and others are emphasizing, the critic must recognize the obvious limits of the historical verifiability of the text. Interpretation involves not the higher critics' "canon within a canon", but the canon accepted as a complete text. The scholar not only considers and evaluates the genetics of the Biblical text, but he must also approach the text as a literary unit. Though Childs is speaking from and toward the importance of Biblical Theology, his views have obvious correlates to the field of literary criticism.

Historical issues of the text are pertinent, for knowing how the historical, cultural, and sociological milieu of both

3"As a fresh alternative, we would like to defend the thesis that the canon of the Christian church is the most appropriate context from which to do Biblical Theology. What does this mean? First of all, implied in this thesis is the basic Christian confession, shared by all branches of historic Christianity, that the Old and New Testaments together constitute Sacred Scripture for the Christian church. The status of the canonicity is not an objectively demonstratable claim but a statement of Christian belief. In its original sense, canon does not simply perform the formal function segregating the books that are authoritative from others that are not, but is the rule that delineates the area in which the church hears the word of God", Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, p. 99.
the author and text will reveal much about the meaning of the
text. The question one must ask as he or she interprets the
text is whether the authors of narrative in the Hebrew
Scriptures considered historical issues to be primary to their
craft of story telling. Obviously, the answer to this
question is negative, and the interpreter must then ask what
was consequential to the authors. If one posits ideology as
opposed to historicity to be preeminent for the author of
these Hebrew narratives, then a refocusing of interpreting the
text is required.

In a similar vein as Childs, Polzin stipulates the
necessity of interpreting the text with both historical
(diachronic) and literary (synchronic) methodologies. While
recognizing the importance of a historical approach, and
attempting an interconnectedness between the historical and
literary methodologies, he emphasizes "the operational
priority of literary over historical analysis".

The answer which informs the present study assumes
that scholarly understanding of biblical material
results from a circular movement that begins with a
literary analysis, then turns to historical
problems, whose attempted solution then furnishes
further refinements and adaptations of one’s
literary critical conclusions. The priority of
synchrony (in dynamic sense emphasized especially
by the Russian structuralists) over diachrony is
not in rank but only in operation. Thus we are
still allowed to call both approaches truly
complimentary: each must eventually take the
other’s conclusions into account. What is
primarily emphasized here is where one begins.4

Broadly speaking, literary critical methodology "assumes" the authenticity and wholeness of the Biblical text. Peter Miscall in his literary analysis of 1 Samuel makes the following statement, "I claim much, because the work is a decisive departure from and challenge to historical criticism and the Biblical studies, whether historical, literary, or theological, based on it or associated with it." Miscall is not one of few but one of many literary critics who accept and interpret the text in its present form irrespective of the results of source, form, and redaction criticism. Even though hermeneutical assumptions vary greatly from Berlin's emphasis upon the necessary distinction between poetics and interpretation, to David Robertson's depreciation of "original context" and "original intention" as a prerequisite for a literary study of the Bible, to the New Criticism's

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4 See Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), p. 11. "This instance (interpretation of Genesis 39 by Bereshit Rabba) may suggest that in many cases a literary student of the Bible has more to learn from the traditional commentaries than from modern scholarship. The difference between the two is ultimately the difference between assuming that the text is an intricately interconnected unity, as the midrashic exegetes, and assuming it is a patchwork of frequently disparate documents, as most modern scholars have supposed," p. 44.


rejection of historicism, most literary critics assume the unity of the Biblical text as a major methodological underpinning in their analysis. This "unity" approach toward the Biblical text is refreshing if for no other reason than it utilizes an hermeneutical approach which interprets the Biblical text "as it stands." Instead of determining meaning by atomizing the text, a literary critical approach assumes the text to be a unit whether by narrator, redactor, or both.

Literary criticism is also beneficial in that the method aids the interpreter in understanding the conventions of narrative. Not only is this knowledge beneficial, but it is also necessary, for narrative is the most prevalent literary form for communicating truth in the Old Testament. It follows, then, for the interpreter to effectively handle the Biblical text, specifically Hebrew narrative, he must incorporate some understanding of the conventions of narrative in general and Hebrew narrative in particular. Hopefully, a literary critical method will place at the disposal of the interpreter the necessary tools not only to understand Hebrew narratives but also to interpret them in their historical and cultural context.


10Note J. Cheryl Exum's comment concerning her analysis of Judges 13. "Since the literary task is to interpret the text as it stands, we shall eschew theories of addition and displacement, which have often been adopted and interpreted of this narrative", "Narrative Art in Judges 13". Journal of Biblical Literature 99:1 (1980): 43.
narrative but comprehend the narrator’s intricate, purposeful literary conventions he applied to convey his ideological message. The method will call attention to such topics as the basic structure of narrative, conventions utilized by the narrator in the context of his ancient world, and his methods of composition.

Hopefully, the literary critic educates the Biblical scholar of literary techniques to be utilized in discerning the meaning of the text. A few of these techniques would include temporal ordering, analogical design (parallelism, contrast, variation, recurrence, symmetry, chiasm), point of view, representational proportions (scene, summary, repetition), informational gapping and ambiguity, strategies of characterization, modes of coherence, and interplay of verbal and compositional pattern.¹¹

Literary criticism also helps the reader appreciate the "ideology" of narrative literature. The narrator portrays people in specific circumstances attempting to represent truth about God and man within sociopolitical realities, cultures, conflicts, and relationships. The narrator reveals truth clothed in "real life" human situations but "real life" situations subordinated always to his ideological thrust. "It (Biblical narrative) not only advances a doctrine but also ruthlessly subordinates the whole discourse--the plot, the

characters, the arena, the language, their ordering and interlineage--to the exigencies of indoctrination." An understanding of literature and literary conventions can create a new world of interpretation for the Biblical critic. He will view Hebrew narrative as an artful, purposeful creation not for its own purposes but for the presentation and intensification of truth.\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.}

The literary critical approach refines and objectifies the interpreter's methodology while deepening his "drama of reading". This fact does not imply though that the Biblical text is consigned to eternal opacity until the interpreter educates himself on the literary conventions of Hebrew narrative. As well noted by Sternberg, "by foolproof composition I mean that the Bible is difficult to read, easy to underread and overread, and even misread, but virtually impossible to, so to speak, counterread".\footnote{Ibid.} The beauty of most Hebrew narrative is that with just a cursory reading the interpreter can yet determine the basic meaning of the text. The "surface" exegete can determine world view, story lines, and the central teaching of the text in most cases. The narrator wrote to be understood and the interpreter reading on a surface level has the ability to understand and to act upon

\footnote{Ibid., p. 50.}
his understanding. With incredible simplicity, the narrator brings incomprehensible complexities to bear on the text. The narrator writes both to disclose meaning and deepen meaning. The interpreter can understand the gist of the text on one hand, and on the other hand, he is drawn and intrigued by the narrator's conventions to "delve deeper" into the many nuances and complexities of meaning as revealed by the narrator.

Literary criticism will ingratiate the Bible scholar by handing him new and more effective tools to mine the depths of the narrator's representation of reality. The literary critic begins with the assumption of a unified text and then proceeds to locate and understand the narrator's literary devices by executing a close reading of the surface structure of the text. Literary criticism will provide the scholar with new interpretive tools to mine the depths of the "way" narrative is written. Form of the text and meaning of the text are not mutually exclusive phenomena; the "way" a text speaks communicates the "what" of the text.¹⁶

¹⁵Contra Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. xi, "In all works of interpretation there are insiders and outsiders, the former having, or professing to have, immediate access to the mystery, the latter randomly scattered across space and time, and excluded from the elect who mistrust or despise their unauthorized devinations".

¹⁶"For a work to be literary in character, and not merely informational, means that it does not have a detachable meaning which might have been stated in some other way; the way in which it was stated in the work is in fact the 'meaning' or the 'message' of this work", p. 22.
The Dangers of This Study

As with any methodology there are both values and dangers. An honest interpreter is a self-conscious interpreter. He is one who constantly seeks to refine and perfect his methodology. This topic will be taken up later in this treatise, but it is important at this point to mention a few of the more salient pitfalls in a literary critical approach.

First, most Biblical scholars, though relatively proficient in their field of study are deficient in their understanding of literary criticism. Hopefully this statement is not a rebuke or denigration put a recognition of fact. This author’s most vulnerable point of methodology will be his lack of training in literary criticism. Tremper Longman III has correctly noted that the Biblical scholar is left to the mercy of someone else’s work and expertise. "The usual result is that Biblical scholars follow one particular school of thought or else one particularly prominent thinker and use that as the guide to a literary approach."17 The Biblical scholar who practices literary criticism must attempt to keep abreast of significant and varied theoretical approaches as he seeks to develop and refine an objective methodology to handle the Biblical text. To practice literary criticism, the

interpreter must aggressively seek to understand both Hebrew narrative aetiology and morphology in the light of universal conventions of literature. Furthermore, he should be constantly aware of the tortuous exegetical path he walks utilizing literary criticism within Biblical scholarship as a conjoint enterprise.

Also, the Biblical scholar is constantly on the precipice of anachronistic interpretation. At this stage in literary analysis the critic predominantly relies upon literary devices used by modern standards of narrative and literature. Because of this interpretive reality, the critic can easily impose modern conventions on the ancient text. One example of this type of imposition is many scholars' use of Propp's theory of literary criticism to interpret the Hebrew narratives. He and other scholars like him derive their methodological approach by studying Russian folklorists. Biblical scholars then assume these presuppositions and techniques of literature as their method for interpreting the text. Though Propp's study is masterful and can be extremely beneficial for the exegete of Biblical narrative, critics practicing an unconscious methodology not only are in greater danger of misinterpreting Hebrew narrative, but eradicating its uniqueness and distinctiveness. As will be studied later, this author's methodology will begin with modern conventions of literary

analysis and then proceed to the ancient text. The critic should exist with and acknowledge this hermeneutical tension of the disparate "horizons" between methods and ancient text.¹⁹

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Assumptions Toward a Methodology

For such a cursory study attempting to cover a broad field as literary criticism, this interpreter assumes he must narrow his focus dramatically. There are possibly hundreds of categories the interpreter could analyze and utilize in his literary critical methodology, so for the sake of this writer's understanding and academic sanity, he has chosen "characterization" as one element among many in literary criticism. This does not assume that characterization is more important than other categories of thought, it only assumes that characterization is broad enough yet sufficiently narrow so that a treatise of this size may begin to understand literary criticism and its contribution to interpreting the Biblical text.

Another even more primary assumption is the necessary distinction between meaning and significance as a part of the literary critical interpretational process. In opposition to the ubiquitous literary relativism of the day, E.D. Hirsch has postulated the exigency of the process of interpretation as
discovering meaning espoused by authorial intent. According to Hirsch, "meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable." Simply put, the author of the text ultimately determines the meaning of the text; the interpreter seeks to discover that meaning through a variety of hermeneutical methodologies. Historically, the problem has been defined succinctly in terms of whether the meaning of a text is one and defined by what the author intended or is the meaning of the text many and defined by what the text means to the interpreter and his Sitz-im-Leben. Exegesis is an heuristic exercise positing authorial intention as the terminus a quo for the interpreter in his quest for ascertaining the meaning of a text. The distinction between meaning and significance has been blurred by the psychological interpretations of such scholars as Schleiermacher, Hans Gadamer, and the

2Ibid.
existential hermeneutic by such scholars as Heidegger. This psychological interpretation predicates the necessity of discovering the author's mental processes and the reasons behind those processes instead of reading the end results of the authorial processes, i.e. the text. The text then becomes a means to "discover" the author and his psychological approach rather than a vehicle to excavate meaning as stipulated solely by that author or authors.

Meaning as determined by authorial intent does demand the necessity and the inestimable benefit of examining specific questions of authorship such as socioeconomic, historical, ideological, personal, and religious influences. Those scholars who would disagree with this position would argue that in many cases, especially in the Hebrew scriptures, these varied questions of textual or authorial background are moot because this information is so sparse, and what is available can be interpreted so subjectively. This author is aware of this tension between the objective quest for meaning as determined by the author and the many subjective realities involved in the process of interpretation. Does this tension though require the scholar to posit that meaning is not authorially based and discernable by the reader? The argument utilized by many scholars when discussing this area of hermeneutics is that they themselves have written words or

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sentences revealing a meaning they never intended are arguing from the basis of exception rather than rule. If their entire work were to be misconstrued by the reader, these scholars would most likely argue that the misconstrued meaning was never intended by their literary work.

This author is not arguing that meaning defined by authorial intent is always entirely possible or purely objective, but the reader must be conscious of this external authority of meaning as determined by the author lest he obscure the meaning of the literary text beyond recognition. The formalist interpretation with its deliberate refusal to allow such questions of the author or authors in many occurrences leads to disturbing the meaning of the text. Interpretation then in this category requires not an "either/or" but a "both/and" approach with the primacy of discovering meaning as identified with the author’s intent.6 These scholars execute the fallacy of obliterating the lines of demarcation between meaning and significance. In each instance, application has now been abstracted from meaning, and the text can possess as many meanings as there are interpreters.

Adele Berlin ably addresses this problem of

6Meir Weiss, The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), "New critics argue not only against determining the nature of the written work by searching for its sources, but also against the idea that the main function of literary research is the discovery of the historical background of the author’s period and his biography", p. 6.
interpretation in the first chapter of her treatment of poetics. Berlin assumes a rigid dichotomy between poetics and interpretation as her title suggests. She defines poetics as

"The science of literature,...not an interpretive effort - it does not aim to elicit meaning from a text. Rather it aims to find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled. Poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language." Poetics attempts to determine how the text is written, and the "how" aids the interpreter in his understanding of "what" the text means. A meticulous reading of the "way" the narrator writes his story discloses much of the "what" of his study. Hasan also notes the importance of this distinction by his definition of the nature of literature, "not what literature does for a community, not what it means (ethically, socially, economically, or philosophically), but simply what it is in itself." One can assume that Hasan observes the prominence of studying literature as it is (its form) before the critic may proceed to significance. The literary critic must assume that the form (what it is) conveys meaning; therefore, a


Ibid., p. 15.

Ruqaiya Hasan, "Rime and Reason in Literature", Literary Style: A Symposium, ed. Seymour Chatman (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 301. "It is no more than a delusion to maintain that any practical study of literature...can be made without a hypothesis regarding its nature", p. 302.
literary reading inherently demands a "close reading" of the text to be analyzed. Poetics is the close reading of the narrator's structure (plot) and compositional techniques (characterization, point of view, repetition, ambiguity, etc.) to contribute to his understanding of the meaning of the text. If the interpreter does not follow Berlin et al.'s penetrating assumptions, he is in danger of imposing his subjective interpretations to the extent of totally obscuring the meaning of the text. Nietzsche's comment at this point is fitting,

> How little Christianity educates the sense of honesty and justice can be seen pretty well from the writings of its scholars. They advance their conjectures as blandly as dogmas and are hardly ever honestly perplexed by the exegesis of a Biblical verse. Again and again they say, 'I am right, for it is written', and the interpretation that follows is of such prudent arbitrariness that a philologist is stopped in his tracks, torn between anger and laughter, and keeps asking himself: Is it possible? Is this honest? Is it even decent? How the Bible is pricked and pulled and the art of reading badly formally inculcated upon the people.\(^{10}\)

This author will attempt two particular methodological assumptions in his literary critical approach: (1). A literary approach first of all demands the classifying, understanding, and application of universal literary conventions. The critic can proceed upon this assumption because all narrative possesses common techniques, compositional components, etc., whether it be history or myth. The Biblicist will contribute to his apprehension of literary conventions by familiarizing

himself with such scholars as E.M. Forster, Seymour Chatman, William Empson, Scholes and Kellogg, and M.H. Abrams. This list is obviously truncated greatly, but the Biblical critic must step out of his field to examine literary conventions that are universally verified and applied. According to Todorov, literary analysis is an "internal" analysis. The interpreter analyzes and synthesizes literary parameters and conventions not from "outside" fields of study but from the study of literature itself. An objective, verifiable hermeneutic must proceed from a sufficient understanding of literary conventions as derived from the study of literature.

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14 Note Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 6-7, "The first thing the literary critic has to do is to read literature, to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field. Critical principles cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science, or any combination of these." Also note, "If criticism exists, it must be an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the
(2). A Biblical literary approach also requires an investigation and understanding of Hebrew narrative. The critic cannot assume that because he apprehends literary criticism, he now apprehends the form and function of Hebrew narrative. The Biblical critic must be acutely aware of Hebrew semantics and syntax, and particularly Hebrew narrative conventions lest he inadvertently superimpose foreign features upon the Hebrew text. Therefore, the critic must carefully execute his literary critical methodology proceeding from a workable knowledge of literary conventions in general and Hebrew narrative in particular. To verify his approach he can examine the immediate context in which he is working and then compare his findings with other texts of Hebrew narrative. His hermeneutic is one of continuous "checks and balances". Simply stated, this writer will proceed from literary conventions to interpret Hebrew narrative and then allow the context and analogy of other texts to verify his method and findings.

To understand a narrative act so bare of embellishment and explicit commentary, one must be constantly aware of two features: the repeated use of narrative analogy, through which one part of the text provides oblique commentary on another; and the richly expressive function of syntax. ..

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literary field," p. 7.

Classification of Character

Aristotle's basic definition of character is "men doing or experiencing something." To the Greeks and in particular Aristotle, action was more prominent than character.

For tragedy is not a representation of men but of a piece of action, of life, of happiness and unhappiness, which come under the head of action, and the end aimed at is the representation not of qualities of character but of some action; and while character makes men what they are, it is their actions and experiences that make them happy or the opposite.  

Aristotle further makes a distinction between agent and character. Agent is necessary only for tragedy because he performs the action, but character is superfluous to literature, in fact an afterthought that has no essential purpose for the meaning or contribution to plot.

