

**THE UNNAMED CONCUBINE**

**PORTRAYALS OF THE UNNAMED CONCUBINE (JUDGES 19) IN EARLY  
JEWISH LITERATURE**

**By**

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## Abstract

Motivated by the fact that many modern readers consider the story in Judg 19 to be a disturbing one, this thesis answers the question: How was the unnamed concubine portrayed in antiquity? Translations, retellings, and rabbinic discussions of Judg 19 that date from the Common Era to the end of the Classical Rabbinic Age are considered. This material includes the Masoretic text, versions of the Septuagint, Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and rabbinic literature of the Tosefta and Babylonian Talmud. These texts are examined and compared to one another, paying close attention to the points of the Judg 19 story that are interpreted, as well as the possible reasons for interpretation. The "going out" of the concubine in Judg 19:2, the ambiguity surrounding her death (19:28), and the negative portrayal of the Levite are common points of interpretation. Many interpretations betray a concern for the portrayal of the Levite. Others, in particular the rabbinic literature, seem focused on the character of the concubine and her place in the story. By noting "exegetical motifs" that are common amongst the interpretations it is possible to realize some continuity in the way that Judg 19 was interpreted in early Jewish literature.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. Literary Criticism of Judges 19.....	13
2. Textual Criticism of Judges 19 .....	27
3. Judges 19 in Pseudo-Philo’s <i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i> and Josephus’ <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> .....	41
4. “The Story of the Concubine of Gibeah” in Rabbinic Literature .....	71
Conclusion .....	91
Bibliography .....	97

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

According to the Masoretic text of Judg 19, an unnamed concubine “prostitutes herself” against her Levite husband and leaves him to return to her father’s house (19:2). The Levite follows, and upon reaching his father-in-law’s house he stays for many days of shared hospitality (vv.3-7). Finally at his own insistence the Levite sets out with the concubine and heads back to his home in Ephraim (v.10). As darkness approaches he decides not to turn into a city of foreigners, but to sojourn the night in Gibeah, a city of the tribe of Benjamin (v. 12). An old Ephraimite takes the travellers into his home, but they are soon accosted by a mob that demands the Levite so that they may have sex with him (v. 22). The old Ephraimite tries to dissuade the mob. When met with their persistence, however, he even offers to give them his own virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine (v.24). The concubine is thrown out to the mob and raped throughout the night (v.25). In the morning, the woman is let go, and she falls at the doorstep of the house in Gibeah (v.26). The Levite emerges from the house, finds the concubine and commands her to “Get up” (v.28). Hearing no answer, he loads her onto his donkey, takes her home, and cuts her body into twelve pieces (v.29). The Levite sends the pieces to all the territories of Israel, urging his kinsmen to “consider it, take advice, and speak” (v.30).

This narrative strikes many modern readers as unsettling.<sup>2</sup> This is not only because it contains such violence, but also, I suspect, because many do not expect to find

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations employed throughout this thesis are those of Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> It has been labelled variously as “a most disturbing story,” “shocking” (Christopher Begg, “The Retellings of Judges 19 By Pseudo-Philo and Josephus: A Comparison,” *EstBib* 58 [2000]: 33), “a horrific story” (David R. Blumenthal, review of Tod Linafelt, *Strange Fire, Reading the Bible After the Holocaust*.

such a story in the Bible. If this story is perceived to be disturbing today, how was it perceived in antiquity? More specifically, how was the unnamed concubine interpreted in antiquity? This thesis will investigate these questions by surveying the early Jewish history of the interpretation of Judg 19.