Much like the Aristotelian view of character, the formalist and majority of structuralist schools of thought posit character to be subordinate to plot. Characters in narrative are not examined to determine who they are but what they do. They are merely functions of the plot, necessities to facilitate the "event-sequence". The formalist position is not interested in the "psychological" makeup of characters, but simply their role as "functionaries". The extreme of this view of character would eventually assimilate the character solely into an operation of the story.

Under the aegis of semiotic criticism, characters

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lose their privilege, their central status, and their definition. This does not mean that they are metamorphosed into inanimate things (a la Robbe-Grillet) or reduced to actants (a la Todorov) but they are textualized. As segments of a closed text, characters at most are patterns of recurrence, motifs which are continually recontextualized in other motifs. In semiotic criticism, characters dissolve.  

Chatman expostulates that the rigid distinction between character and plot are not necessary, "stories only exist where both events and existents occur. There cannot be events without existents and though it is true that a text can have existents without events no one would think of calling it a narrative."  

It seems ludicrous to this author to take such a hard line in dichotomizing plot and character; to do so requires a false view of narrative representation. As noted by Chatman, it can be proved just as well that plot succumbs to character. Both plot and character are equally determinate, and preeminence for either one should be allowed according to the devices of the narrator if he chooses to do so.

Rimmon-Kenan rightly asks, "Is it possible to see characters at once as persons and as parts of a design?"

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This view would recognize and acknowledge characters as persons whom the reader can relate to while also realizing that the presentation of character is also a necessary function of plot to communicate the story. Rimmon-Kenan further states that in their extreme forms both modes of characterization can be utilized in different aspects of narrative.

In the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are—by definition—non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modelled on the reader's conception of people and in this they are person-like.²⁰

The question this author wants to pose at this time is one of the interplay of plot and characterization in relation to Hebrew narrative; it appears that characterization contributes to plot in manifold ways. To posit the Hebrew narrator superimposed plot for the sake of characterization would not be accurate, but the variety and depths of characterization techniques in the Hebrew Bible emphasize the importance of character portrayal and development. Would it not be more beneficial to propose that not only does

²⁰Ibid. The author also argues for the reconciliation of event and character with the following reasons, "(1) Instead of subordinating character to action or the other way round, it may be possible to consider the two as interdependent. (2) The opposed subordinates can be taken as relative to; types of narrative rather than as absolute hierarchies. There are narratives in which character predominates (so-called apsychological narratives. . .) (3) Characters may be subordinated to action when action is the center of attention, but action can become subordinate to character as soon as the reader's interest shifts to the latter". nn 75-76
characterization contribute to plot and theme development, but
the Hebrew’s conventions of characterization contribute to the
"ideology of narration"? The characters themselves by
analogy emphasize and reveal in dramatic fashion the
narrator’s ubiquitous ideology, "Yahweh’s ways are not man’s
ways".

Building on Scholes and Kellogg’s and E.M. Forster’s theories of characterization, Berlin proposes the most able treatment of characterization to date. This author will attempt to recount Berlin’s classification with modifications or embellishments along the way. Berlin’s most significant contribution to characterization is her additional classification "agent" to the customary "round" and "flat" characters.

The "flat" character or "type" is a character that is created around one quality trait. S.P. Guilford defines trait as "any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another". The reader analyzes the character’s actions, interactions and habits to determine his trait or traits.

If a common denominator, e.g. ambivalence, emerges from several aspects, it can then be generalized as a character trait, and in a similar way the various

21Sternberg, pp. 84-128.
traits combine to form the character. A trait is sometimes explicitly mentioned in the text and sometimes not.²⁵

The "flat" character or "type" does not stand out as an individual but as one who represents an ideal or universal. He is a "closed" character who has no possibility of change because he is a stereotype. Furthermore, the "type" is very predictable and will be expected to act according to his trait; the murderer will be expected to murder and the thief to steal. The narrator uses "type" most often as a foil to the major premise of his particular narrative, i.e. the contrast of Abigail and Nabal. Abigail is the "model wife" and Nabal is the prototypical "fool".

"Round" or "full-fledged" characters are complex personages who have many traits. These characters are "real people" whom the narrator describes in various ways. The reader observes their inner lives, actions performed and performed upon, words spoken and spoken to -- the reader can identify with a "full-fledged" character because he is one who has opinions, emotions, and volition. To use Chatman's term, the "full-fledged" character is "open-ended". As opposed to the "type" he can change, express different opinions, progress or digress. His behavior is never predictable in any circumstance, and his personality is characteristically psychologically complex. This full-fledged character is

predominantly the subject or the actor instead of the acted upon. He is portrayed realistically and the reader can readily identify with him and his circumstances and actions. David is the quintessential paradigm for a "full-fledged" character.

"Functionaries" or "agents" are characters who exist primarily to facilitate story-line. M.H. Abrams defines agents as "characters who serve as mere functionaries and are not characterized at all". The "agent" is most likely the passive object used to contribute to the story-line of the narrative. In most cases he or she has no proper name; the "agent" is anonymous. A dietic mark will suffice for the agent. He can be described by an epithet ("the wife of. . .") or simply by a demonstrative pronoun ("this one"). In the case of agent and its relationship to plot, agent will always be subordinate to plot. Since the agent is the passive object the reader cannot "relate" to the character, he can only "act upon" the character at a distance. At times the agent is also used to contrast other characters in the narrative. As will be discussed later in this section of the treatise, the interpreter's use of analogy can contribute greatly to his understanding of "agent". Literary criticism focuses upon characters in their comparison/contrast with other characters and situations within this narrative.

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\[\text{M.H. Abrams, p. 23. See also Frank Kermode The Genesis of Secrecy.}\]
Adele Berlin makes the pertinent observation that characterization and its classification is not a matter of kind but degree. She states that characterization must be viewed as a continuum.

Ewen, in his work on characterization, also views the classification of character as portrayed somewhere on this continuum of complexity, development, and inner life. His simple characters are types, allegorical figures, and caricatures who do not have the potential of developing in the narrative. They are characters portrayed with little or no inner life. At the opposite end of the pole is the complex character that is capable of change, psychological complexity, and a view into his/her inner life.

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<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Character</th>
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<td>SIMPLE</td>
<td>COMPLEX</td>
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<td>Necessary for plot</td>
<td>Limited traits</td>
<td>Many traits</td>
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<td>Passive</td>
<td>Stereotype</td>
<td>Full-fledged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Little inner life</td>
<td>Unpredictable</td>
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<tr>
<td>No inner life</td>
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**Techniques of Characterization**

By nature of this title, a double entendre is intended. The reader/interpreter must be aware of characterization.

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techniques to determine what and why the narrator chose to use certain techniques of characterization within his ideological purpose. But the reader/interpreter generally speaking must commence his interpretation with a workable knowledge of "secular" characterization and those Biblical literary critics who have gone before him. Though he begins with a verifiable and condensed methodology of characterization he cannot suspend his pursuit of characterization at this junction, for now the reader/interpreter must allow the Biblical text and the particular narrator's devices modify his approach. The imminent methodological danger is that the interpreter becomes hesitant in constantly refining his techniques of characterization by allowing the narrator to speak for himself as he recounts his particular world view within the narrative. This writer is totally indebted to those literary critics "outside" the Biblical domain and those pioneers who have blazed the trail in literary analysis of the Bible.

This section of the treatise will attempt to enumerate and describe a few of the universal techniques of characterization. Techniques of characterization are numerous and a paper of this size cannot possibly cover this topic in its totality. Only a list of more prevalent and pertinent techniques that will aid the reader in understanding the Judges 19-21 narrative will be recounted. Though the particular techniques will have a cursory treatment to say the least, Chapter Two will hopefully put flesh on the skeletal
framework by exhibiting techniques and practice rather than theory alone. Some of the techniques used for understanding characterization can be used for numerous other major components of narrative plot, theme, compositional structure, etc. Though this author discusses ambiguity as a technique for characterization he does not assume ambiguity can be applied to characterization only. Ambiguity in narrative itself is a major technique that contributes to the understanding of character, plot, themes, compositional structure, etc. At times there will be techniques of characterization particularly applicable to characterization and universally applicable to narrative. To obscure the matter further there will also be times of overlapping categories and usages.

According to Rimmon-Kenan, "In principle, any element in the text may serve as an indicator of character and, conversely, character-indicators may serve other purposes as well. . ." The same author further states that there are two types of textual indicators in determining characterization: (1) direct definition which names the character trait by an adjective, an abstract noun, some other kind of noun, or a part of speech and (2) indirect presentation portray the character in his/her actions, speech, external appearance, or environment. With indirect presentation the reader is left to infer the trait or traits.

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²Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, p. 59.
of the character presented.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{Repetition}

Sternberg lists redundancy, equivalence, and variance as major components of repetition.\textsuperscript{30} Until the time of New Criticism, most historical critics have viewed repetition in the Biblical text as definite indicators of the hand of the redactor or the evidence of various sources. Literary criticism with its assumption of the unity of the text has shaken one of the major pillars of historical criticism. This is not to deny the evidence of redactors or sources, but the narrator's use of repetition is most likely purposeful for the entire scheme. "Most instances of repetition prove to be quite purposeful; and this would include the repetition not only of relatively brief statements, but . . . of whole episodes presumably compiled from parallel traditions."\textsuperscript{31} The careful reader must be aware of repetition and then inquire as to the particular purpose of this technique. Is the narrator using repetition to exhibit equivalence among characters or variance against others? Do two or more repetitions indicate the existence of various sources or will analyzing the variances or equivalences reveal something about the character?

The authors of the Biblical narratives astutely

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., pp. 60-67.

\textsuperscript{30}Sternberg, \textit{Poetics of Biblical Narrative}, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
discovered how the slightest strategic variations in the pattern of repetitions could serve the purposes of commentary, analysis, foreshadowing, thematic assertion, with a wonderful combination of subtle understatement and dramatic force.32

Sternberg further notes that repetition in the Bible occurs on all levels: (1) Levels of sound are linguistic sense (verbatim equivalence, synonymity, authonymy, homonymy, and syntactic parallelism), (2) Plot level - "it assumes the form of equivalence and contrasts between events, characters, and situations", (3) Thematic level and (4) Generic level. Understanding these categories will aid the interpreter as he/she seeks to understand repetition and its contribution to characterization.

According to Sternberg there are five features of repetition in the Bible:33

1. Referential Bearing - The plot of repetition in world and discourse - "full-fledged" occurrences that affect the overall course of the action.

2. Filing and constitution
   A. The member of forecast (command, prophecy, scenario), defined in terms of expectation about narrative future.
   B. The member of enactment (performance, realization,

32Alter, p. 91. See also Bruce Kawin, Telling it Again and Again: Repetition in Literature and Film (Ithaca: 1972).

33Sternberg, pp. 375-82
or, rarely state of affairs) which focused on the narrative present and may causally derive from . . . and/or lead to.

C. The member or report "defined . . . in terms of retrospection on the narrative past".

3. Order of presentation—planning before performance, degree before fulfillment, action before reporting.

4. The sources of presentation; between objectivity and subjectivity in point of view — in contrast, (to modern theory of novel). "The Bible’s structure of repetition conveys the truth about its essential through the most authoritative source: This manifests now the strategic tendency to objectify reality that informs Biblical narrative as a matter of principle, anchored in a definite world view and serving definite (epistemological, aesthetic, thematic historical, rhetorical) ends".

5. Formal Boundaries of Structure — Variation within repetition is also another important category in understanding characterization. Sternberg notes that textual variations would include (1) expansions or additions, (2) truncations or ellipses, (3) changes of order, (4) grammatical transformations, and (5) substitutions.

Kawin is a secular critic who has done an extensive and masterful study of repetition in literature. He emphasizes
the difference between "repetitious when a word, percept, or experience is repeated with less impact at each recurrence; repeated to no particular end, out of a failure of invention or sloppiness of thought, and repetitive: when a word, percept, or experience is repeated with equal or greater force at each occurrence".\textsuperscript{34} Kawin lists some of the uses of repetition in characterization as repetition for didactic purposes, comic purposes (the reader expects certain realities of the character because they have been repeated throughout the narrative), the repeating of certain actions of a hero or specific scenes and arguments or the acting out of similar scenes by different actors ("calling attention to difference"). The author further notes that parallel plots will be repeated and "there are those words that carry the meanings that have acquired in earlier context with them into their present and future contexts, immensely complicated and interrelating the concerns and actions of the play, and pointing solutions within the play to its problems. . .".\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34}Kawin, \textit{Telling It Again and Again}, p. 4. "I use 'constructive' in the sense of contributing to the internal power of the work. There are two aesthetics of constructive repetition, differentiated by their attitudes toward memory. The first, involved with the concepts of past and future, and believing in the integrity of memory, builds repetitions one on the other toward some total effect; this 'repetition with remembering' takes place in simulative or 'building time'. The second, considering the present, the only artistically approachable tense deals with each instant and subject as a new thing, to such an extent that the sympathetic reader is aware less of repetition than of continuity; this 'repetition without remembering' takes place in 'continuing time'," p.33.

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 58.
THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHARACTERIZATION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE JUDGES 19–21 NARRATIVE: A LITERARY ANALYSIS

BY

DON MICHAEL HUDSON

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE Th.M. IN OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
APRIL 12, 1991
Recently in Biblical scholarship, focus on the analysis of the text has shifted dramatically from reading the Scriptures as an attempt to prove or disprove its historicity or atomizing the text to determine its authenticity to accepting the text as a literary unit and approaching that text as literature. The Evangelical assumes the integrity of the text but historically he has been wary of most attempts to read the stories of the Old Testament as they really are—stories. While assuming the historicity of the text, the Evangelical can utilize modern and ancient conventions of literature to better read and understand the text.

One most prominent literary convention is that of characterization. This paper assumes a two pronged methodology of analyzing and utilizing modern conventions of characterization as applied to the Biblical text and then allowing that particular text (Judges 19-21) to inform the reader as to the narrator’s utilization of characterization to present his pertinent ideology. The assumption is made that the narrator carefully and artfully portrays the characters to substantiate, support, and augment his theology.

The conventions of characterization will be discussed and then the text of Judges 19-21 will be analyzed with these particular literary conventions to better understand the meaning of the text. Lastly, many of the particular and disparate ideas revealed by analyzing the characters in Judges 19-21 are understood in light of an overall theological framework.
Kawin views constructive repetition as emphasizing, building, and complicating.

**Ambiguity**

Many times the narrator will deliberately utilize various techniques such as gaps of information, contradictions, reversals, surprises, etc. to cast his character in an ambiguous, opaque light. Ambiguity in this case will most likely occur with "full-fledged" characters to give them a "psychological" depth required for reading the narrative. The narrator may also present an ambiguous character or trait of character for future disclosure or the character may remain ambiguous and the problem never solved.³⁶ "On the one hand, the Bible always tells the truth in that its narrator is absolutely and straightforwardly reliable. On the other hand, the narrator does not tell the whole truth either. His statements about the world - character, plot, the march of history - are rarely complete...".³⁷

Empson's seven categories of ambiguity will aid the interpreter in his understanding of the function of ambiguity. They are, (1) an ambiguity arises when a detail is effective in several ways at once, (2) two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved into one, (3) two apparently unconnected meanings are given simultaneously, (4) the alternative


meanings combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author, (5) a fortunate confusion, as when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing, (6) what is said is contradictory or irrelevant and the reader is forced to invent interpretations, and (7) full contradiction, marking a division in the author’s mind.

Nomenclature

It is probably obvious to the reader that nomenclature was integral to the Hebrew existence. Nomenclature is also highly pertinent to the discussion at hand. The proper name of a character may have direct bearing upon the interpretation of the text such as Nabal ("fool") or Mahlon and Chilion ("weakly" and "sickly"). Other characters are addressed with familial nomenclature — "Father-in-Law, Mother, etc". Berlin explains that familial nomenclature "is an important sign of significant relationships within the story". Many times stories will have "typical" nomenclature such as "levite" and "concubine".38

Anonymity

There will be many times in the text when a character exists within Biblical narrative but has no name. It could be argued that types who are named exclusively by their trait or societal or familial position are anonymous. Anonymity is a signpost to the reader that the narrator within a culture of

38Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, pp. 59-61.
emphasizing nomenclature has chosen to allow the character to exist nameless, either as a function of plot, a foil for other characters, a comparison for other characters, or in an ironic way to call attention to the anonymous character. The narrator by using anonymity can enhance the character's purpose and position in the narrative.

Description

Berlin refutes the standard relief that Hebrew narrative is sparse in character description by explaining that the Bible is very descriptive but lacks "the kind of detailed physical or physiological description of characters that creates a visual image for the reader". She further notes that Hebrew narrators gave descriptive terms based on, (1) states, (2) profession, (3) gentilic designation, or (4) distinctive physical features. Narrative descriptions direct the reader not to portray the character but by analyzing his situations, actions, and words he can observe "what manner of person he was".

Analogy (Comparison/contrast)

Analogy is an essential spatial pattern composed of at least two elements ... between which there is at least one point of similarity and one of dissimilarity ... .

As quoted previously, Alter emphasizes the importance of "narrative analogy" as "one fact of the text provides oblique

Ibid. pp. 34-36.

Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, p. 365.
commentary on another". "The reader/interpreter by comparing or contrasting characters can gain a richer understanding of characters, and enhanced significance of plot". Berlin notes three modes of comparison helpful in characterization: (1) contrast with another character, (2) contrast with an earlier action of some character, and (3) contrast with the expected norm.

Making a distinction between metaphorical and metonymical elements, Rimmon-Kenan emphasizes that analogy can "reinforce" characterization through analogous landscapes, and analogy between characters.  

Discourse/Actions

A close reading of discourse and actions of the character at hand, the narrator, and other characters will suggest much toward understanding narrative characterization. The reader/interpreter can observe the character through three lenses: (1) the character, (2) the narrator, and (3) other characters within the narrative. The reader/interpreter has at his disposal a number of questions he may inquire as to how discourse and action enhances his understanding of the character.

1. What does the character do, both specifically and generally?
2. What does the character not do?
3. What does the character say?