Judges 19 has garnered much attention in biblical scholarship. For the most part, the existing scholarship on the chapter focuses on three main topics. First, many studies consider the narrative and literary techniques in Judg 19. For instance, Susan Niditch, and Stuart Lasine explore how Judg 19 uses a narrative “type-scene” also found in Gen 19, to emphasize the theme of hospitality.<sup>3</sup> Don Michael Hudson offers a literary study that shows how the author of Judg 19 has used the anonymity of characters to exemplify the chaos of the story.<sup>4</sup> Other studies address the use of irony, sarcasm, and humour in Judg 19.<sup>5</sup>

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*Conservative Judaism* 54 [2001]: 111-112), “a text of terror for queer people” (Michael Carden, “Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gibeah: A Response to Ken Stone,” *JSOT* 82 [1999]: 83), “a horrific narrative” (Christiana de Groot Van Houten, “The Rape of the Concubine,” *Perspectives* Oct [1997]: 13); “gruesome and appalling,” (Carrie Nutt, “Judges 19: The Gibeah Outrage,” *University of Washington Newspaper* 22 October, 1999); “incomprehensible to modern readers,” (John L. McKenzie, *The World of the Judges* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966], 165); “quite possibly the most disturbing tale... in the Bible.” (John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 217) and Phyllis Trible describes, “To hear this story is to inhabit a world of unrelenting terror that refuses to let us pass by on either side.” (*Texts of Terror* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984], 65. See also Stuart Lasine, “Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot’s Hospitality in an Inverted World,” *JSOT* 29 (1984): 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Niditch, “The Sodomite Theme in Judges 19-21: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 365-378; Lasine, “Guest and Host,” 37-59. See also Daniel I. Block, “Echo Narrative Technique in Hebrew Literature: A Study in Judges 19,” *WTR* 52 (1990): 325-341; Victor H. Matthews, “Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19,” *BTB* 22 (1992): 3-11.

<sup>4</sup> Don Michael Hudson, “Living in a Land of Epithets: Anonymity in Judges 19-21,” *JSOT* 62 (1994): 49-66. See also J. Cheryl Exum, “The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 410-431; Adele Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name?* (New York: Oxford Press, 1998), 122-126.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Boling, *Judges* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1969), 37-38; Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 161-174; Lasine, “Guest and Host,” 43-44.



Secondly, scholars try to determine the place and function of Judg 19 within the book of Judges. Robert Boling suggests that the narrative functions as a “Postview” that serves to put the book of Judges in a “tragic-comic framework.”<sup>6</sup> Alberto Soggin treats the final chapters of Judges as an “appendix” to the entire book.<sup>7</sup> Mark Zvi Brettler asserts that Judg 19-21 is intended as a polemic against the kingship of Saul.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, many feminist-critical studies focus on the abused woman in Judg 19 and analyse the dynamic of gender and power as they relate to her place in the text. In her well-known work *Texts of Terror* Phyllis Trible offers a literary-feminist reading that sets out to engage the “sad stories” of women in the Bible.<sup>9</sup> She divides Judg 19 into two main scenes, finding that in content both are studies in oriental hospitality shared between men.<sup>10</sup> In both scenes the laws of hospitality apply only to males, for the women are readily sacrificed to remedy any offence between the men.<sup>11</sup> In Judg 19 male “power, brutality, and triumphalism” is contrasted to female “helplessness, abuse, and annihilation.” In conclusion, Trible reframes the narrative as a call to action against similar violence in our own time. Women today are still abused, raped, and dismembered. Trible urges that “to take to heart this ancient story, then, is to confess its present reality.

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<sup>6</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 30-38.

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), 263.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Zvi Brettler, *The Book of Judges* (London: Routledge, 2002), 92-116. See also, A. E. Cundall, “Judges – An Apology for the Monarchy?” *ExpTim* 81 (1969-1970):178-181; 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.” *JSOT* 25 (1983): 23-33.

<sup>9</sup> Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 65, 68.

<sup>11</sup> Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 75.

The story is alive and all is not well. Beyond confession we must take counsel to say, “Never again.”<sup>12</sup>

Mieke Bal proposes an alternative reading of Judg 19 in which she explains the story as a power struggle between existing patrilocal marriage and the Levite’s desire to overturn it. By living with the Levite the concubine breaches patrilocal marriage and offends her father, but when she returns to her father’s house she offends her Levite husband. The Levite tries to alter the social structure of patrilocal marriage but failing, he throws the concubine out of the house in Gibeah and back into the existing world.<sup>13</sup> Bal finds it crucial to give identity to the concubine and does so by naming her “Beth,” which plays on the word בית “house,” בת “daughter” as well as the name of her hometown, Bethlehem. Bal views Beth as a sacrifice to social expectations and norms. For Bal, “there is an intrinsic bond between the idea of virginity, the competition between fathers and next-generation men, and the extreme violence that takes the form of ritual sacrifice.”<sup>14</sup>

J. Cheryl Exum addresses the concubine in her work *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Like Bal, she also finds it necessary to name the concubine, but chooses “Beth Sheber” “daughter of breaking” as a reminder of what happens to the concubine at Gibeah, the way she is dismembered and of “the role that feminist criticism plays in breaking open the text’s phallogocentric ideology.”<sup>15</sup> Exum

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<sup>12</sup> Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 93.

<sup>14</sup> Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 32-39.

<sup>15</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* JSOT 63 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 176.

works to highlight the “gender-motivated subtext [that is] motivated by fear of female sexuality and by the resultant need of patriarchy to control women” that she finds exists throughout Judg 19.<sup>16</sup> Through careful analysis Exum finds that the concubine is repeatedly punished because by going out from the Levite she commits “a sexual offence against a male authority.”<sup>17</sup>

Similar to the above feminist-critical studies, this thesis will focus on the unnamed concubine. The concubine is certainly not the main character in Judg 19. Although the narrative begins with her autonomous action of “going out” from the Levite she is quickly swallowed up by action that takes place around her, and is forced upon her, and she never regains her autonomy. As Phyllis Trible notes: “of all the characters in scripture, she is the least. Appearing at the beginning and close of a story that rapes her, she is alone in a world of men...She is property, object, tool, and literary device.”<sup>18</sup> This thesis will seek to understand more about the portrayal of this subjugated woman by moving beyond the Hebrew Bible to analyse how she is portrayed in early Jewish literature.

To determine how Judg 19 was interpreted in an ancient context this thesis will examine a range of early Jewish texts, dating from the beginning of the Common Era to the end of the Classical Rabbinic Period, including sources written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. With one possible exception (i.e. Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*), these texts were all widely circulated and commonly known in the ancient world. It is likely that they either represent a traditional understanding of Judg 19, or that

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<sup>16</sup> Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 181.

<sup>17</sup> Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 184.

<sup>18</sup> Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 80-81.

themselves were influential on the perception of Judg 19 during this period. This being said, there was little selection process necessary in order to determine which texts would enter into our study, because Judg 19 does not appear in many ancient sources. By contrast, interpretation of Gen 34, another story of rape, occur in the same texts as does Judg 19, but also in Philo's *On the Migration of Abraham*, *Jubilees*, *Judith*, *4 Maccabees*, and *Testament of Levi*. To my knowledge the texts treated in this present study of Judg 19 are the only ones that exist from the beginning of the Common Era to the end of the Classical Rabbinic Age.

We will begin with the Masoretic Text (hereafter MT) of Judg 19. The proto-MT and MT appear to have been circulated and copied more than any other Hebrew version of the Bible and they had the most influence on early Jewish literature.<sup>19</sup> Because the MT is in Hebrew and used by most even today as authoritative Scripture, there is a tendency to consider the MT as the "original" text. Our earliest manuscripts of the MT, however, date to the medieval period, and, as such, are significantly later than many other manuscripts of the Bible that we possess.

For possible evidence of an earlier form of Judges we can turn to the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the Septuagint (hereafter LXX). The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a fragment of Judg 19:5-7 in 4QJudg<sup>b</sup>, but the text is identical to the MT.<sup>20</sup> The LXX of Judg 19 is a Greek translation that originated sometime after the third century B.C.E.,

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<sup>19</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Julio Trebolle Barrera, "4QJudg<sup>a-b</sup>," *Qumran Cave 4, IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings* (E. Ulrich et al., eds., DJD 14; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 166. See also G.W. Nickelsburg, "4Q551: A Vorlage to Susanna or a Text Related to Judges 19?" *JJS* 48 (1997): 349-51, who briefly inquires into the possibility that 4Q551 is not a *Vorlage* of Susanna, but a fragment of an unidentified narrative that was influenced by the story in Judg 19.