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41Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, pp. 67-70.
4. What does he not say?
5. What do other characters say to Him?
6. What do other characters say concerning Him?
7. What does the narrator say concerning Him?
8. What do the other characters think of Him?
9. What does the character think?
10. What are his action/thoughts toward Yhwh?
11. What does Yhwh say about him?
12. What are the motives of character?
13. What does the character think of others?

**Irony**

Uspensky states that, "Irony occurs when we speak from one point of view, but make an evaluation from another point of view; thus for irony the nonconcurrency of point of view on the different levels is a necessary requirement".42

According to E.M. Good, "Irony, then begins in conflict, a conflict marked by the perception of the distance between pretense and reality".43

**Inner Life**

"The inner life is assumed but not presented in primitive narrative literature, whether Hebraic or Hellenic. This inscrutability of characters, their opaqueness, is neither a


defect or limitation. It is simply a characteristic."

Many literary critics take this statement to task, because they believe strongly that the narrator portrays much of his character's inner life in various ways. Attempting to read the Old Testament narratives with a view toward the various characters' inner lives requires an informal analysis of their thoughts, speech, and actions. Understanding their inner lives is to be as objective as possible and must entail assumptions based upon tangible criteria.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERIZATION APPLIED TO THE TEXT

An Anonymous Concubine

"The betrayal, rape, torture, murder, and dismemberment of an unnamed woman is a story we want to forget but are commanded to speak."

Phyllis Trible, Texts of Terror

Formulaic Saying: 19:1a

"no king...there was a levite"

The narrator commences this section of his story with the recurring theme, "In those days Israel had no king". This is one of the two occurrences of the truncated formula (19:1). The fuller statement, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit", is located in 17:6 at the beginning of the narrative piece (17-21) and also occurs at the very end of the unit 21:25 functioning most likely as inclusio. These two repeated formulaic sayings are not arbitrary occurrences, for they give a literary and theological framework for the entire narrative piece of Judges 17-21. One cannot read this unit of narrative without being readily conscious of the fact that the narrator presupposes
anarchy and chaos to be a direct result of the absence of kingship.¹ Times represented in Judges 19-21 were undoubtedly the nadir of pre-monarchic Israel. It was an era of lawlessness, utter confusion, destruction, and godlessness. In a time of Israel’s history when the people of the covenant had lost sight of Yhwh, "every man did what was right in his own eyes". The narrator depicts in this section the most pungent atrocities committed in Israelite history; "Everyone who saw it said, 'such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt'" (19:30). In opposition to the successful ventures of the tribes in Chapter One, the tribes as "one man" now turn upon each other and commit the "ban" against their own; it is significant that Judges 1 details the account of Judah’s victorious exploits and at the conclusion of Judges, Judas is humiliated (20). The identical question is asked in both

¹Contra W. J. Dumbrell, "In Those Days There Was No King In Israel, Every Man Did What Was Right In His Own Eyes. The Purpose of the Book of Judges Reconsidered", Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 25 (1983): 23-33. The narrator was not along with his emphasis upon kingship for socio-economic, religious and political stability. "The ancient near east considered kingship the very basic of civilization. Only savages could live without a king. Security, peace, and justice could not prevail without a ruler to champion them. Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king’s function to maintain the harmony of that integration," Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion As the Integration of Society and Nature (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, (1948), p. 3. Note C.R. North, "The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship", ZAW 9:1 (1932): 37, "One of the strongest arguments in favor of monarchy today is that it, better than any other form of government, gives unity and cohesion to society".
contexts, "who shall go up for us to fight first?" Assuming the entire text to be a literary unit,¹ and the repetitive saying, "In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as he saw fit" to be the overriding theme, one can then assume that the narrator uses strategic literary conventions to recount his story and in turn his theology of Yhwh and kingship. This writer will attempt to reveal those techniques of characterizations that the narrator executed masterfully not only to validate his ideology but to portray vividly the grotesque contrast between monarchy and "no king".

Determining the date of the authorship of this section would most likely aid the interpreter in his understanding of the importance of this section of Hebrew narrative. The book itself only gives one vague clue as to the time and circumstances of authorship. According to 18:30-31 "the captivity of the land", the book was written sometime after the captivity (most likely the southern captivity of 587 B.C.). If this statement is not the work of a redactor, then


was the book written as an apologetic for the legitimation of Judaic kingship? If this is so, why would the narrator defend Judaic kingship against a northern kingship that no longer existed? Or is the narrator simply setting the reader up to expect great things from kingship as the panacea for Israel’s myriad problems and setbacks just as Israel expected when the people asked Samuel for a king? If one views the entire narrative section of Genesis-2 Kings to be a literary unit written by one author or group of authors during the post-exilic times then this idea of the narrator’s “setting up” the reader fits quite nicely. If this statement though is a redactional gloss, could this pericope be an apologetic for Davidic kingship (Judah) against Saul’s kingship (Gibeah, Jabesh-Gilead, etc.)? Davis observes that the idyllic presentation of kingship presupposes an early date of authorship, “no one who had much historical experience with monarchy in the United or Divided Kingdoms would have dreamed of suggesting the absence of a king as the factor explaining domestic theft and cultic irregularity”.

Dumbrell argues that this section does not promote the ideal of monarchy. He believes that Judges was written in post-exilic times. With no kingship, Israel in spite of civil

1Ibid., p. 157.

5“We would conclude therefore that the book of Judges can hardly have been an apology for the monarchy, as is usually thought”, Dumbrell, “In Those Days”, p. 30. See also S. Cundall, “An Apology for the Monarchy?” ET 81 (1970).
war and the near extinction of Benjamin retained its unity. To argue this conclusion though, Dumbrell must extract the one "unity" section from the entire context of destruction. This author argues that irony is afoot in this pericope, for when Israel is unified, they unify themselves to divide themselves. As will be revealed later, a close reading of the text will exhibit how disjointed every effort was in the narrative. In its attempt to maintain unity, the nation committed seduction, rape, and murder. The interpreter needs to call to mind the analogy of Saul's mustering the tribes in I Samuel 11. As opposed to the Levite, Saul received the Spirit of God. What Saul intimated will happen to the guilty who does not respond, the Levite committed against his innocent concubine. Instead of destroying Jabesh-Gilead arbitrarily, Saul protects them.

One can observe Yhwh's direct role in I Samuel 11, but in Judges 19-21 he seems to be strangely obtuse. Kingship in its proper function protects Jabesh-Gilead rather than destroying it with the (DIP). Though the interpreter may never know the date of authorship and the significance of Ephraim--Judah, Dumbrell with others promulgate a weak case when they deny the narrator's espousal of monarchy whether ideally or ironically.

"Similarly, the deliberate contrast between the Levite's dismemberment of his concubine (Judg. 19:29) and Saul dismembering the oxen (I Sam. 11:7) demonstrates the difference between the way a disaster is prevented by a newly chosen King and the way a disaster is avenged by an irresponsible, callous, and self-absorbed man who lives at a time in which there is no king in Israel", Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19", p. 37.
One seemingly insignificant event of a concubine deserting her husband sets off a ghastly, ludicrous chain of events that proceeds from individual to tribal destruction and the violation of one woman to the violation of the women and children of an entire tribe and two cities. The narrator artfully details a time when the vulnerable ones of society were violated and massacred. Each time the concubine acts, she is desperately attempting to escape the ravages of a lawless, Godless society by going back (יֵרָה) to her father (19:2) and going back (קְנָה) to the house where her master (יַע) was (19:26). From the apparent safety of her Father’s house, the concubine proceeds to the betrayal of the host’s house. From the dismemberment of the one results the dismemberment of the many. From the internal strife of one family, disunity proceeds to civil war in the nation. If these times were not so deplorable they would be almost comic.7

Episode 1 (Judges 19:1-30) The Levite and his Concubine

Scene One (19:1b-10a) Now a levite who lived in a remote area of the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But she was angry with him. She left him and went back to her father’s house in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months, her husband went to her to speak to her heart. He brought with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her father’s house, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him. His father-in-law, the girl’s father prevailed upon him to stay, so he remained with him three days, eating and drinking, and sleeping there.

"A Levite from Ephraim took (נַע) a concubine from

Bethlehem Judah. Ephraim and Bethlehem Judah are repetitive Leitworts in both major sections of the narrative in Judges 17-21. Once again in this narrative section these two locations in Israel play important roles in the presentation of events and characters at the close of Judges. Though the significance of these locations will be discussed in the last chapter of this treatise, let it suffice to say that this author believes these elements of geography play a great part in the narrator's presentation of his ideological thrust.

After the setting is framed, the narrator begins immediately with the Levite's "taking" of the concubine. Though this is a prototypical Hebrew way of recounting a man marrying a woman, the "taking" (נָּצִי) picks up and continues the major leit motif of Chs. 17-18: 17:2 - "the 1100 shekels of silver that were taken (נָּצִי) from you and about which I heard you utter a curse - I have that silver with me; I took (נָּצִי) it;" 18:1ff. "Took (נָּצִי) the carved image;" 18-23 - "you have taken (נָּצִי) my gods;" and 18:27 - "they took (נָּצִי) what Micah had made." Continuing the narrative in Chs. 19-21, (נָּצִי) is used three times in the narrative as regards the concubine; analogous to Chs. 17-18, the concubine is always the object of the "taking", and each time the concubine is acted upon in ascending violence. The Levite "takes" (נָּצִי) a concubine as wife (19:2), he "takes" (נָּצִי) her up on the donkey (19:28) and then in the climax of the narrative he "takes" (נָּצִי) a knife 19:29 and dismembers her. In the
context, the concubine is portrayed as just another piece of silver or graven image "taken" as mere property to be used by society at its own arbitrary wims. The "taking" of one concubine in this society leads to the "raping" (כַּפֹּל) of the virgins of Shiloh (21:22). Though it can be argued that (כַּפֹּל) is a very common and prevalent word used throughout the Hebrew Bible, there is no question that the concubine is put in the class of possessions being taken, used, and passed from one person to another as mere property at the disposal of whoever happened to possess the property at that time. From Micah, to the young Levite, to the Danites, to the Levite from Ephraim, to the men of Gibeah, the Leitmotif of every man's taking what he "saw" fit with little or no recognition of an individual's personhood portrays graphically the characters' "doing what was right in their own eyes".

The narrator immediately begins to reveal how the reader is to view the concubine. The first time one encounters the concubine, she is the object of the Levite's marrying her, and the final time she is the object of the Levite's dismembering her (19:29). In fact, predominantly throughout the narrative, the concubine is the object of other's action each time she is mentioned. As mentioned previously in the chapter discussing methodology, the fact that the concubine is portrayed primarily as the object and not the subject is significant for the story the narrator is weaving.

The concubine, though in a small measure is a "type"
character; she primarily functions as an agent throughout the study.\textsuperscript{8} If the concubine possesses a trait she is one who acts out of desperation attempting to escape the ravages of her society. As an agent she is a passive object necessary for the development of the plot. She is taken as a wife, she is not allowed to eat with her father and husband, she is taken to Gibeah, she is offered to the host, she is seized, she is violated, she is left for dead, and then in horror she is dismembered. The narrator undoubtedly portrays her in this fashion to exhibit her standing in society. In many ways, the narrator has forced the reader to view the concubine as her society did—a passive, expendable object!

Not only is the concubine passive, she is anonymous.\textsuperscript{9} The reader never knows her name nor her inner life, so he cannot relate to her—only sympathize for her. The reader is first introduced to the woman through the designation, (וַיֹּ֣בְק) . This term is most prevalent in Judges 19-21. The concubine was one of the lowest members of society filling the role of a "second-class" wife. Concubines were distinguished from wives in Judges 8:31; 2 Sam. 5-13; 1 Kgs. 11:3; and 2 Chr. 11:21, but as will be discovered later theoretically

\textsuperscript{8}See Berlin, \textit{The Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative}, pp. 23-42.

The lowly concubine in analogy is compared to the Levite who was by implication a "well-to-do man". The Mosaic code assumes this societal stratification by the way it stipulates the institution of Levitical priesthood (Numb. 1:50; 3:12) and the protection of the "second wife" (Ex. 21:7-11). In a society gone awry, the God-appointed protector of the law violates his concubine. The woman (wife of the Levite) is also called the "girl" (נַעֲשָׁה) of the father, the guest’s maidservant (נָזִיקָה), and "the woman" (נְזִיקָה). The concubine, forever nameless, is addressed with familial and societal nomenclature, but nothing is ever known about her and her inner experiences of inconceivably horrible atrocities.

In the first action she performs, she most likely is fleeing the Levite to by "returning" (נָחַל) to her father's house. The MT states that she "played the harlot" (נָתָּה), and this particular word has troubled interpreters. The textual apparatus proposes emending the text from "playing the harlot" (נָתָּה) to "rejecting him" (נָתַתּ). The LXX reads "the concubine was angered at the Levite". The recovery of the text at this point is a difficult task. The Jewish interpreters found the text very difficult: how could a concubine, who was neither wife nor slave, commit adultery against her lover? If she did so, how could the Levite (lawfully) go after her and take her back? See also J. Alberto Soggin, Judges (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 283-284, he translates (נָתָּה) as "quarreled". The targum translates "scorned him" and the LXX reads "she..."
juncture is well nigh impossible, but if the texts reads "play the harlot" (HJT) then the narrator may be utilizing ambiguity as to the concubine’s actions and the only portrait of her inner life. Was the narrator by use of this word attempting to disclose that even the concubine was guilty of "doing right in her eyes?" Is the narrator as in numerous later instances with other characters using ambiguity to obscure the character of the concubine? The major problem this reader has with this negative interpretation, is the concubine’s "playing the harlot" by returning to her father’s house. Would she not have gone anywhere but her father’s house? Gomer played the harlot but went after the other lovers besides Hosea. This interpreter assumes hesitantly that the concubine based on the later action of the Levite was attempting to flee him for the safety of her father’s house. Furthermore, the Levite’s "speaking to her heart" (19:3) may suggest his fault in the matter.

The responsibility for the matrimonial crisis, on which the text gives us no information, must have been with the husband, at least in view of his later behavior; however, the cause of the quarrel cannot have been very serious, if the wife and the father-in-law are so glad to be reconciled.12

Another argument in favor of this position is the concubine’s second act. "Her husband went to persuade her to return. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She went away".

12Soggin, p. 284.
took (Kiḇḇal) him into her father’s house”, (19:3). If she had played the harlot, would she have "caused" her husband to enter? It is ironic though that the concubine leads her husband into her father’s house and his hospitality in which and by which begins the ascent of violence. This action of the concubine is framed by her two desperate actions of entering either her father’s house or the guest’s house. Now, in causing her husband to enter, one may interpret that the concubine assumes her father’s house to be safe; this is the only time the concubine acts on her own without attempting to escape the actions of others. The reader is told that the father-in-law was glad to see her husband, but as throughout the narrative, the concubine is not allowed to speak nor does one view her inner life. After the concubine welcomes her husband into her father’s house, the concubine practically disappears from the story except to be grouped as "they" with the servant and the donkey. The narrative up to this point has moved along quite rapidly—"a Levite took a concubine, she left him, she was there four months, her husband went to persuade her to return, he took his servant and donkeys, she caused him to enter". As the reader approaches the hospitality scene, the story slows dramatically and the narrator focuses upon the father-in-law and his interactions with the Levite. Whereas the narrator never allows the reader to view the father’s response to his own daughter, there is no doubt as to his generous welcome offered to the Levite when he
enters the house. As will be studied in the following section, the father-in-law and the Levite are predominant throughout this scene and the reader does not view the concubine except as a part of the group until she is sacrificed to the mob. The following diagram emphasizes the narrator’s portrayal of the concubine’s action and the resulting emphasis on her father and the Levite. Even in her father’s house she is excluded from the enjoyment that her father and her husband are experiencing.

19:3b She took (κατέλαμβαναν) him into her father’s house
19:3c Her father-in-law saw him — gladly welcomed him
19:4 His father-in-law (girl’s father) "grasped" (πάλαμον) him
19:4b He (Levite) remained with him

Another pertinent irony in the narrative is that the father-in-law’s "prevailing" (grasping--πάλαμον) upon the Levite to remain there in his house. This "grasping" of the Levite will in turn ironically result in the Levite’s seizing (19:25) his concubine to send her out to the mob and when he seizes her (πάλαμον--19:29) to cut her in pieces. The same word is used in 2 Sam 13 to signify Amnon’s seizing Tamar to rape her. The same word is also used in 1 Sam 15:27 when Saul in desperation seizes Samuel’s robe and thereby tears the robe. Antithetical to this passage, Lot and his family are "seized" by the guests to deliver them (πάλαμον--19:16). Sadly, in this passage, the
guest violently seizes his wife to deliver himself. The father-in-law’s seizing the Levite will eventually lead to seizing the concubine to dismember her. As the concubine spent four months in exile from her husband (19:2) so too would the remnant Benjamin spend four months in exile from the federation of tribes.

Scene One (19:5-10a) “On the fourth day they got up early and he prepared to leave, but the girl’s father said to his son-in-law, ‘Refresh yourself with something to eat; then you can go’. So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Afterward the girl’s father said, ‘Please stay tonight and enjoy yourself’. And when the man got up to go, his father-in-law persuaded him, so he stayed there that night. On the morning of the fifth day, when he rose to go, the girl’s father said, ‘Refresh yourself. Wait till afternoon!’ So the two of them ate together.

Then when the man, with his concubine and his servant, got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl’s father said, ‘Now look, it’s almost evening. Spend the night here; the day is nearly over. Stay and enjoy yourself. Early tomorrow morning you can get up and be on your way home’. But, unwilling to stay another night, the man left and went toward Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine.

Once again in this scene, the concubine is not a part of the major activities except to be included, "with his concubine and his servant" or as a part of the group, or lastly with the donkeys, "with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine". The concubine is mentioned elsewhere in this section of scene one but only indirectly as the “girl’s father”. It is as if the narrator keeps the concubine in the reader’s mind but only indirectly by his use of familial nomenclature and his never allowing her to act independently outside of the group. In the beginning of this section the narrator tells the reader that the Levite went to his wife to speak to her heart, but the reader instead never views the Levite even speaking to her much less acknowledging her
presence to be important. Instead, one views the Levite enjoying the over generous hospitality of his father-in-law with no apparent thought of the concubine.