likely during the first and second centuries C.E.<sup>21</sup> For Greek-speaking Jewish communities in the Diaspora the LXX was their main biblical text. Relevant to our study of Judg 19 are two Uncial manuscripts of LXX: Alexandrinus (hereafter LXX<sup>A</sup>) and Vaticanus (hereafter LXX<sup>B</sup>), which date to the fourth and fifth centuries respectively.<sup>22</sup>

We find evidence for early Jewish interpretations of Judg 19 in the texts of the genre of “rewritten Bible,” specifically the biblical retellings of Pseudo-Philo and Josephus. Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (hereafter *L.A.B.*) emerges in Palestine in the latter part of the first century, after the destruction of the Temple.<sup>23</sup> Josephus wrote *Jewish Antiquities* (hereafter *Ant.*) in 93/94 C.E. Although written in Rome, the text reflects his own Palestinian origins.<sup>24</sup> In his study *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, Geza Vermes explains the genre of rewritten Bible as follows: “in order to anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance, the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative.” As part of this discussion Vermes applies the term specifically to *L.A.B.* and *Ant.*, along with other texts such as *Jubilees*, and the *Genesis Apocryphon*.<sup>25</sup> In biblical retellings, the interpreter does not discuss difficulties

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<sup>21</sup> According to the Letter of Aristeas the Pentateuch was translated in the third century B.C.E., but it is unclear when the other biblical books were translated. Most scholars cite either the first or second centuries C.E. See Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 50; Karen H. Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academy, 2000), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 138-139. The so-called *kaige* Recension that is usually so important to text-critical studies of Judges, in the case of Judg 19 shows no relevant variants and thus will not enter into this study. See Barnabas Lindars, “A Commentary on the Greek Judges?” in *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (ed. Claude E. Cox, Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1986), 182-183.

<sup>23</sup> This is a matter of debate. See “Introduction to L.A.B.” in chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> D.J. Harrington, “Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies,” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W.E. Nickelsburg, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 240.

<sup>25</sup> Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 95.

in the text, but replaces them with his own retelling of the content.<sup>26</sup> Both Josephus and Pseudo-Philo move freely through the biblical stories, explaining them in their own words, in ways that often reflect their own concerns with the text. Accordingly, as we will see, the retellings of Judg 19 in *L.A.B.* and *Ant.* are very different from the narrative in the MT.<sup>27</sup>

The next place that we find interpretation of Judg 19 is the Classical Rabbinic literature. With one exception, these traditions do not translate or retell the biblical story, but comment on it. Specifically, we find traditions about “the story of the concubine of Gibeah” in the Tosefta and the Babylonian Talmud. The Tosefta originates in Palestine like *L.A.B.*, but is significantly later, dating to about 300 C.E.<sup>28</sup> Although the Tosefta follows the structure of the Mishnah the relationship between the two is complex. At times the Tosefta comments on the Mishnah, but it also contains material that is not found in the Mishnah, and at times disagrees entirely with the Mishnah’s teachings.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> James Kugel, *The Bible as it Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23.

<sup>27</sup> The genre of “rewritten Bible” is admittedly broad. Nevertheless, attempts to place either *L.A.B.* or *Ant.* in a more specific genre have remained only attempts, and do not illuminate our understanding of the text. After a comparison with several genres (e.g. Midrash, Pesharim), Feldman finds that no one model describes *Ant.* (Louis Feldman, *Josephus’ Interpretation of the Bible* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 14-23, 62-65). Spilsbury finds that rewritten Bible is “a more accurate generic classification of *Antiquities*” (Paul Spilsbury, *The Image of the Jew in Flavius Josephus’ Paraphrase of the Bible* [Texte und Studium zum Antiken Judentum 69; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998], 15). Feldman finds that *L.A.B.* “defies precise classification” (Louis Feldman, “Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* and Pseudo-Philo’s *L.A.B.*,” in *Josephus, the Bible, and History* [ed. Louis Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989], 61). See also Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University, 1993), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta* (Peabody: Hendrikson Publishers, 2002), xiv.

<sup>29</sup> H.L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1991), 152.

The Babylonian Talmud follows the Tosefta by several centuries, emerging around 500 C.E.<sup>30</sup> The Bavli is a commentary on the Mishnah. As part of this additional commentary we find a variety of material such as prayers, parables, popular proverbs, and folklore.<sup>31</sup> The character of the Bavli can be described as “encyclopaedic,” containing the teachings of the rabbinic schools of Babylonia and in many ways serving as a “national library of Babylonian Judaism.”<sup>32</sup>

The latest text to be considered in this study is *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (hereafter *Tg. Ps.-J.*). This Targum has also been classified by Vermes in the broad category of rewritten Bible because of its typically expansive paraphrases of the MT. In the case of Judg 19, *Tg. Ps.-J.* elaborates very little, in contrast both to the LXX and to the retellings of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo. It has been suggested that *Tg. Ps.-J.* originated in Palestine, but we know only that its final form emerged in Babylonia in the medieval period.<sup>33</sup>

As we review these ancient texts we will consider, first of all, where interpretation occurs within the story. This line of analysis is largely based on the assumption that where the meaning of the story is different from the accepted narrative, which in most cases is represented by the MT, we may find an indication of interpretive work. Each individual case requires careful consideration, because not every variant is the result of interpretation; some may be due to a scribal error or the translation of an alternate

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<sup>30</sup> John Bowker, *The Targums in Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretation of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 66.

<sup>31</sup> Bowker, *The Targums in Rabbinic Literature*, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 192.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (The Aramaic Bible 10; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 13.

*Vorlage*. Moreover, it is not enough merely to identify the part of the story at which interpretation is apparent. We must also determine why this occurs. James Kugel explains “the formal starting point for ancient interpreters is always Scripture itself.”<sup>34</sup> The ancient interpreters are usually motivated by some “peculiarity” found in the biblical story.<sup>35</sup> As such, when Judg 19 is interpreted this is related directly to the content of the story. One important question for this thesis will be whether or not later writers were uncomfortable with some aspects of the story, and whether such attitudes motivate their changes or expansions to the biblical version of the story. Kugel explains that the work of these interpreters was not purely exegetical, “The early exegete is an expositor with an axe to grind.”<sup>36</sup> The interpreters approach the text with their own agendas, and may seek to justify the actions of some biblical characters, or launch a polemic against others. As noted above, this study will focus on the portrayals of the unnamed concubine. When the story in Judg 19 is changed by later interpreters, so too is the role and description of the unnamed concubine. Our survey of the interpretation of Judg 19 will focus on her character to consider what portrayals of the unnamed concubine emerge from early Jewish literature.

I will analyse the portrayal of the unnamed concubine within each of the above texts and consider the similarities and differences between them. In the process, I will investigate whether these texts reflect a unified tradition of interpreting Judg 19, or

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<sup>34</sup> Kugel, *The Bible As It Was*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> James Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 247.

<sup>36</sup> Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 248-249.



whether their interpretations arose independently, rather than stemming from a continuous tradition of interpreting the text.

This study is organized into four chapters. Chapter one offers a literary-critical reading of Judg 19 as it is evidenced in the Masoretic text. This reading will seek to understand how the original biblical composer of Judg 19 intended the story to be understood. This reading of the story is an apt starting point for the remainder of this study, because the literary features and narrative structure of Judg 19 inform the various translations and retellings of the story.

Chapter two will offer a text-critical analysis of select passages in Judg 19 as evidenced not only in the Masoretic text, but also in the Septuagint. Differences between the LXX and the MT will lead us to question whether and how the translators are interpreting Judg 19. The goal of this chapter is to present these differences and evaluate the instances of interpretation and their motivation.

Chapter three will analyse the retellings of Judg 19 in Josephus' *Ant.* and Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* These texts will be treated separately, given that each author approaches Judg 19 with their own concerns and agenda. We will determine each author's motivations, and how each interprets Judg 19. Then, we will seek to establish the place of the unnamed concubine in their interpretations.