19:5 They get up early
19:5b He prepared to leave
19:5c Girl's father spoke to son-in-law--"refresh yourself"

19:6 Two of them ate
19:6b Girl's father said "please stay"
19:7 Man get up to go
19:7b Father-in-law persuaded him
19:7c so he stayed
19:8 He rose to go
19:8b Girl's father said, "refresh yourself"
19:8c so two ate together
19:9 man with concubine, servant, got up to leave
19:9a Father-in-law (girl's father) said, "spend the night here"

Many have taken the variances in number and nomenclature to be the evidence of variant sources. Reading this scene though as a whole will exhibit the narrator's use of techniques to communicate his message. The narrator wisely uses variance between second and third person to disclose the concubine's true position. The text explains that the Levite came to "speak to her heart". The reader can recall the same
phrase being used in the rape of Dinah narrative when Shechem spoke to the girl (Gen. 34). Ironically, the reader never observes the Levite’s speaking to his concubine nor her to him. The reader is left with a gap in information at this point. He only observes the narrator’s use of pronominal variance that the man, he is welcomed, he enjoys, he eats with her father, he decides to go or stay; and the concubine they simply follow directions and she is classed with the servant and the donkeys—quite an ironic twist for a husband who came to speak to his wife’s heart.

The narrator artfully utilizes variance in personal pronouns to continue his particular presentation of the concubine. As opposed to many scholars positing different redactors or sources, the narrator most likely is using this unique syntactical variation to contrast the concubine with the Levite and the father as he has been doing throughout this section of the story. The narrator uses actions, dialogue, nomenclature, lacunae, and variation in presenting the concubine most definitely as a "type" who is mere functionary of the plot.

Scene Two (19:10b-15) Transition from Bethlehem to Gibeah

"But unwilling to stay another night, the man left and went toward Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine. When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, 'Come, let's stop at his city of the Jebusites' and spend the night'.

His master replied, 'No. We won't go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah'. He added, 'Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places'. So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night.

The Levite finally leaves now with his concubine whom he came to persuade to return with him to the hill country of Ephraim. The text states that "the man" left with his concubine and the donkeys. In usual fashion, the reader knows nothing of the concubine's inner thoughts, whether she wanted to go with her husband, or even the father's response of her leaving. In Genesis 24 another hospitality scene is portrayed wherein Abraham's servant seeks to return to his master with Rebekkah, "When they got up the next morning, he said, 'Send me on my way to my master'". In some ways this passage is closely analogous to the passage in Judges 19. There is a great hospitality scene and then the relatives of Rebekkah ask the servant to allow her to remain with them a little longer. But her brother and mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go". It is possible that the relatives were exercising some ploy to keep Rebekkah from leaving their place at all, but it is more likely that they were desirous for Rebekkah to stay with them as long as she could.

"But he (the servant) said to them, 'Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master'."

Then they said, 'Let's call the girl and ask her about it.' So they called Rebekkah and asked her, 'Will you go with this man'? 
'I will go,' she said.

So they sent their sister Rebekkah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekkah...".

What a stark contrast of this "departing" scene and the one in Judges 19. In this story, Rebekkah is cared for and even asked to decide when she wanted to depart with the servant. Finally, when she does leave, she leaves with her family's blessing. In Judges, there is no care revealed, and as said previously the reader has no idea of the concubine's thoughts of leaving. The narrator depicts an anonymous woman at the mercy of everyone she comes into contact with. As in the majority of the last scene, the concubine if she is mentioned, is mentioned obliquely and passively. In this scene though we once again hear nothing the concubine says, the servant of the Levite though is allowed to speak when he offers his thoughts on where to stay for the night.

Scene Three (19:16-28) The Rape of the Concubine

The Levite and his small entourage pass the alien city of Jebus and now enter the Israelite city of Gibeah. Starkly contrasted with the hospitality of the father-in-law, the Levite can find no one who will offer his/her home for them to stay. Soon though an old man from the hill country of Ephraim comes from the field into the town and invites the visitors into his home.

While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex
with him.’

The owner of the house went outside and said to them, ‘No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don’t do this disgraceful thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine, I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do them whatever you wish. But to this man, don’t do such a disgraceful thing’.

But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.

When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, ‘Get up; let’s go.’ But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and sent out for home.

With this scene, the reader reaches both the climax of the narrative and the nadir of the Old Testament. In desperation, the Levite divinely instituted by God will "sacrifice" his wife to spare his own life. The concubine that night was passed around like chattel by the host, the master, and finally by the mob. Once again the concubine is not allowed to speak, only act in final desperation. Even though the concubine was of low social stature, the Mosaic law made provision for her protection (Dt. 21:14)—"If you (the husband) are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored (∩ננ) her." This same word (∩ננ) is used in the rape scene of Dinah (Gn. 34:2) and the rape scene of Tamar (2 Sam. 3:12). Interestingly, the host invites the mob to violate (∩ננ) both his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine (19:24). The host and the Levite, in direct contradiction to the law, conspired to violate the concubine. It is inconceivable that the old man would really offer his own daughter and the concubine to such a crowd. This scene
though is very familiar with those who remember Lot's scene in Genesis 19. This writer will not discuss the analogy of Lot's scene with these happenings in Gibeah until the section dealing with the characterizations of the Levite and the old man, but it is important to note the similarity in both accounts of the wicked men's homosexual desire of the respective guests and the incomprehensible offer of the women. In both scenes the host would go to great lengths to prevent his guest from being abused sexually by the men of the city, but with incredible flippancy the host would offer the women of the house. It is interesting that the narrator is comparing Gibeah "a city of Israel" with the alien, wicked city of Sodom, and in each instance the women are property to be offered for the safety of the men.

In Judges 19, the narrator calls the men of Gibeah "wicked men" (men of Belial) which is his only overt statement concerning any of the characters. It is significant that the narrator infers data about every other character except for these men who seek the guest and eventually abuse the concubine. The men approach the house and surround it asking for the guest that they may "know" him. Some scholars take this term to be ambiguous because the typical phrase "to lie with" is not used. Within the context though this suggestion is ludicrous for the narrator explains his meaning by the reactions of the characters. If the situation had not been serious, the host would not have been so intent upon
protecting the Levite. The apparent ambiguity is settled as soon as the reader views what these men do to the concubine; there was never any doubt what these "wicked" men's intentions were with the Levite. Directly antithetical to the account in Genesis 19, there is no divine intervention and the Levite "grasps" (יָתַן) his wife and sacrifices her to the mob. The concubine must have experienced extreme horror but in usual fashion with this narrator the reader is left guessing with any of her responses. Just as the concubine has no apparent choice in leaving her father’s house, so here too with a wild mob she is allowed to say nothing or resist the one who is to protect her. The word "grasp" (יָתַן) suggests an extremely violent action committed by the husband.

The host has previously offered this woman to the men for them to do whatever was "good in their eyes", and that is exactly what they do. The narrator has brought the reader’s attention back to his initial and final thoughts of "every man (יָתַן) doing what was right in their own eyes". The reader is never told what went on that night except that the men "raped" (יָתַן) and "abused" (יָתַן) her throughout the night. The narrator utilizes a strong word to portray what the mob committed against the woman. "Abused her" could be translated literally "gleaned" (יָתַן) her. The word is used few times in the Bible. It occurs in Lev. 19:10 and Dt. 24:21 speaking of a literal gleaning (picking clean the vineyards). The word is also found in Jer. 6:9 and 19:25 used metaphorically of
gleaning the remnant of Israel. The language graphically portrays that the mob "picked clean" the unprotected woman. As a result, Benjamin will be "gleaned" (עָנַן) in battle. In Deuteronomy, the fields were not to be gleaned completely so the aliens, widows, orphans, and the Levites would be cared for. In this inverted world where there is no leadership, the helpless of society are gleaned in degradation. The narrator also uses the word (עָנַן) reminding the reader of the "wicked men's" intentions toward the Levite previously.

Her last act was one of pitiful desperation, "fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold". Few pictures evoke more pity than the image portrayed at the end of this scene. In two of the three actions the concubine commits, she is attempting to escape her society of the safety of her father’s house or ironically the supposed safety of the guest’s house.

Phyllis Trible has made the point that the narrator views the concubine as her society in that day, "neither the other characters nor the narrator recognizes her humanity. She is property, object, tool, and literary device". Though Trible has done an excellent job of "reading" the text, she has made a fatal error. To include the narrator as part of the deeds is ludicrous and unfounded. The narrator very subtly but masterfully has renounced the awful deed committed in Israel. As will be exhibited later, the narrator reveals the

culprits for who they are. In this case, Tribe with her intrusive hermeneutic has violated the text.

Scene Four (19:29-30) The Dismemberment of the Concubine

"When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his own way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, "Get up; let's go". But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home. When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel. Everyone who saw it said, "Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Think about it! Consider it! Tell us what to do!"

The horror of the concubine is not completed until she is dismembered by the Levite. She was passed around by the host, her master, the mob, and now ironically in this macabre scene through the twelve tribes of Israel. One of the greatest ambiguities in the Bible occurs in this section of the narrative. The reader will never know whether the concubine died at the hands of the mob, the Levite, or both. One Hebrew word would have forever enlightened this ambiguity, but the narrator has chosen not to do so. This topic will be taken up in greater detail when the characterization of the Levite is discussed. It is relevant though for the discussion of the concubine that it is not clear if her husband killed her or someone else.

The peoples' response is also ambiguous for the reader does not know if they are shocked at the dismembered concubine, or the debacle at Gibeah, or both. The Levite is questioned later in the narrative as to what happened in Gibeah, but he is never questioned as to why he dismembered
his concubine. Whatever the people did think, they did call these happenings as the worst to happen since Israel came out of Egypt. It is ironic that in a time when men did right in their own eyes, "such has never been 'seen' or done."

A Father-in-Law

Scene One (19:1b-2a)

Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But she rejected him. She left him and went back to her Father's house in Bethlehem Judah.

Bethlehem of Judah and the hill country of Ephraim play major roles in this saga of the Levite and his concubine. The mentioning of these cities reminds the reader of their importance in the Micah-Danite narrative. In both of these studies, Bethlehem-Judah seems to be a sane community within a nation of insanity. Though this author does not fully comprehend the import of these two locations of Israel, he does believe there is some level of significance for this particular story in 19-21 and the many stories in the book of Judges. It will be discussed later why and how Judah and Ephraim support and interconnect the theology of Judges in general and the Levite-concubine story in particular. At this point in the treatise though the reader should at least note the narrator's use of geographical locations in relaying his story. In 17-18 the young Levite leaves his sojourn from Bethlehem of Judah and sojourns in the hill country of Ephraim. In 19-21 there is a circular pattern between
Ephraim—Bethlehem of Judah—Ephraim. The concubine is taken from Bethlehem of Judah to the hill country of Ephraim and then returns to Bethlehem of Judah. The Levite in this story makes two circular trips beginning in the hill country of Ephraim to Bethlehem of Judah back to the hill country of Ephraim. The travels of the characters can be diagrammed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Young Levite</th>
<th>The Concubine</th>
<th>The Levite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hill Country of Ephraim</td>
<td>Hill Country of Ephraim</td>
<td>Hill Country of Ephraim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem of Judah</td>
<td>Bethlehem of Judah</td>
<td>Bethlehem of Judah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The concubine, as discussed earlier, returns to her father's "house" most likely to escape her husband, the Levite. More than likely, the concubine assumed her father's house in Bethlehem-Judah to be safe. If this author understands the implications of the text, then the concubine had no intentions of returning to her husband; she remained with her father four months and it was the Levite who initiated the reconciliation of the marriage.

The mentioning of the word "house" in vs. 2 begins a prevalent repetition of this word in the story. The word (םַעַם) occurs 15 times in this chapter and it occurs 13 times in the 17-18 narrative. Though this word is quite prevalent
and normal in the Hebrew scriptures, in the Levite-concubine story this author thinks it to be significant for the plot. Irony is replete in this story by the use of the word "house". The concubine escapes the Levite to return to the supposed safety of her father's house (vs. 2), she then leads her dangerous husband into her house of safety (vs. 3), the Levite's destination is not his home but the house of the Lord (vs. 18); no one in Gibeah of Israel would open his/her home for the evening (vs. 15); the wicked men surrounded the host's house (vv. 22-23); the concubine makes a desperate attempt to return to the host's house (vs. 26); and the Levite instead of going to the house of the Lord, takes his concubine home and dismembers her (vs. 29). The fact that the concubine is not safe in any house in Israel is reiterated time and again and with incredible variance. Within the story this whole debacle commences from the "safety" of her father's house. The reader must not forget that the narrator possibly implies that the concubine also fled the Levite's house.

The reader though begins immediately to envision an ambiguous picture of the concubine's father. There is a strange silence of the father's response to his daughter as compared to his welcoming of the Levite. "And when her father saw him he gladly welcomed him. His father-in-law, the girl's father, prevailed upon (נָלַח) him to stay." There is the possibility that the narrator never intended such a strong distinction, but it is strange that there is total silence
concerning the daughter, and the narrative moves along quite rapidly when recounting the daughter's return. When the concubine brings the Levite into the house, she disappears, the narrative slows dramatically, and the father's responses are given intricate detail. Is this the narrator's manner of casting the father of the concubine in an ambiguous light? Or is he simply skipping the insignificant for what he deems to be significant?

Scene One (19:2b-4)

After she had been there four months, her husband went to her to speak to her heart. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her father's house, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him. His father-in-law, the girl's father, prevailed upon him to stay, so he remained with him three days, eating and drinking, and sleeping there.

The reader of this treatise may wonder why the author has entitled this section the "father-in-law" instead of the "concubine's father". This particular pericope explains much of the reasoning; the narrator by his emphases considers the father-in-law relationship to be much more prominent. There is no known response given to his daughter. There is no conversation between father and daughter. The daughter brings in her husband and she immediately disappears. Then begins this almost ludicrous hospitality of the father-in-law toward the Levite. The Levite returned to speak to the heart of his wife and ends up excluding her by partying for days with his father-in-law.

The reader should be asking why the father-in-law practically trips over himself in attending to the Levite.
The answer to the question will reveal much about the characterization of the father-in-law. If one reads Chs. 17-18, he soon learns that in this time in Israel the Levites were looked to quite differently than what was intended in the Mosaic code. The majority of this topic will be taken up when the characterization of the Levite is discussed. The Levites in both stories of Judges 17-21 are greatly respected with a "magical" veneration. After viewing Micah's thievery from his own family, and subsequent syncretistic idol making, setting up his own shrine, and his practice of nepotism in appointing a non-Levite son as his priest, the reader is told that, "In those days (of Micah) Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." After this statement a young Levite from Bethlehem-Judah sojourns to the hill country of Ephraim. This Levite meets Micah and once Micah discovers his priesthood he welcomes him to remain with him and be "his father and priest". Micah then makes the ironical, pompous statement, "Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest". The idolatrous, thieving Danites possess the same view toward the Levite that Micah did, "Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" By these examples, the people in that day believed if they possessed a Levite, they possessed Yhwh. Worship of Yhwh was somehow magical and He could be manipulated for blessing by the very presence of a
This author posits that the Father-in-law within this same context most likely held the similar beliefs as Micah and the Danites, hence, the real motivation of his over generous hospitality. The father-in-law believed somehow that the Levite would bring Yhwh's blessing to his house, therefore his almost comic efforts to prevail upon the Levite to stay. This theory is also supported by the former discussion of the ignoring of the concubine against the overwhelming emotion toward the Levite. In a time "when every man did what was right in his own eyes" a major element of their blind worship included this view toward the Levite and Yhwh which was held by Micah, the Danites, and now possibly the father-in-law.

Edward M. Good summarizes their view beautifully:

The chief enemy of faith in the Old Testament is magic. By magic is not meant the entertaining slight-of-hand tricks 'magicians' do, but the virtual structure of life in the ancient Near East, assumes that a vast blind source of power awaits utilization to fulfill man's desires. When the correct formula is uttered or acted, the power source, which has no motive mechanism in itself, is stirred into the desired action. At the bottom of magic, then, is the very powerful assumption that man has a way to ensure his own success in life.\(^{15}\)

Scene One (19:5-8)

On the fourth day they got up early and he prepared to leave, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, 'Refresh yourself with something to eat; then you can go.' So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Afterward the girl's father said, 'Please stay tonight and enjoy yourself.' And when the man got up to go, his father-in-law persuaded him, so he stayed there that night. On the morning of the fifth day, when he rose

to go, the girl's father said, 'Refresh yourself. Wait till afternoon!' So the two of them ate together.

The father-in-law's excessive hospitality would be comical except that according to the narrator's account the concubine is left out of the enjoyment. As mentioned in the characterization of the concubine, there is significant variation in this scene between the personal pronouns and the nomenclature:

They got up early
He prepared to leave
Girl's father said to his son-in-law
So the two of them sat down
The man got up to go
Father-in-law persuaded him
So he stayed there that night
When he rose to go
Girl's father said
So the two of them ate together

Probably the major ambiguity of this passage is whether the father-in-law is persuading the Levite to stay for his own benefit or to keep his daughter with him as long as possible. This author takes the former view because of the previous discussion and now the narrator's obvious portrayal of the concubine's exclusion. The father-in-law does the talking, the Levite makes the decisions, and the two of them sit down to eat together. The reader must ask, in her father's house where is the concubine? The reader gets the impression that the Levite is doing his best to leave the house of the father-in-law and just cannot get away from the man. The father-in-law in turn uses every available means to get the Levite to stay. When morning comes, he wants the Levite to "refresh"
himself and leave in the evening; when evening comes, he wants him to wait until the morning, and on it goes. The father-in-law uses two strong words in detaining the Levite: "prevail" (מְלַא), and "persuade" (לָשֵׁעַ). The father-in-law's "grasping" of the Levite will ironically lead to the Levite's "grasping" of his concubine to sacrifice her. His "persuasion" (לָשֵׁעַ) is reminiscent of Lot's "persuading" the visitors to stay (Gen. 19:3) and the wicked men's "placing pressure" on Lot to get to the guests (19:9).