In chapter four we will explore representations of Judg 19 in rabbinic literature. Here, we will analyse the Aramaic translation of Judges in *Tg. Ps.-J.*, noting how the story is represented and considering the likely scope and influence of this Targum. We will then turn to the three discussions of Judg 19 that appear in the *Tosefta* and the

Babylonian Talmud. Because these texts are not retellings of Judg 19 but discussions about it, our task will not be to compare narratives, but to analyse what is posited and discussed about the story of the unnamed concubine.

*In the Hebrew Bible the unnamed concubine is a woman who endures much horror. Her husband betrays her, she is raped, abused, murdered, and dismembered. There seems to be no reason for what happens to her, no explanation of why the text depicts such violence. It is no wonder that many modern readers are disturbed by this story. In light of the subjugation of the unnamed concubine in MT Judg 19, this thesis will investigate how she appears outside of the Hebrew Bible. How did other ancient writers and translators react to this story? How did they choose to portray this unnamed woman? By determining how she is depicted in early Jewish literature we make her the focus of a story that is not intended to be about her. It is my hope that this study offers a small protest in the face of her quieted role in the biblical text.*

## CHAPTER 1: LITERARY CRITICISM OF JUDGES 19

### Introduction

Using literary-criticism this chapter will analyse the story in Judg 19 as it appears in the Masoretic text. By analysing the plot, narrative structure, character types, and literary devices that are used to create this story, we aim to accomplish two main tasks. The first is the aim throughout this entire study, namely to determine how the unnamed concubine is portrayed. Although this study focuses on later interpretations of the story rather than on the Hebrew text, it is important to establish a clear understanding of how MT Judg 19 presents the unnamed concubine since the MT likely reflects the basis for most later interpretations. Secondly, a literary-critical view of this passage will seek to illuminate what the biblical composer intended to convey with this story. The language and style that are used to create a narrative can tell much about the author's purpose for writing.<sup>37</sup> Knowing what was likely the intended meaning of Judg 19 will enable comparisons with how later interpreters seem to have understood the story.

The episode in Judg 19 is part of a larger narrative that spans Judg 17-21. It is commonly assumed that these chapters represent a later addition to the book of Judges.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Paul R. House, "The Rise and Current Status of Literary Criticism," in *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism* (ed. Paul R. House; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 7.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Noth's theory of the Deuteronomistic History asserts that Judg 1, along with Judg 19-21, are post-exilic expansions (Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomist History* [JSOT 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981]). Robert Boling finds four main stages of development to the book of Judges in which Judg 19:1-21:25 was added by a final editor in the sixth century (Boling, *Judges*, 1-42). The redaction history of Judges is of course a broad and much debated topic that has been greatly simplified here. See also; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard

Most scholars hold that the addition is meant to show the chaos, anarchy, and debauchery of life in a time when Israel was without leadership. This view is supported by the opening phrase of Judg 19: “In those days, when there was no king in Israel...”<sup>39</sup> Scholars seeking a more specific reason for the addition have found variously that it represents an apology for the Davidic monarchy, a critique of Saul, or a dark comedy meant to counter the disillusionment of living in a time of exile.<sup>40</sup> In any case, as the narrative in Judg 19 begins, the repetitive phrase signals to the reader that what is to come will exemplify an unfortunate time in the life of Israel.

By way of introduction to the main events of the narrative, we are told only “a certain Levite, residing in the hill country of Ephraim, took to himself a concubine” (v. 1). The reader learns nothing more about these characters other than their place of origin and, by way of their titles, their status as “Levite” and “concubine” respectively. In fact, all the characters in Judg 19 remain nameless and without defining characteristics.

In her study of anonymous characters in the Hebrew Bible, Adele Reinhartz notes that a name allows one character to be distinguished from another and serves as “a peg on

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University Press, 1973); B. Halpern-Amaru, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); A.D.H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel Between Settlement and Exile* (London: SCM Press, 1983); R. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Supp. 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981.)