Scene One (19:9-10a)

Then when the man, with his concubine and his servant, got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said, 'Now look, it's almost evening. Spend the night here; the day is nearly over, stay and enjoy yourself. Early tomorrow morning you can get up and be on your way home.' But unwilling to stay another night, the man left...

When the reader approaches this last part of scene one, the cycle of preparing to leave, persuasion to remain, the subsequent decision to stay, and the "two" of them eating together seems that it will continue indefinitely. The father-in-law made one last impassioned appeal to keep the Levite and his entourage with him, but finally late in the evening this fails. The father-in-law's most lengthy appeal is framed with the man, the concubine, and his servant preparing to leave and then the curt statement that "the man left".

In usual fashion, the reader knows nothing of the father-in-law's response toward his daughter and her leaving. What is important in this scene concerning the father-in-law is not...
primarily what he said but what he did not say or do. Even in the concubine’s father’s house, she disappears from the view of the reader except to appear occasionally as some sort of phantom. As with the rest of the characters in this narrative, the father-in-law has no name and is described by familial nomenclature only. The father-in-law is an agent who has emotions and motives, and the reader is allowed to view some of his inner life. At best, the father-in-law is cast in an ambiguous role toward his daughter and his son-in-law. At worst, he, in the line of Micah and the Danites, was an opportunist who cared nothing of his daughter while using the Levite for his own benefit.

The Old Host And the Gibeahites

Scene Three (19:15-17)

There (Gibeah) they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night. That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was sojourning in Gibeah (the mean of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going? Where did you come from?"

The transition has been made now from Bethlehem-Judah by way of Jebus to Gibeah in Benjamin. The reader will recall the Levite’s arrogant response to the servant’s suggestion to stay in Jebus, "No we won’t go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites." The Levite was intent to reach an "Israelite" city, Gibeah or Ramah in Benjamin. With this statement, the reader who does not know the ending might suspect that if the Levite and his entourage makes either of these two cities, they will be safe. Undoubtedly, the Levite
expected Gibeah of Israel to be a friendlier and safer city than Jebus of the Canaanites. Considering the completion of this story, both the Levite and the reader are set up for the ironic happenings soon to come to pass.

"They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night".

What a contrast from the hospitality of the father-in-law. Maybe the narrator intended to emphasize the father-in-law's farcical hospitality against that of the people of Gibeah. Not only has the Levite made a geographical transition, he has also made a drastic change from hospitality into inhospitality. Already with this statement the reader is beginning to see the irony of the Levite's pompous statement. They have passed an alien Canaanite city for a city in Israel, but once they are there, no hospitality is existent—they sit in the city square. Here in Gibeah, a Levite in his own country is treated as an alien with no place to stay; the reader can envision the "aliens" sitting in a "strange" city with no one who will offer any hospitality. The narrator is also beginning to give subtle clues as to the kind of people who reside in Benjamin in Gibeah.

This story can also be contrasted with the story presented in Gen. 19. As opposed to this account, the strangers in Sodom are met immediately in the square by Lot. The story in Genesis 19 will be important as a contrast with the scene of the old host. Stuart Lasine has done an
excellent study of the analogy of the two texts.\textsuperscript{16} Lasine notes the "inverted, topsy-turvy" world relayed in Judges 19 and the old host when contrasted with Genesis 19 and Lot as the host. "The use of the material from Genesis 19 allows the reader to contrast the situations at Gibeah and Sodom so that he can see how the old host inverts Lot’s hospitality into inhospitality...".\textsuperscript{17}

"That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim who was sojourning in Gibeah".

After the Levite, etc. had sat in the city square for some unknown time someone does appear on the scene and offers his home for them to reside for the night. Ironically though, the hospitable host is not one from Gibeah, but the hill country of Ephraim. Unlike the people of Gibeah, the old host who was alien to the city shows concern for the travelers. Typically in the ancient Near East, hospitality involved more than simple provisions and a place to rest for the night, "traditionally, hospitality included asylum for guest. Customarily, one could remain under his host’s roof for three days in safety, and receive protection for a given time after


\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 37, "The dependence (of Judges 19 on Gen 19) is ‘one-sided’ because a reader can fully understand the story of Lot’s hospitality in Sodom without knowing the story of the Levite’s concubine, whereas the events described in Judges 19 must be viewed together with Genesis 19 for the intended contrast between the two situations to make the reader aware of the topsy-turvy nature of the ‘hospitality’ in Gibeah."
hospitality... is a necessity of life in the desert, but among the nomads this necessity has become a virtue, and a most highly esteemed one. The guest is sacred. The honor of providing for him is disputed, but generally falls to the sheikh. The stranger can avail himself of this hospitality for three days, and even after leaving he has a right to protection for a given time.19

The narrator is continuing his negative portrayal of the Gibeahites by presenting their refusal to be hospitable. A lack of hospitality was both a contradiction of social institution and the Mosaic code. The Levite had refused to reside in an alien city while purposing to enter an Israelite city. Once he was there no one in the city provides a basic code of hospitality recognized even by Israel's alien neighbors. To further contrast the Gibeahites, one who sojourns (γίνεσθαι) in their city offers hospitality. This topic will be dealt with later with the Levite, but the (γίνεσθαι) was a familiar concept both in the ancient Near East and in the Hebrew scriptures. The (γίνεσθαι) was an alien who "had come in", and the Mosaic code accorded protection and provisions for all the aliens within the borders of Israel. "The alien (γίνεσθαι) living (γίνεσθαι) among you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord Your God" (Lev. 19:34); "Whatever the land yields..."18


during the Sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident (אַל) who lives among (יִהְיֶה) you," (Lev. 25:6). In an ironic twist, the narrator portrays the alien (אַל) who lives (יִהְיֶה) among the Gibeahites as the one who offers hospitality to the stranger (19).

The men of the place were Benjaminites'.

This is the second time in this scene the narrator has mentioned the tribe of Benjamin. By this point in the story there should be no doubt that the narrator is foreshadowing the importance of the tribe of Benjamin as it relates to the overall story. With this oppositional statement he is slowly working his way toward the devastating civil war which is yet to come.

With the contrast of the old host and the men of Gibeah, the reader immediately has a favorable opinion toward the host and a disfavorable opinion toward the men of Gibeah. With the Levite’s detailed description of his own provisions, the narrator pours more contempt upon the Gibeahites. They could have taken in this man with no expense to themselves.

Scene Three (19:20-22a)

"You are welcome at my house; the old man said. Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square. So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink. While they were enjoying themselves..."

This scene of the old host and his hospitality is one of the most beautiful scenes in the Old Testament. Few passages in the Bible portray such care given to alien travelers. The
old host is analogous both to Rebekkah and Laban in their generous hospitality toward Abraham’s servant.

Genesis 24

"We have plenty of straw and fodder for you as well as room for you to spend the night." "Come, you who are blessed by the Lord, ‘He said, why are you standing out here: I have prepared the house and a place for the camels’. So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels and water for him and his men to wash their feet. Then food was set before them..."

Judges 19

"You are welcome at my house; the old man said. ‘Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square.’ So he took them into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.

When the Levite came into the city there was a dearth of hospitality, and now the old host showers him with everything he might need. The narrator is yet portraying the host a favorable character who vigorously cares for the travelers.

There is a note of urgency though in the old host’s statement, "Only don’t spend the night in the square." This is reminiscent of Lot’s persuading the two guests to spend the night in his home, "My Lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No", they answered, "We will spend the night in the square." But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house", (Gen 19:2-3). The old host is compared with Lot in this story; and yet, contrasted with the "wicked men" of
Gibeah just as Lot was with the men of Sodom. Both men living in a dangerous city know the results of allowing the men to reside in the city square for the night, therefore their insistence to come under the protection of their roofs. Interestingly, whereas the concubine was never allowed to experience the enjoyment of her father's house, the old host embraces the Levite, his concubine, and his servant, and instead of the "two" of them eating alone they all eat and drink together. Thus, the old host is in many ways more hospitable to the concubine than her own father who was known for his excessive hospitality. Up to this point in the narrative, the narrator presents the old host as a generous character in the midst of a city of selfish characters. So far, the old host has no ambivalent quality about him.

The words, "while they were enjoying themselves", signals a change in the tone of the story. Could it be that the narrator is alerting the reader that something significant is upon the scene? Except for a few minor complications, the story line has ascended until these foreboding words. The Levite with his entourage and the old host were finally in the safety of a house enjoying themselves unwitting of the imminent disaster.

Scene Three (19:22b)

Some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house. 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.'

Some of the men of Gibeah, however, had different plans
for the night. Suddenly and ominously, the entire narrative switches from ascending to descending circumstances which will eventually culminate in incredible disaster. The narrator does not implicate all of Gibeah, only "some of the men". In a rare exposure on the part of the narrator, he leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader as to the character of these men. They were "men of Belial". Analogous to the "violation" of the concubine and its relation to the Deuteronomic code, this phrase "men of Belial" occurs in Dt. 13:12-13, "If you hear it said about one of the towns of Yhwh your God is giving you to live in that wicked men have risen among you and have led the people of their own town astray, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods...'". There is also the possibility of the interrelationship with the sons of Eli who are called "wicked men" (1 Sam. 2:12). The narrator’s overt statement is shocking in this pericope because he is so silent about all the other characters. The reader must interpret the other characters with subtle but textually verifiable implications, but he has no question about "some of the men of Gibeah".

Once again, the narrative pace slows during the second hospitality scene and then picks up. In the transition, these wicked men appear and then immediately surround the house—the surrounding of the house here in Judges 19, "Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house". Interestingly, this surrounding of the guest’s house by the
men of Gibeah will soon lead to the surrounding of the men of Gibeah by Israel (20:29).

Very quickly, with no delay, the men reveal their true intentions toward the guest of the house. The narrator has made it very clear that the inhospitable men who cared nothing of the strangers previously are now passionate to know (מְמַשְּׂרָה) the man. Compare this portrayal of the men's inordinate desires with that given in Genesis 19:

Genesis 19                    Judges 19
They called to Lot. 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.' Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, "bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him".

Obviously, the two texts are very similar even down to particular vocabulary. What distinguishes the two texts dramatically is the obviously disparate settings. Though the reader of Genesis 19 is shocked at the circumstances that take shape, he most likely expects such things from an alien city which Yhwh is ready to destroy because of its infamous wickedness. Gibeah, however, is an Isrealite city within the tribe of Benjamin. Furthermore, Gibeah, possibly was one of the forty-eight cities set aside for the protection and provision of the Levites in the land (Josh. 21:17). In direct contrast to the Levite's pompous refusal to reside in Jebus, Gibeah offers no hospitality to Israelite aliens who possess their own provisions, and now, the men of Gibeah take on in a
similar type-scene the words and actions of the wicked men of Sodom. These obvious parallels between the two accounts subtly implies that Gibeah, within the tribe of Benjamin, within the land of Israel is now the prototypical wicked city. Sadly, some of the men of Gibeah were no better than the Sodomites who were later exterminated by Yhwh. By subtle implications of the narrator, the reader wonders whether the Levite and his entourage would have been safer and more protected had they elected to stay in Jebus for the night. Against this background, the narrator subtly but forcefully begins to characterize both the old host and the Gibeahites as "wicked men".

Scene Three (19:23-24)

The owner of the house went outside and said to them, 'No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don't do such a disgraceful thing'.

With the narrator's initial characterization of the old host, there seems to be hope that maybe there is one man who is not an opportunistic prig as the other characters presented so far. The reversion of this world in which "every man does what is right in his own eyes" is supported by the particular supple technique of characterization utilized by the narrator. One hopes that the father will protect and care for his daughter, when in reality he is more concerned with his own concerns. One is given hope when he is told that the Levite comes back to "speak to his wife's heart", but instead, he
never acknowledges her presence. Finally, one hopes that the generous old host who is contrasted with the selfish, wicked Gibeahites will be one man who will do the right thing. The reader though is disappointed when he views the old host’s generosity now extend to his own virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine. Ironically, the old host who initially offers his home for the safety and protection of the travelers, will offer the two women for the use of the “wicked men”.

A careful study of the parallels between Judges 19 and Gen 19 in general and Lot and the old host in particular will continue to aid the reader’s understanding of the character of the old host.

The analogy of these two passages reveals multitudinous and multilevel contrasts and comparisons. As observed earlier, comparison of the men of Gibeah with the men of Sodom exposed much of the character of the Gibeahites, but subtly the narrator intensifies the wickedness of the Gibeahites because "the men of place were Benjamites". Now continuing the interrelationship with Judges 19 and Genesis 19, the reader notices both similarities but differences between Lot and the old host. As if to leave no doubt, the narrator now signals the descent of the old host into the blindness of the other characters. Oddly, the old host’s excessive hospitality, like the father-in-law’s, will usher disaster into his home and then to the entire nation of Israel.
Lasine argues that the old host is practically mimicking Lot in his confrontation of the men of Gibeah, "He follows Lot’s example so precisely that it is almost as though he were following a ‘script’." The similarities between the two accounts are astounding. Suffice it to say that Lot’s words and actions are deplorable in their own right. In the narrative section dealing with Lot, he is characterized in an ambiguous role. He pitches his tent near Sodom, and eventually resides in Sodom sitting in the gate of the city most likely as an elder (Gen 19:1). As a stark contrast, Lot could reside in a city that was upon the precipice of virtual destruction. Lot was protected not because of his righteousness and intercession with Yhwh but Abraham’s. Later in the narrative he is duped into incestual relationships with his daughters. To begin with, this is the man whom the old host is compared to. He, like Lot, goes outside the house to meet the men, he addresses them as brothers, asks them not to do this wicked thing (יָרֵע), and offers two women to be ravaged by the mob. Under such circumstances, the comparison alone is condemning of the old host.

If the similarities are revealing and condemnatory, the dissimilarities between the old host and Lot say much more. Just like other characters in this narrative (the father-in-law’s hospitality, the Levite’s response, and Israel’s response toward Benjamin), the old host is excessive in his

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20"Guest and Host in Judges 19", p. 39.
words and actions. Since the old host does not have two virgin daughters, he offers his own daughter and the Levite’s concubine as she was his to offer. Lasine argues,

The ‘script’ calls for the two women to be offered to the mob. The host has only one virgin daughter, so he must include the guest’s concubine in order to act at his role; although this characterization of the host’s action exaggerates the mechanical way in which his behavior ‘follows’ Lot’s, it does highlight the ludicrous and self-defeating nature of his action, when it is compared to Lot.

Like Lot, the old host offers the women to the men to do "what is good in their eyes"; but unlike Lot he proceeds further and invites the men to "violate" the women. It has been noted how the old host’s use of this word explicitly contradicts the stipulation in the Deuteronomic code (Dt. 21:14). This verb (יָבַשֵׁת) is also used in the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 and Tamar 2 Sam 13. Incredibly, the host brazenly offers his daughter and another man’s wife; he then speaks one of the most pungent ironies of the story. In the same words of Lot, he asks the men not to do something so "wicked" (יָבַשֵׁת), and

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21It is fascinating to note the excessive responses in this narrative section toward other accounts in the Old Testament. The father-in-law’s hospitality is excessive compared to such accounts as Genesis 24; the Levite’s response is excessive to Saul’s mustering of the tribes (I Sam 11); the response of Israel’s committing the ban against itself instead of against the people of Ai (Josh 8) is excessive; and the host’s response is excessive to Lot’s interactions. In a strange, disorderly interplay, all of these excessive responses lead to destruction.

then adds "don't do this disgraceful thing" (נָמַל). This sentence occurs twice in this pericope ironically forming an inclusio around the offer of the two women for the sake of the man.

Now the old host proceeds to the baseness of the aforementioned characters. In the last pericope the narrator uses several techniques of characterization to show the old host to be callous and opportunistic. Sadly, what distinguishes the account of Lot and this account of the old host is the obvious absence of Yhwh. Like Lot, the host asks the men to do with his daughter and guest, "what is good in their eyes". But the Judges story in contrast has no blinding of the men's eyes. Instead of the angels averting the danger of the men by blinding them, the Levite with the sanction of his compatriot will send his own wife out for the men to "do what was right in their eyes". Progressively, each character involved with the concubine gives concrete portrayal of "every man doing what is right in his eyes".

With both the old host and the Gibeahites, the narrator begins their characterization by casting them in a favorable

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"The word (נָמַל) calls the reader's mind to Gen. 34:7, "They (Jacob's sons) were filled with grief and fury, because Schechen had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter—a thing that should not be done", and Dt. 22:20-21, "If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing (נָמַל) in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house."
role. The narrator wants the reader to expect something positive from these characters, and then suddenly their true natures are revealed and the reader has been set up. Both the old host and the Gibeahites are agents of the plot which the reader first observes in a favorable role, then an ambiguous role, and then finally another graphic picture of men doing right in their eyes. When these characters are compared to other despicable characters in similar type-scenes, they emerge with even darker sides than their wicked counterparts. The reader is allowed to view some of their inner life through their discourse and their actions.

The Levite

Scene One (19:1a-b)

In those days Israel had no king. Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim. . . .

The narrator's syntax in these sentences seems to place great contrast between the absence of a king and the presence of a Levite. The Hebrew is more specific, "and there was (נַע) in those days no king in Israel and there was (יָכ) a man (עַמ), a Levite, a sojourner (גָּו)." The narrator reiterates his overriding theme and then immediately brings the Levite upon the scene. This is speculation, but maybe the narrator is completing his truncated statement, "In those days Israel had no king" with "Now there was a Levite from the hill country of Ephraim." This same phenomenon may be occurring in 18:1, "In those days Israel had no king. And in those days
wherein two of his formulaic sayings are completed with "every man did what was right in his eyes"; in these two passages he is immediately introducing a man and a tribe who does what is right in their eyes--using graphic portrayals of characters to complete his thoughts.

Though it is obvious, the fact that the main character is a Levite in this narrative is significant. Whether he is a Levite who functions as a priest the reader is never told. This Levite theme continues the importance of the Levite priest found in Judges 17-18. In this Micah-Danite section of the narrative, the Levite is undoubtedly a priest who functions in that capacity. After sojourning (נַע) from Bethlehem-Judah he becomes the personal priest for Micah and then under the compulsion of a more profitable opportunity he moves on to become the priest of a tribe rather than one house. The character of the young Levite with his syncretism and opportunism in Judges 17-18 blends well with every other character. He too adds another portrayal of "every man doing right in his own eyes". Up to this point in Israel's history Moses and Aaron had led the people out of the land, Joshua had led them into the land, and Yhwh had sent charismatic leaders

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called "judges" to deliver the people from oppression and destruction within their own land. Now in a time of no leadership, the people took to the Levite for their own version of leadership. As will be examined later, Judges is in direct contrast with the successes of Joshua under the leadership of Joshua. Joshua though dies in the beginning of the period of Judges and he is buried in the hill country of Ephraim. It is odd now that the Levite looked to as a leader in the closing chapter of Judges comes from the hill country of Ephraim.

The Levite was appointed by Yhwh to function as priests in representing the people of Yhwh (Numb. 3,8,18). Whereas provision was made for judges in the Deuteronomic code, so also the Levites were appointed to judge situations between the people (Dt. 17:9). Further, the Levites were the keepers of the law so that when kingship did arise in the land, the king was to take the law from the Levites (Dt 17:18; 21:5; 27:9; 33:8; 10). Most importantly though, the Levites were to teach and exposit the law to the people in representing Yhwh to the people (Dt. 17:18; 33d:10; 2 Chron. 17:7-9). They were also keepers of the law in that they were responsible for carrying the ark which was a repository of the law (Dt. 17:18; 31:9,25-16). "Indeed, the legal work of the tribe of Levi was probably the most extensive and important function, especially when we note the breadth of meaning given to the word
Torah." The priests were also to instruct the people prior to entering into battle with their enemies (Dt. 20:2). "In the older period it was probably the regular practice for a man of God to seek to determine the issue of military operations by blessing his own people and putting the enemy under sacral prescription...". Against this Deuteronomistic background the Levite enters the story supposedly as a visible portrayal of Yhwh's righteousness. How distant this concept is from the portrayal of the two Levites in this narrative.

The text states the Levite is one who sojourns in the uttermost part of the hill country of Ephraim. This author has already observed the old host's sojourning (יָנָה) in the city of Gibeah (19:16). This same concept is also used in describing the young Levite in Chs. 17-18. "He left that town in search of some other place to stay (יָנָה). On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. Micah asked him, 'Where are you from'? 'I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah', he said, 'and I'm looking for a place to stay'" (יָנָה). According to Deuteronomy 18:6 it was not abnormal for the Levite to move from a city he was living in to minister

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before Yhwh. The Levite was most likely a sojourner because of his lack of land and inheritance, Yhwh allocated forty-eight cities to the Levites with a specific plot of land in each city. The Levite in many ways was dependent upon the people of the land for their care and provision. In this vein of thought, he is grouped with the widows, orphans, and aliens (72) (12:12,18-19; 14:27-29; 16:11-14; 18:6; 26:11-13). Ideally, if the stipulations of the Deuteronomic code were observed, the Levite sojourning in Israel would have been cared for. Of course, the ministering priests officiating in the cultic sacrifices partook of a tenth of the people’s offerings.

Scene One (19:1c)

Took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But she rejected him. She left him and went back to her father’s house in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months, her husband went to speak to her heart. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her father’s house, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him.

"If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living, and comes in all earnestness to the place the Lord will choose, he may minister in the name of the Lord his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the Lord. ‘He is to share equally in the benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions.’ Take note though that the young Levite in Micah’s account sojourner not for Yhwh’s sake but where the most profit could be gained.

"When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the Tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Then say to the Lord your God, ‘I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them’."
The syntax of the Hebrew relates the concubine closely to the Levite, "a man, a Levite...took a wife, a concubine." This particular section of the pericope is rife with ambiguities about the Levite. It has already been noted that the concubine’s leaving the Levite is one of the most nebulous actions of the story. The reader gets an ambivalent feeling toward the Levite: Did he cause the concubine to leave or did she really leave him for her own desires? Why does the Levite take a concubine—is she truly a second wife to the Levite? Why did he wait four months before returning to his wife? These questions will never be answered by the reader, but so far the Levite is cast into a questionable light.

The narrator states that the Levite returns to "speak to her heart". Few statements evoke more pathos than this comment. This same image is used in Genesis 34, "His (Shechem’s) heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her" (נַלְמָדָא לֵיכְרֵךְ כְּלֵי יַעֲקֹב, וַיֵּלֶד ה גֹּלֶה אֶל דְּנָה אֹתֶרְכָּה); Gen 50:21, "So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them" (נַלְמָדָא לֵיכְרֵךְ כְּלֵי יַעֲקֹב); and Hosea 2:14, "Therefore, I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her" (נַלְמָדָא לֵיכְרֵךְ כְּלֵי יַעֲקֹב). Unfortunately nothing else is said about the Levite’s speaking to his wife’s heart—he comes to speak to his wife and ends up partying with his father-in-law. In fact, the only time the narrator portrays the Levite speaking to her is when he callously commands his abused wife to get up
and go on with him. The narrator as with other characters in this story has intentionally raised the reader's hopes and then dashed them as quickly. The ambivalent portrayal of the Levite is becoming increasingly negative.

Three times the text mentions that the Levite was traveling with a servant and two donkeys (19:3,10). The Levite himself mentions the fact that he travels with all his own provisions. "We don't need anything." Is this the narrator's implication that the Levite is a man of means? If this is so, the Levite is a stark contrast with his wife who is not a woman of means and is totally at the mercy of her society. How this Levite came into such possessions the reader is not told. Does the fact that he has a concubine also indicate his wealth?

Scene Two (19:10-15)

But, unwilling to stay another night, the man left and went toward Jebus...with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine. When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, 'Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night.' His master replied, 'No, we won't go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah. 'He added, 'Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places.

Considering the outcome of this story, what the Levite says is incredible. Oddly, this is the first time the Levite has been allowed to speak. Everything he has done up to this point has been portrayed through the viewpoint of the narrator. The Levite came to Bethlehem-Judah to speak to his wife's heart, but he is never allowed to speak. Now that the
narrator does allow him to speak, he speaks a pompous statement that once again provokes ambivalent feelings. What the Levite says makes good sense and may have been the right thing to do. After completing the story though, hindsight proves this statement to be foolhardy. The Levite most likely genuinely expected the cities of Gibeah or Ramah to be much safer than Jebus, a city of Canaanites. Once again the narrator has subtly compared the men of Gibeah with the Canaanites, once again the men of Gibeah are found wanting. This is the only time the servant speaks, and he recommends remaining in the city of Jebus for the night.

The reader wonders if this wholesale destruction presented would have happened if the Levite had heeded his Servant by staying in a city of aliens. Is the narrator subtly implying that all would have been well if the Levite had listened to his servant and stayed in the alien city?

It is interesting to note how easily the whole ghastly situation could have been averted by a few close decisions. If the Levite and his entourage would have left early in the morning, these events probably would have never come to pass. Had the Levite not been so pompous in his attitude toward Jebus, maybe he would have stayed there, and the chain of disaster might not have begun. The characters, both the father-in-law and the Levite, respond unwittingly with some major decisions as if nothing like what happens could ever come to pass in Israel. Maybe it’s simply the way the
narrator is portraying the unavoidable sequence of events, but there seems to be a shared character trait among these men that they are oblivious to any consequences of their actions. Did they not think that there was danger by leaving so late in the evening or that something deplorable could happen in an Israelite city? Or were the men like the reader shocked at such happenings in their day?

**Scene Two (19:14-15)**

So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night.

"Fortunately" the Levite and his entourage approach Gibeah just as the sun was setting. Knowing what the Levite said previously, he must have felt quite secure to be in the city square. The text does not linger and soon the Levite discovers that no one in the city of Israel will take him in, "and no man gathered them into his house to spend the night". One can attempt to envision the disbelief of the Levite as he watches the people of Gibeah pass by the haggard travelers. The Levite's shock at the Gibeonites inhospitality is confirmed by his second speech recounting his provisions, "We have both straw and fodder for our donkey's and bread and wine for ourselves your servants--me, your maidservant, and the young man with us. We don't need anything". This detailing of the Levite makes this author think that this is further support of his disbelief that these vents could happen in an Israelite city. It has been noted that this passage in the Bible...
provisions augments the negative characterization of the wicked men of Gibeah, but with the Levite it also reveals his utter disbelief that even with his own provisions, no Gibeahite would take him in. The Levite’s first statement recounts the superiority of the city of Gibeah to the city of Jebus, and now in disbelief his second speech betrays his first.

"And now I am going to the house of the Lord."

This comment seems incongruous with all that follows in the story. Was the Levite simply expressing this to impress the old host or was he truly on his way to the house of the Lord, most likely in Shiloh? This statement is plausible because the Levite was on the road to Shiloh. If the statement was superfluous one on the part of the Levite, this would seem to be more in line with his overall behavior. This worship of Yhwh with no real practical, legal, or relational implications for their everyday lives is quite typical in Judges 17-21. Micah mixed Yhwh worship with idolatry, the young Levite conceded, the Danites followed suit, and now it appears that the Levite falls right in order.

Scene Three (19:25-26)

But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and
sent her outside to them, they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go.

At this juncture in the narrative, the Levite loses any ambiguity as to his character. He too is an opportunist who sends his wife out in his place to be abused. Ironically, the God-appointed keeper of the law, breaks the law to protect himself. The one who was appointed to sacrifice for the people, sacrifices his wife to the people.

Unlike the account concerning Lot, this story ends in shame and disaster. In Genesis 19, Yhwh is ever present to protect Lot, his family, and the guests of the house. In a striking contrast, Yhwh is strangely silent throughout the narrative and there is no divine protection for the inhabitants of the house. Whereas the angels are powerful to blind the men to avert their wickedness, the Levite is impotent and instead offers his wife for the men to do "what was good in their eyes".

The narrator summarily but graphically describes the rape and abuse of the concubine. Instead of protecting his wife with whatever means necessary, the Levite offers her to protect himself. Unfortunately for the Levite unlike Lot he was required to make a decision. He chose to allow his wife to receive the denigration intended for him.
When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, 'Get up; let's go.' But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home.

Ludicrous and callous behavior and character traits. Lasine deftly notes that, "The juxtaposition of serious and ludicrous behavior in Judges 19 can best be illustrated in reference to the description of the concubine's death and the Levites' 'reaction' to it". In contrast to the abused concubine's collapsing at the doorstep, the Levite now rises in the morning to be going on his way. He walks outside intending "to continue on his way" with no apparent thought of his wife. The narrator's manner of writing this scene evokes intense pathos for the concubine, "there was his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold." The Levite though acts as if all was well and nothing had happened that night. Sadly, the concubine had endeavored to get back into the house "where her master ([ת") was." When the Levite had come to "speak to her heart" the narrator called him "her husband". Now twice the text in this scene declared the Levite to be her "master" ([ת") . The concubine had been raped and abused throughout the night, while her husband
appears to have gotten a good night's sleep and leaves the	house as if nothing really happened that night. At this point
the Levite's callous behavior is absurdly incredulous.

The man who came to speak to his wife now speaks to her.
He is responsible for this nightmare--she is pathetically
fallen in the doorway, and her husband commands her, "get up;
let's go". The Levite's callousness is practically
inconceivable and outrages the reader like few scenes do.
Once again in stark contrast, the concubine does not answer
the man. "The lack of response from the woman is mirrored by
the lack of any response from the Levite. We hear nothing of
his reaction to what he sees before him."  

Scene Four (19:29)

When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb
by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel.

As if the tragedy-comedy could get any worse, the Levite
in this last scene with his concubine commits one of the most
ghastly, acts known not only in the scriptures but to mankind.
The overriding ambiguity of this passage is whether the
concubine died at the threshold of the old host's home or
whether the Levite murdered her and then dismembered her.
Polzin argues, "perhaps the most outrageous thing of all is
that neither the story itself nor the following story within

30Ibid., p. 45.
a story clarifies for us whether the concubine was alive or dead when the Levite dismembered her.\textsuperscript{31} Lasine contra Polzin states,

There is little doubt that the reader is meant to conclude that the concubine was dead (by the hands of the men of Gibeah), there is no justification for Polzin's view...that the narrator is being 'deliberately vague' about whether the concubine was dead when she was dismembered....

He further argues that the reader does not have the 'confused and ambiguous perspective that the Levite does, but this ambiguity is assumed to be cleared up by the reader's presupposing the natural course of events. According to Lasine, the ambiguity helps the reader 'to view his (the Levite's) obliviousness and topsy-turvy behavior from a detached perspective'.\textsuperscript{32}

This author, however, agrees with Polzin that the narrator has intentionally left a large gap as to how the man's concubine died. This fact though adds to the characterization of the Levite. Though the Levite needs little else revealed about him to prove his culpability, the narrator by use of this lacuna reflects upon the Levite in a most negative way. The reader will forever question whether the Levite murdered his own wife and then proceeded to dismember her. "Do we have an angry man murdering his abused


\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.
concubine by dismemberment, or simply (!) the dismemberment of a corpse to constitute a bloody message about a bloody crime?" The narrator in one fell swoop of ambiguity has put both the men of Gibeah and the Levite in a questionable, murderous light.

The text repeats again the Levite's seizing his concubine but this time to dismember her. The father-in-law's seizing (יִהְיֶה) of the Levite led inadvertently to the Levite's seizing (יִהְיֶה) of his concubine to send (קִי) her out to the men of Gibeah, which in turn led the Levite to seize (יִהְיֶה) his concubine to dismember her in a macabre gesture. This dismembering by the Levite has a strange relationship with Saul's dismembering of the oxen to rally the tribes for battle (1 Samuel 11)." When the reader compares the two passages he will observe the absurdity of the Levite's actions compared to Saul's. Saul dismembers two oxen and he does so after the Spirit of God comes upon him; the Levite dismembers a human body (his wife) with detached emotion. The Levite, as opposed to Saul, gives no obvious, much less underlying, significance to his dismemberment. "Ironically, the Levite's dismemberment of his concubine almost leads to the annihilation of the very town which is later saved because Saul dismembers the

"Ibid., p. 201.

"See Lasine's excellent study on this relationship, "Guest and Host in Judges 19", pp. 41-43.
It is interesting to note that the Levite is compared to Israel's first king, Saul, under the leadership of Yhwh expended his energy to rally the tribes to protect Jabesh-Gilead, wherein the Levite foolishly uses excessiveness to rally the tribes with the result that Jabesh-Gilead is nearly destroyed.

Once again, the intended contrast, between the two situations point up the perversity of the events described in Judges 19-21, and thus, the topsy-turvy nature of a world in which the people do what is good in their eyes, without a king to stand in their way.34

Scene Four (19:30)

Everyone who saw it said, 'Such a thing has never been seen or done. Not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Think about it! Consider it! Tell us what to do!'

The narrator is deftly moving from individuals in the story to the nation of Israel. He has moved from the city of Gibeah to the twelve tribes of Israel, and they now respond in astonishment. The narrator in this verse makes the transition closing out the Levite and his concubine and beginning the nation and it's civil war.

Whether the people are responding to the actions of the

33Ibid., p. 43.

34Ibid.
men of Gibeah or the Levite's dismemberment of his concubine, or both, is left ambiguous. In the words of the people, nothing of this scope or significance has come to pass since the inception of national Israel. Foreshadowing the destruction yet to come in the narrative, strikingly the people recognize the implications of the disaster but have no clue as to what to do in response. For the first time in national Israel there is no Moses, no Joshua, and no charismatic Judge to respond—only Israel as "one man".

The Levite under the hand of the narrator has played his role of opportunism, weakness, and deliberate inversion of the law all too well. When there was no leadership in the land, the Levite could have stood in the vacuum and upheld the law which in turn upheld the societal values so brazenly violated in this story. In a time when every man did right in his own eyes the only appointed leaders followed in the steps of the people. The Levite is the major character in Judges 19 and probably the only full-fledged character representing an individual. The Levite though is cast by many implications in an ambiguous role. In this narrative he plays the double role of subject and object—he is threatened with abuse and he abuses. In a number of ways he is a catalyst to the awful chain of events. If this is all Israel has to offer in leadership she is destined for destruction.
Israel as One Man

Scene Five (20:1-11) Israel Assembles as One Man

Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out as one man and assembled before the Lord in Mizpah. The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand soldiers armed with swords. (The Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah). Then the Israelites said, 'Tell us how this awful thing happened.'

These scenes concerning the civil war and its aftermath are much too long to be dealt with in detail. In this current treatise, unfortunately, brevity will be the rule for this characterization. It is significant that the narrator describes Israel with the term "one man" (יְיָ֖ן) three times (20:1,8,11). The narrator makes it clear that the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mizpah by his geographical details, 'from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead'. Even Gilead which had warred with Ephraim under Jephthah (12:4-5) now was united as "one man". The idea of "one man" adds to the narrator's thought of "a man" doing right in his own eyes but also to the future of Israel's civil war. The supremest irony in this story will be Israel's almost permanent dissolution of itself while acting as a unified entity. As with the other characters of this story, excluding the concubine, Israel as one man begins in a positive light—they assemble to question the Levite as to what happened in Gibeah; they are truly shocked at the Gibeah outrage and possibly what the Levite committed against his wife. They not
only assembled together but the text stipulates that they assembled "before Yhwh" and the "leaders of all the peoples of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God". With this last statement the narrator reiterates the unity of Israel; with a unique show of oneness the Israelites begin to address this "awful thing" in Israel. As mentioned previously, the only suspicion of things to come was Israel's question, "Tell us what to do!" While this is happening the narrator in a parenthetical statement informs the reader that Benjamin heard of Israel’s assemblage.