<sup>39</sup> The phrase is repeated in 18:1, and in its entirety as “In those days, when there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes,” in 17:6 and again as the final phrase of the book in Judg 21:25.

<sup>40</sup> Brettler (*The Book of Judges*, 80-116), claims that Judges is a “highly political work” that encourages and endorses the kingship of David. See also A.E. Cundall, “An Apology,” 178-181; Matthews, “Hospitality and Hostility,” 3-11; Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 84. Judg 19 is implicitly a critique of Saul because Gibeah, the site of such disrepute, is the birthplace of Saul (1 Sam 10:26) and later his home as king (1 Sam 13-15). Boling, *Judges*, 38, finds that the addition of chs. 19-21 puts Judges in a “tragic-comic framework” that serves to solidify the ideal of a united and strong Israel, while providing a dark comedy of sorts that counters life in exile. For a counter viewpoint see W.J. Dumbrell, “In Those Days There Was No King,” 23-33.

which other traits and features may be hung”; many times in biblical literature a proper name is actually a definition of the character.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, the absence of names in Judg 19 confounds the reader and contributes to a sense of anarchy and disorder from within the narrative.

Just as the reader is given no clear idea about the characters, so there is no presence of God to exact moral judgement and no narrative statement to affirm or reject any of the characters or their actions. Is the Levite wrong in his behaviour toward the fallen concubine? Is the concubine to be faulted for running away from him? The reader is unable to answer any of their questions from what the narrative tells us. Don Michael Hudson finds that the absence of both names and moral judgement in Judg 19 creates “a shadowy world...of alienation and annihilation,” where the reader “cannot orient themselves in their understanding of the narrative.”<sup>42</sup> In this way the author exemplifies the chaotic world in which the events of the story unfold.

The status of the concubine and her relationship to the Levite are also unclear. The woman is labelled as *אִשָּׁה זָנָה* literally, “a woman, a concubine” or “a wife, a concubine.” With no specific designation for a “wife” in Hebrew, the general *אִשָּׁה* can describe a woman or a wife.<sup>43</sup> In the context of this narrative the label “concubine” (*זָנָה*) cannot be understood as a woman who is merely a mistress or a servant, because the Levite is referred to as “her husband” (*אִישָׁהּ*) (19:3) and the woman’s father as the

<sup>41</sup> Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name?* 6.

<sup>42</sup> Hudson, “Living in a Land of Epithets,” 55. See also Exum, “The Centre Cannot Hold,” 410-431.

<sup>43</sup> Phyllis Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 37.

“father-in-law” (אָהָב) of the Levite (19:4).<sup>44</sup> In Judg 19 the concubine is treated much like a wife, but her title may indicate that she does not have the rights of a free person.<sup>45</sup> In this way her status may be best understood as that of a “secondary wife.”<sup>46</sup>

The inciting action of the narrative comes in 19:2 when, according to the MT, the concubine “prostituted herself (זָנָה) against him [the Levite]” and goes away to her father’s house in Judah. The Hebrew זָנָה is used elsewhere in biblical literature either metaphorically to describe idolatry and cultic unfaithfulness,<sup>47</sup> or to denote sexual infidelity.<sup>48</sup> The term may indicate that the concubine was actually acting as a professional prostitute. More likely, it is meant to indicate her sexual unfaithfulness to the Levite. Notably, the act of adultery, or any sexual unfaithfulness that occurs within the bonds of marriage, is more commonly indicated with the Hebrew verb זָנָה.<sup>49</sup> The use of זָנָה may be another indication that the concubine is not considered to be a fully legal wife.

After four months the Levite sets out after the concubine (v.2). The inclusion of this time span is curious. It may serve to emphasize the woman’s offence, because she failed to return to her husband for an extended period of time. Conversely, it may reflect

<sup>44</sup> Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 132.

<sup>45</sup> Bird, *Missing Persons*, 25n27.