Scene Five (20:4-7) The Levite’s Recounting

So, the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, said, 'I and my concubine came to Gibeah to Benjamin to spend the night. During the night the men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house, intending to kill me. They raped my concubine and she died. I took my concubine, cut her into pieces and sent out one piece to each region of Israel's inheritance, because they committed this lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. Now, all you Israelites, speak up and give your verdict.'

The Levite in recounting his story, adds a detail or two and omits an important detail. Of course, he lies, or at least embellishes the actual circumstances of the event. The Levite states that the men intended to "kill" him most likely to redeem himself in the people's eyes. He too like the narrator omits whether the concubine died at the hands of the men of Gibeah or at his own hands. He simply states that the men raped (-navigation) his concubine, and she died (-navigation). He incredulously and pompously names the deed in appropriate
language--"lewd and disgraceful" נָשָׁה. The Levite too emphasizes the entire unity of all Israel when he calls upon them to decide. In a way, the Levite now calls upon the people to speak up and judge, just as the people in 19:30 had rhetorically declared similar thoughts. In a time when "every man does right in his own eyes" no one seems to know what to do concerning any of these matters.

Scene Five (20:8-11)

All the people rose as one man saying, 'None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house. But now this is what we'll do to Gibeah. We'll go up against it as the lot directs. We'll take ten men out of every hundred from all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred from a thousand, and a thousand from ten thousand, to get provisions for the army. Then, when the army arrives at Gibeah, in Benjamin, it can give them what they deserve for all this vileness done in Israel.' So all the men of Israel got together and united as one man against the city.

The narrator again artfully demonstrates the oneness of Israel and the unity of thoughts and actions. The pericope is framed by the "one man" description of Israel occurring both at the beginning and the end. If this were not obvious enough, the narrator in the words of the people declares that not one man (יְיָעַק בֶּן) will go home until Gibeah is punished. Then in unusual form, the narrator repeats the united resolve of the people. The people respond to the situation in an indignant manner. Unfortunately, they never question the Levite's story whether he was telling them the truth or not. As will be discussed later, the destruction of Ai in Joshua 7-8 has significant affinity with his story. In direct
contradiction to Yhwh’s stipulations concerning the “ban” (נָמַל) in Israel, Aachan keeps some of the booty for himself. Subsequent to and as a result of Aachen’s deed, Israel is defeated by the city of Ai. Israel in response to Yhwh’s direction comes before them tribe by tribe, clan by clan, and finally, family by family. Aachen and his family are destroyed and Israel proceeds to defeat Ai. In this story, Yhwh is strangely silent, the truth of the Levite’s wickedness is never known by the Israelites, and the people cast lots toward the destruction of Benjamin.

The people of Israel resolve themselves to punish “this vileness done in Israel (נָמַל)”. With this particular denunciation of Benjamin, the Israelites join the ranks of the father-in-law and the Levite in their same description of the events to Gibeah. It is also important to note that Israel takes the first of seemingly laudable but excessive vows. As will be seen later, these particular vows on the surface appear so good, but in reality they lead to unbelievable excessiveness and absurd, ludicrous behavior of the Israelites. These rash vows recall the reader’s remembrance of Jephthah’s vow leading to his daughter’s death and Saul’s foolhardy vow almost leading to Jonathan’s death except the people would not allow such a thing. The people rightly desire to respond to the deplorable situation, but they were oblivious to the Levite’s true behavior. So far, any question as to Israel’s character has only been implied by the
narrator.

**Scene Six** (20:12-13a) Israel's Demand to Relinquish the Gibeahites.

The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, 'What about this awful crime that was committed among you'? Now surrender those wicked men that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel.

The men of Israel, in opposition to the absurdity of the Levite, respond sanely to the situation as stipulated in the Deuteronomic code. The tribe of Benjamin is addressed (most probably the leaders) and they are commanded to give over the wicked men. The law allowed, yea required, such a response to the "evil thing" that occurred in Israel.

**Scene Seven** (13b-16)

But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites. From their towns they came together at Gibeah to fight against the Israelites. At once the Benjamites mobilized...

When the outrage of Gibeah occurred, the narrator stated that only "some of the men of Gibeah" surrounded the house. Now with the refusal of the Benjamites to relinquish the wicked men, the whole tribe and the city of Gibeah are implicated. Of course, had the Benjamites surrendered the men this insane debauchery probably would not have continued. Sadly though, the stubborn Benjamites for some unknown reason are quick to muster their men to take on the whole nation of
Israel. Even with 700 left-handed men as mighty warriors, Israel outnumbers Benjamin 400,000 to 26,700. Why was Benjamin so quick to war with Israel under such incredible odds? With these odds, Benjamin, if for no other reason than opportunism, should have given these men over. Their blind stubbornness will lead eventually to their destruction.

Scene Seven (20:17-28) Israel Assembles for Battle -

Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand swordsmen, all of them fighting men. The Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of God. They said, 'Who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites'? The Lord replied, 'Judah shall go first...'.

The events and tone of the story now take on comic proportions. The indignant Israelites now muster its forces to fight Benjamin. But first they must inquire of Elohim. Their question nudges the reader back to the beginning of the period of the Judges, "After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked Yhwh, 'who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites'? Yhwh answered, 'Judah is to go, I have given the land into their hands" (1:1-2). In a striking contrast, at the end of the account of Judges, instead of asking who will go up first against the Canaanites, Israel asks who will go up against themselves. Instead of viewing Judges as a series of cycles the narrator may be portraying Judges as a steady, downward spiral interconnected with all these repetitive cycles. Leaderless Israel, after countless years of apostasy, does what is right in their eyes
and this leads to their destruction.

Yhwh’s response is ambiguous in this part of the narrative. So much recounting of the story has occurred; and yet, this is the first mention of Yhwh’s involvement. However, with the data presented, the involvement is less than satisfying. In Judges 1, Yhwh responds to their inquiry, then reiterates his promise that the people will inherit the land, and then Judah proceeds to do battle and is victorious time and time again. Here though, there is no promise and Judah with Israel ends the first day of battle in defeat. The reader wonders if Yhwh really responded at all, and if he did, why this response and the subsequent defeat of Benjamin?

Soon after the defeat, Israel inquires of Yhwh the second time, but with this inquiry the text also states that they went before Yhwh until evening. Once again, Yhwh replies that they should “Go up against them”. What must have been in the minds of the people toward Yhwh the reader can only wildly conjecture.

Israel goes to battle with Benjamin for the second time, and for the second time they are defeated. Again, thoughts of Ai come to mind with the defeat of a large gathering of warriors by a small company. Israel inquires a third time with no recorded thoughts toward Yhwh and why they have been defeated. This time in their inquiry the intensity increases even more. The people, all the people sat before Yhwh weeping in Bethel. The narrator explains that they also fasted until
evening and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. With each inquiry the efforts escalate similar to the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The narrator then makes the strange comment that the ark was in Bethel and Phinehas the high priest was ministering. According to this, these events occurred within a generation of Joshua's death. Phinehas is mentioned in Josh. 24:33. "And Eleazar, son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son in the hill country of Ephraim." Oddly, a generation after Eleazar's death and burial in Gibeah, the debacle involving a Levite and his concubine occur in Gibeah. It is also fascinating that Phinehas' allotment like Joshua's was also in the hill country of Ephraim.

The third time Yhwh replies, but this reply includes the promise, "Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands", now Israel receives the response they so earnestly coveted.

**Scene Seven (20:29-48) Israel's Virtual Destruction of Benjamin.**

Ironically, now that Yhwh has promised the victory, Israel devises an intricate plan. This plan though is strangely familiar with the same battle plan utilized to destroy Ai in Josh. 8. Again analyzing the comparisons and contrasts between the two stories will greatly aid the interpreter's understanding of Israel as 'one man'. 
Joshua 8

1. Yhwh promises Joshua and encourages him (8:1a).
2. Israel may take the spoil (8:2).
3. Set an ambush behind the city (8:2b).
4. Israelis purposely flee from them to cure them (8:5, 6, 16).
5. "They are running away from us as they did before" (8:6).
6. "You are to rise up from the Ambush and take the city" (8:7).
7. "Behind the City" (8:4).
8. Joshua set up ambush (8:9).
10. After a defeat (7).
11. King of Ai didn't know about ambush (8:14).
12. "Men in the ambush rose quickly and rushed forward" (8:19), they surrounded the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire (8:19).
13. "Ai saw the smoke of the city rising up" (8:20).
14. Ai had no chance to escape in any direction.
15. Israel fleeing toward desert (8:24).
17. "I will give them into your hands".
18. Went back to Ai and killed those in it—Dest. all who lived in Ai (8:26-27).

Judges 20

4. Israelis "draw" the bows out (Jud. 20:31-32).
5. "We are defeating them as before" (20:32, 39).
6. "And the Israelite ambush charged out of its place" (20:33).
7. "West of Gibeah" (20:33, 36).
8. Israel set up ambush (20:29).
10. After a defeat (20).
11. "Did not realize how near disaster was" (20:35).
12. And the Israelite ambush charged out of its place (20:33), "made a sudden dash onto Gibeah, spread out and ran the whole city to the sword" (20:37).
13. "Turned and saw the smoke begin to rise from the city to the sky" (20:40).
14. Benjamin did, but didn’t escape (20:42b, 43-48).
15. Benjamites fleeing for desert (20:45).
17. I will give them...
18. Went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword—everything (20:48).
The same plan used formerly under Joshua to defeat Ai is now used by leaderless Israel to dismember itself in civil war. In the tradition of the other characters, the coalition of tribes used excessive force to deal with Benjamin. Under Joshua’s leadership, the “ban” (דָּמָם) was used effectively to defeat the enemy and possess the land. Now the foolish Israelites unite to divide themselves by using the "ban" against "one tribe" in Israel. They too have, like the old host and the Levite perverted the Deuteronomic code by using the ban on themselves instead of their enemies. The foolish Israelites have allowed the "gleaning" (ןַעֲלָה) of the concubine to lead to the virtual "gleaning" (ןַעֲלָה) of the whole tribe of Benjamin (20:45). Ironically, the surrounding of the house by the men of Gibeah has now lead to the surrounding of Gibeah by the men of Israel.

A number of scholars historically have taken the disparate accounts of the battle to be evidence of different authors and sources. A more plausible alternative though is that the narrator’s form of the battle accounts adds to the irony of Israel's uniting to divide itself. Possibly the narrator is writing the account of the battle in such a way as to communicate the disorder and confusion.

Scene Eight (21:1-14)

The men of Israel had taken an oath at Mizpah: 'not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite'.

The narrator now tells the reader of an oath not
mentioned previously. The reader is knowledgeable of the previous oath, "None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house". At this point in the narrative the reader must be thinking that surely this is enough foolishness on the part of the people of Israel. Israel is intent on destroying itself and one wonders what else could happen in this tragedy-comedy. This new oath brings a new twist to the story continuing to expose the foolishness of the Israelites. In the first chapters of Judges, the Israelites willingly and freely gave their daughters to alien nations in direct contradiction to the Deuteronomistic code. Now Israel pompously refused to give their daughters to the six hundred men of Israel.

The people went to Bethel, where they sat before God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly. 'O Lord, the God of Israel,' they cried. 'Why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?'

The people are back to Bethel weeping until evening and offering sacrifices to God not to seek Benjamin's destruction but now to seek its preservation. Foolishly, after all that has come to pass at the hands of Israel, not Yhwh, they address him to ask why all this has happened! Along with Israel's possible magical view toward Yhwh's presence, they practice a distorted view of his involvement. It will be remembered that Yhwh's involvement was never that definite in this story. As soon as Yhwh promises victory, the Israelites rely on the ambush. Yhwh's presence and involvement is indeed at best extremely nebulous and now Israel asks Him why one
tribe should be missing. Not only are they blind to Yhwh’s involvement, but they are also myopic as to their own excessive, foolish role to almost obliterating the entire tribe of Benjamin.

Then the Israelites asked, “Who from all the tribes of Israel has failed to assemble before Yahweh?”

With this question, the Israelites seek to rectify the destruction just committed. Yhwh does not answer their questions, and with this the strange silence continues. Whether as a result of Yhwh’s silence concerning the matter or not, the people devise a foolish plan. Has it not been enough that Israel has almost destroyed one tribe by use of the ban? This inquiry and subsequent scheming of an intricate plan is similar to the Israelite’s actions in attempting to destroy Benjamin. Now with incredible inconsistency they devise intricately woven plans to preserve Benjamin. The plans though are totally unconcerned with the societal, legal, and familial ramifications. For the sake of a rash vow that could have been refused, the Israelites continue to bring destruction and disorder upon themselves. Once again the Israelites have a semblance of Yhwh worship but their actions toward others betray their faith.

Once again, the narrator tells of another vow the Israelites had taken, “for they had taken a solemn oath that anyone who failed to assemble before the Lord at Mizpah should certainly be put to death”. The Israelites, because of their ridiculous vow and their even more ludicrous refusal to break
the vow, must now perform reprehensible gymnastics to provide wives for the six hundred Benjamites. Their plan calls for finding out whoever did not assemble "before Yhwh" and then send fighting men to destroy the city taking only the virgins for the Benjamites. As with the tribe of Benjamin, Israel continues its use of the ban against the city of Jabesh-Gilead. The text graphically displays that the warriors were to put every person including women and children to the sword. The Israelites as "one man" break the Deuteronomic code by destroying one of its own cities, murdering, kidnapping, and raping. In excessive, foolish responses on the part of Israel, the rape and dismemberment of the concubine leads to the rape and dismemberment of one tribe and the rape and dismemberment of a city. The only city which probably acted right in this incredulous fiasco was destroyed by the Israelites. This plan does not work out completely for there are yet two hundred men without wives.

Scene Nine (21:15-24)

The people are still grieving for Benjamin, "because Yhwh had made a gap in the tribes of Israel". Is this the narrator's statement or the narrator's recounting of the peoples' thoughts? As in the previous inquiries, the reader is not told whether Yhwh is involved or detached, approving or disapproving. The people are assuming Yhwh to be responsible for the destruction of Benjamin.

If one ludicrous plan were not enough, the Israelites
devise another deplorable scheme to circumvent their rash vow. This time they commanded the remaining Benjamites to go, hide in the vineyard, and when the annual feast came to pass in Shiloh, the men were to "seize" the virgins as their wives. The Israelites instead of wisely renouncing their vow, continued to scheme wild plans that seemed good to them. The rape of the concubine has led to the kidnap and rape of the virgins of Shiloh. Reminiscent of Joshua's sending the people back "each to his own inheritance" (Joshua 24:28) after victories over their enemies, the Israelites return "each to his own inheritance" after defeat at their own hands (21:24). The narrator now at the conclusion of the narrative brings the reader's focus back to the beginning and overriding theme, "In those days Israel had no king, every man did as he saw fit".

The Israelites as "one man" have been portrayed by the narrator more clearly than the other characters excluding the men of Gibeah. Even with this detailed description and varied dialogues and actions, the Israelites are also cast in an ambiguous role as to their worship of Yhwh. They are a people who seem to be lost regarding religious and societal matters. They utilize excessive actions to remedy the problems and instead of correcting the situation, they compound the matters to tragic and comic proportions. They too are a final graphic portrayal of what happens when there is no leadership and every man does right in his own eyes.
CHAPTER 3
A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This writer has, in the last chapter, attempted to utilize literary conventions in determining the narrator's portrayal of different characters. Hopefully, this writer has concentrated on simply "what" the text says, not "why" the text says what it says. In particular, the "what" of literary conventions which the narrator utilized for characterization and not "why" he uses such conventions have been analyzed. The basic thesis of this paper is that the narrator used characterization carefully and masterfully to convey his ideological and theological thrust. The assumption has been that the narrator portrayed the characters in such a way as to give pictorial evidence of what happens to people who live in an age of chaos as pictured in Judges 19-21.

With Polzin's idea of the Deuteronomistic history and literary unity of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, this author assumes that one of the author's or authors' major motifs was that of kingship and Israel's preparation for the institution. In this category of thought, Deuteronomy and Joshua portray Israel under the successful leadership of men who do right in Yhwh's eyes. Now in Judges, Moses and Joshua are dead and the
Israelites are left with no major leader to direct their society. As Joshua is a beautiful portrayal of the success of Israel under the effective leadership of Joshua, Judges in a stark contrast portrays a time of Israel’s downward, cyclic spiral toward dissolution. Possibly the thought is if there is not effective leadership soon, Israel will, instead of possessing the land in Joshua, lose the land and their distinctive worship of Yhwh.

In attempting to understand the theology of Judges 19-21, this author thinks it important to examine the presentation of Moses and Joshua as effective leaders and as precursors of kingship. The book of Judges will be studied as a preparation for kingship and as a transition from leadership to no leadership to kingship. Then in the treatise, the analogy of Judges 1:1-3:6 and Judges 19-21 will be analyzed to determine how the similarities and comparisons contribute to the theological framework within which the narrator works and the methods by which he seeks to use characterization of people who reject the "kingship" theology by "doing what is right in their own eyes".

**Moses and Joshua as Prototypes of Kingship**

The concept of a centralized leader administering the affairs of the nation was not new in the memories of the people during the Judges’ time. Yhwh established a special relationship with Israel at Mt. Sinai with Moses as mediator.
and receiver of the law. Since that time, Israel would be a cohesive community with the law of God as their constitution. By accepting the covenant as revealed by Yhwh, the Israelites were acknowledging the kingship of Yhwh.\(^1\) It was within this context that Yhwh revealed his divine will in choosing Israel as his kingdom on earth. "The symbols of the early cult were symbols that of that kingship: the Ark was Yhwh's throne (cf. Num. 10:35f), the rod of Moses was His scepter, the sacred lots His tables of destiny. The earliest poems occasionally hail Him as king (Ex. 15:18; Num. 23:21; Ps. 29:10f; 68:24)."\(^2\) Moses was Yhwh's appointed leader in delivering the oppressed nation from Egypt, revealing His will, and executing justice among the people. Throughout the career of Moses he functioned as a king in representing Yhwh to the people, and the people to Yhwh.

Philo was one of the first to note the significance of Moses as king, high priest, legislator and prophet, and J.R. Porter states, "The most inclusive and the one that best explains most features in the pentateuchal picture of Moses would seem to be that of the Israelite king, more specifically, the Davidic monarch of the pre-exilic period...".\(^3\) Porter continues to explain that the other

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\(^2\)Ibid.

offices noted by Philo are simply subsets of kingship.¹

One important aspect of Moses' kingship over Israel was his giving and promoting of Yhwh's law (Ex. 20, Dt. 5). It is significant to note that according to Dt. 17 one of the primary functions of the king was to uphold and promote Yhwh's law, "When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law...it is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees." In Dt. 33:4-5 Moses is called the king of Jeshurun directly subsequent to his description as lawgiver. Moses is a prototype of the king by the very fact that he is the authority in legal issues and the people come to him for judicial decisions (Exodus 18:13-27),⁵ "I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statues of God, and His laws."

Porter notes the importance of Moses as being the divine representation of Yhwh and the steward of Yhwh's dominion, Numb. 12:7 - "He is faithful in all my house".⁶ Even though Moses is ruler over God's household, he is also called the

¹Ibid., 9.

⁵Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel", "Moses is the sole source of the law for the people", p. 179.

⁶This motif of the king being a "steward" in the house of his gods is seen clearly in the Mesopotamian ideal of the king ruling judiciously over the land and the people, cf. H.W.F. Saggs, The Greatest That Was Babylon, (NEW YORK: HAWTHORNE BOOKS, 1962).
"servant" (מָסלָל) of Yhwh. C. Lindhagen has exhibited that the king was the servant of Yhwh in its fullest definition.7

Moses then because of his function in God's kingdom can be seen performing the duties of a king such as upholding the law (Dt. 33:4-5), delivering the nation as a savior (Ex. 13-14), executing justice (Ex. 18), and providing a proper atmosphere for worshipping Yhwh by administering his house properly (Numb. 12). Is it not significant that Yhwh supplied such a leader in the constitution of Israel as a community under the direct rule of Yhwh? Yhwh over 400 years prior to the people's request for kingship in I Samuel 8 had already utilized the "ideal king" to establish and administer His community.8

Another prominent prototype of kingship was the warrior king, Joshua. During the time of Joshua, Israel would need an effective leader to help them subdue the land Yhwh had promised them. As with Moses and the kings, Joshua was also to "not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." Once again, Yhwh's leader is

7The Servant Motif in the Old Testament. Also note de Vaux, A History of Israel. "expresses not only a relationship of dependence, but also activity in the service of the master; hence when it is used with reference to God it implies submission to his law and fidelity to his cult," p. 154.

8Philo lists the following aspects of Moses' kingship, "Moses had a peculiarly beautiful form; he had been trained in science and magic; he had early experience as a shepherd ... he had mystic power over the elements. So 'he was called god and king of the whole human race'," quoted in Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel", p. 181.
expected to know, obey and promulgate His law in every facet of life in his world. Joshua was also to be the leader in carrying Yhwh's will in the matter of war. Yhwh utilized war in the Old Testament as a sacred act in executing righteousness (Joshua 4, etc.) and delivering his people from oppression (Judges 3-6). It was definitely the function of the king to lead Yhwh's people into victory over His enemies, and Joshua performed this function.

A most interesting passage is Numbers 27:15-23, in which Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses in the context of royal terminology. The leader was to be appointed by the God of the universe which is reminiscent of Dt. 17.

This leader is "to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in" (27:17). This is the exact clause used by the elders in requesting a king in I Samuel 8:20, (cf. I Kings 3:7; 2 Chron. 1:10). The reason for this leader is so that Israel will not be as "sheep without a shepherd" (27:17). Once again this clause occurs in I Kings 22:17 to describe Israel's condition without a king. Joshua is also described as one who possesses the spirit (27:18) which was significant for the "anointing" aspect of the king. Porter notes that the most significant aspect of this chapter is that Moses was to give Joshua "honor" (נִיר). Note also that "shepherd" was a common designation for the king (cf. Ez. 34:23; 37:24). See chapter III of this study.

Moses and Monarchy, p. 18.
(תֵּלָם), meaning 'majesty' in a quite concrete and probably visible sense, when applied to a human being is used exclusively of kings. Joshua then was a prototype of kingship in administering Yhwh's kingdom in leading the people both politically and religiously. Joshua's name meaning "salvation" speaks of his role as Yhwh's ruler in delivering the nation of Israel. Most likely the success of Moses and Joshua would have been prominent in the minds of the people as a stark contrast to the history of their last four hundred years.

**Judges as Preparation for Kingship**

Another significant aspect in developing theology of Judges 19-21 is the value of Judges as preparation for that kingship. With the examples of Joshua and Moses, the concept of kingship was not novel. The period of Judges was a four hundred year object lesson in chaos without a centralized leader upholding Yhwh's law. The key idea in the book of Judges is the statement, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (17:6; 21:25). Two other times this statement occurs, "In those days Israel had no king"


12"Hitherto the saving of Israel had been the direct act of Yahweh, as in Exodus 14:30, where Yahweh's saving act in destroying the Egyptians brought honor to himself and his servant Moses. Now the ruler himself is called Preserver or Saviour," Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel", p. 182.
(18:1; 19:1). With no king the Israelites faced constant defeat by their enemies because of their rampant apostasy, and eventually traced defeat at their own hands.

One pertinent method in the period of the Judges that Yhwh utilizes to prepare for kingship is the nature of the Judges. These men and women were temporary leaders who were usually endowed with Yhwh’s spirit to perform a specific task (3:10; 6:34; 11:29,30; 13:25; 14:6,9,15). After analyzing these judges one is struck with the utter failure that many of them were. In fact, it is significant that the real heroes in the book of Judges were the women which is in contrast to Yhwh’s leadership in the nation’s past. Gideon was a man who found it difficult to trust in Yhwh (6:17-23) and soon after his death the children of Israel turned back to Baal worship. Soon afterwards his own son Abimilech anointed himself king and slaughtered his own brothers (9:105). Jephthah was a judge who thought Yhwh was a God to be manipulated in securing victory (11). Probably the saddest story in Judges is that of Samson. As far as what is recorded, Samson possessed the most gifts and the Spirit came upon him on at least four occasions.

This writer thinks it is significant that these four clauses are recorded in the last chapters of Judges which he considers to be the nadir of the Old Testament.

Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Tola, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Jair, Jephthah, and Samson were military leaders and Eglon, Ibzan, and Abdon were individuals who are recorded simply as leaders. Most likely the only judges to continue their leadership after delivering the nation were Gideon and Jephthah (9:1-2; 12).
occurrences (13:25; 14:6,9,15). Samson, though, was rendered ineffective by the very enemy he was sent to judge. One can also observe the utter failure and disrepute the priesthood had fallen into by the two accounts of Micah’s Levite (17) and the Levite’s concubine (19).

Another aspect of preparation for kingship was the constant cycle of apostasy which Israel experienced. Both judges and people possessed a jaundiced view of Yhwh as can be observed in Gideon (6), Abimilech (12), Micah (17), the Levite (19), and the people (2:11-13, 16-19; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 10:6; 13:1). According to Dt. 16:18-20, the judges were to judge righteously and by the nature of being Yhwh’s servant they were to uphold and promulgate the law. Israel was constantly oppressed not only militarily but most sadly spiritually. From the very beginning, the nation did not drive out her godless enemies and for the rest of her history these enemies were a stumbling block. It is important to note that the Israelites constantly returned to idolatry after the judges passed from the scene.

A third aspect which characterized this period of the judges was the ubiquitous chaos over the land. One example of this disunity is the civil war between Jephthah and Ephraim (12:1-7) in which 42,000 Ephraimites were killed. Another period of disunity occurs in chapters 19-21 in which the nation almost destroys the tribe of Benjamin because of the incident between the Levite and his concubine. Not only was
there civil war among God's people, but they were constantly harassed by unbelievably insignificant peoples. Kingship in its proper role would supply tribal unity (I Sam. 11:6-8), properly represent Yhwh to the people (Dt. 17:14-18), execute justice (Dt. 16:18-20), and deliver the nation from her enemies (I Sam. 11:11-12). What a contrast proper kingship could be to the four hundred years of utter chaos as portrayed in Judges.

The Narrator's Literary Form and its Contribution to the Theology of Judges

Comparing the narrative in Judges 1:1-3:6 with 17-21 reveals several contributions to the narrator's theology in Judges 19-21. Judges is a book of transition from Moses and Joshua to kingship in Israel. Joshua begins, "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide". Judges, in like manner begins, "After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, 'who will...?'". Moses has led the people to the land, Joshua details how Joshua the man led the people into the land successfully, but soon thereafter Joshua dies. The "Israelites" as an entity step into the leadership. Judges details this time immediately after Joshua's death as a time of chaos, godlessness, and disorder. The "cycle of punishment" gradually descends downward until Israel as a nation practically destroys itself. Without leadership, the Israelites allow sociological and familial atrocities, abuse
of the weaker members of society, religious apostasy (an inversion of Deuteronomic code), and political anarchy.

Judges 1:1-3:6 is a basic introduction of the book detailing the major motifs developed throughout the book. The Israelites begin with military success against their enemies but very rapidly the text details their defeats. Soon the Israelites are condemned at Bokim, their wickedness is detailed, and the cycle of punishment is summarized. Judges 17-21 details in many ways a graphic portrayal of the culmination of the downward spiral. This author posits that Chs. 17-21 are literally the end of the book, but chronologically simultaneous with the generation after Joshua, "In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministering before it" (20:27-28). If this is true, the fact that this madness occurred within years of Joshua’s death is unbelievable, but dramatically and graphically supports the narrator’s theology of chaos without leadership in the form of kingship. The two narratives 1:1-3:6 and 17-21 (the introduction and the conclusion of Judges) have striking similarities and differences:

Judges 1:1-3:6
1. Israelites inquired of the Lord, "who will go up first to fight the Canaanites"? (1:1)

Judges 19-21
1. Israelites inquired of the Lord, "who of us shall go up to fight the Benjaminites"? (20:1,18).

See Polzin for his excellent discussion on this score.
2. Judah is to go, "I have given the land into their hands".

3. Judah and Simeon unite to battle the Canaanites (1:3).

4. Judah is successful - the Lord gives them in to their hands (1:4).

5. Judah pursues Adoni-Bezek (1:6)

6. Judah attacks Jerusalem and puts it to the sword (1:8).

7. Ai goes up in smoke (1:8).

8. Utterly destroys Zaphath (1:17).

9. The Lord was with Judah (1:19).


12. Each went to his own inheritance (2:5).


15. Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2:11).

16. No doubt as to their
loyalty—Baal (2:12-13).

17. Violated the covenant by following Baal (2:20).


19. Gave their daughters in marriage to Canaanites (3:6).

The similarities between the two texts are too stunning and deliberate to be coincidental. The masterful narrator has very carefully exhibited the similar and disparate motifs to emphasize Israel’s need for kingship before anarchy and lawlessness dissolves the kingdom, if this author is correct in his assumption that though these events occur separately in the introduction and the conclusion the time frame is the same within one generation. The reader completes his reading where he began—leaderless Israel one generation after Joshua, rushing headlong into total dissolution. To read Judges as one chronological event after another would miss this most pertinent technique of the narrator. The book begins and ends with Israel in desperate need of a leader to do "good in Yhwh’s eyes".

The narrator in Judges 19-21 dramatically and graphically recounts a time in Israelite society when chaos and dissonance
are the norm rather than the exception. The narrative portrays nameless characters set on a surreal, opaque stage performing grisly, incomprehensible acts within an absurd plot that leads from the folly of a few men to the folly of the "one man" of Israel which in turn leads to the dismemberment of the one woman to the "few women" of Shiloh. The world presented by the narrator is a terrifying, nightmarish one indeed, and the reader readily grasps that only the powerful in this society are protected; the "widows and orphans" are simply grist for the mills of their godless and selfish agendas. The reader must wonder with apprehension whether leadership in the form of a king will enter the scene before every man is obliterated.

As mentioned earlier, outside of the dissolution and dissymmetry of Israel during the exiles, this time in Israel as portrayed in the Old Testament is truly the nadir. In fact, one could think of this time in Israel as an exile in reverse or a self-imposed exile because there is no leadership in the land and "every man does right in his own eyes". Instead of other nations removing Israel from the land, the reader must surmise whether or not the people actually possess the land, and whether they will rape and pillage their own.

In his book *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrup Frye details his theory of the five modes of literature. They are as follows: (1). Myth--the hero is divine and superior in kind

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to man and environment; (2). Romance—the hero is human but the laws of nature are suspended—he is superior in degree to man and environment; (3). High mimetic—the hero is a leader and is superior in degree to man but not his environment; (4). Low mimetic—the hero is the common man and is neither superior to man or his environment; and (5). Irony—the hero is beneath the common man and inferior. Frye continues on to develop the thought that these modes of fiction though present in every age, appear more cyclically in literature beginning with myth and culminating in irony. These so-called cycles may be observed in the classical world beginning with Greek myth, leading to the epics, then to tragedy and Roman satire.

Could it be possible that the reader sees a semblance of this same cycle of fictional modes in the book of Judges? The book does not begin with myth but with the romantic heroes Joshua and Deborah both superior to man and environment, eventually leading to high mimetic heroes who though superior to in degree (power) the men and women around them succumb fatefully to their respective environments, i.e. Jephthah, Abimelech, and Samson. Immediately following Samson in the literature, Micah (the only named character in the 17-21 narrative) comes upon the scene, but he like the low mimetic hero is inferior to man and nature. As the reader turns to Judges 17-21, he finds an anonymous Levite as the ironic hero of this narrative—a narrative that Frye would most likely
term "Ironic Tragedy".  

According to Frye, ironic tragedy portrays a world of realism that begins to verge on the absolute absurd. It is a world of savagery that inflicts pain on the victim and evokes both pity and fear on the part of the reader. The ironic tragedy "begins in realism and dispassionate observation". The hero is a character who is inferior both in degree and kind to even the common man. In Judges 19-21, the Levite plays the part of the agent and the victim. As the agent, the culpable Levite "doing right in his own eyes" commits incredulous atrocities against his wife and Israel. As the victim, the oblivious Levite is caught in the web of an unjust, leaderless nation that also "does right in its own eyes".

The pharmakos (the victim of ironic tragedy) is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes, like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty

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17 Frye, "If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the ironic mode. This is still true when the reader feels that he is or might be in the same situation, as the situation is being judged by the norms of a greater freedom." p. 34.

18 Ibid., p. 42. Note Frye’s use of "dispassionate observation"—"the ironic fiction writer, then, deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even that he is ironic. Complete objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgments are essential to his method. Thus pity and fear are not raised in ironic art: they are reflected to the reader from the art," p. 40. This is a fascinating observation in light of some scholars assuming the narrator himself becoming caught up in the "spirit" of that age and writing this narrative as "what is right in his eyes".
in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence.\textsuperscript{19}

As discussed previously, literarily the 17-21 narrative is chronologically subsequent to 1:1-3:6 within only one generation of Joshua's death.\textsuperscript{20} If the reader can reasonably apply Frye's cyclical fictional modes to the book, he will view the dissolution of Israel as pungent testimony to a society that has no king and does right in its own eyes. This narrative (19-21) does not represent the happenings four hundred years later; instead these atrocities occurred within a few years of the passing of Joshua. In reality, the book of Judges then presents a nation destroying itself immediately after the leadership of Moses and Joshua.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 41.

\textsuperscript{20}Note Mieke Bal's discussion in \textit{Death and Dissymmetry} of the chronology of the book of Judges, p. 5ff.
CONCLUSION

Significantly in Judges 19-21, the narrator as if to leave no doubt, recounts a time in society when chaos and godlessness pervades Israel's existence. What distinguishes this passage is the astounding reality that none of the players have names. They forever remain anonymous in the history of the Scriptures. The text elaborates beautifully and dramatically in portraying characters who purpose to do "what is right in their own eyes." The narrator both reveals the subtleties of their "doing right" and then the dire consequences of their actions. By allowing the characters to remain anonymous, it is as if the narrator implicates not just one Levite, one city, or one host, but the entire structure of that Godless society. By allowing the concubine to also remain anonymous, the reader must conjecture that many of the "concubines" of that society were abused, raped, and mutilated. The anonymity of the characters assumes the universality of their wickedness in their society.

The reader, while focusing on individual characters, cannot lose the reality of the overall literary and theological frameworks. Assuming Polzin's theory of a Deuteronomistic framework from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings to be true, Judges 19-21 in particular, and the book of Judges in
general contribute significantly to this framework. As the people of Israel approach the land, their leader, Moses, presents the ideal of the law. Soon after the death of Moses, the new leader Joshua steps upon the scene and portrays realistically the ideals presented in Deuteronomy. With the advent of Joshua’s death and the period of the Judges a stark period of darkness envelops the newly formed nation. Judges presents the very opposite of the ideal stipulated in Deuteronomy. If Joshua is the positive portrayal, Judges is entirely opposite in its negative portrayal. Judges details the results of a nation with no such leader as Joshua and Moses, and with that reality causes the reader to long for a leader who will do what is right in the eyes of Yhwh, and in so doing, cause the people to do right.

Perched on the precipice of ensuing kingship, Judges 19-21 portrays the Nadir of Israelite history. The narrator does more than show characters who do “right in their own eyes”. He proceeds to present the reader with concrete presentations of the workings of such a society and the men and women of that society.
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