<sup>46</sup> Koala Jones-Warsaw, “Toward a Womanist Hermeneutic: A Reading of Judges 19-21,” in *A Feminist Companion to Judges* (ed. Athalya Brenner, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 172. See also; Chaim Rabin, “The Origin of the Hebrew Word Pilegsh.” *JJS* 25 (1974): 353-364, who is supported by Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 177. For an exception to this argument see Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 80-93, who argues that the title “pilegsh” should not be understood as a concubine, but as a wife who continues to live at the home of her father in practice of patrilocal marriage.

<sup>47</sup> Judg. 2:17; 8:27; 8:33

<sup>48</sup> Gen 34:31; 38:15, 24; Deut 22:13-21

<sup>49</sup> Bird, *Missing Persons*, 37.

positively upon the Levite, showing that he did not immediately run after the concubine; after all it was he who was wronged, and this may be why he waited for four months before setting out to find her.

Surprisingly, upon reaching the concubine, the Levite aims to “speak tenderly to her” in order to bring her back (v.3). From 19:2, we can infer that the concubine’s offence was a serious one. Her sexual infidelity shames the Levite.<sup>50</sup> It is unexpected that he would not only set out to find her, but also that his aim appears not to be punishment or chastisement, but to speak kindly to her. The phrase used here is literally “speak to her heart,” (לְדַבֵּר עַל לִבָּהּ). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase is used to describe Joseph’s reassurance to his brothers (Gen 50:21), comfort for God’s people (Isa. 40:2), and Shechem’s words to Dinah (Gen 34:3). The English translation seems to suggest that the Levite is whispering sweet nothings into the concubine’s ear, but in this ancient context the heart is not the seat of romantic love, but of rational thought and mind. The Levite’s actions may be more accurately translated as “reasoned with her in order to bring her back,” or “convinced her in order to bring her back.”<sup>51</sup> In either case it is the Levite who approaches the concubine in order to speak kindly to her and bring her back home, even after he has been wronged.

In the opening verses of Judg 19 the story focuses on the concubine. The actions of the narrative are hers as she is unfaithful to the Levite and then goes out to her father’s house. The Levite also focuses on her, as he runs after and still desires for her to come

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<sup>50</sup> Bird, *Missing Persons*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn discuss the phrase in the context of Gen 34:3. They find the phrase to be accurately translated as “compel” or “convince” (“Tipping the Balance: Sternberg’s Reader and the Rape of Dinah,” *JBL* 110 [1991]: 190).

back even though he has been wronged. Certainly at this point of the narrative it seems as though the concubine is an important character who commands the attention of the Levite and reader alike, but all of this changes drastically when the Levite reaches the house of his father-in-law.

The unnamed concubine fades into the background of a story that is now about hospitality shared between men. The exchange between the Levite and his father-in-law showcases the theme of hospitality that will continue throughout the narrative. The Levite arrives with his servant and a pair of donkeys and is welcomed in by his father-in-law who “came with joy to meet him” (v.3). There is no indication of whether or not the concubine was happy to see the Levite, or if she approved of her father’s warm reception. A back-and-forth episode ensues between the Levite who rises to go and the father-in-law who insists that he stay for just one more day. When the Levite finally insists on his departure there is no exchange between the concubine and her father, and no indication of whether or not she desires to accompany the Levite. The only mention of her seems to be a narrative afterthought, as she is listed along with the saddled donkeys as things that the Levite has with him when he departs (v.10).

The father-in-law offers hospitality *par excellence* to the Levite, but the Levite only accepts it reluctantly and is eager to be on his way. The small group, comprised of the Levite, the concubine, a servant, and a pair of donkeys sets out north back to Ephraim. By nightfall they reach Jerusalem, but the Levite refuses to stay, telling his servant that “we will not turn aside into a city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel; but we will continue on to Gibeah”(v. 12). The concubine is not included in the



discussion. The Levite's comments are of course ironic, for it is with the foreigners of Jerusalem that the group may have been safe -- they certainly will not be amongst the kinsmen of Gibeah.

The Levite expects that Gibeah will be a most hospitable place for them to sojourn, but as the group sits in the town square no one offers to take them in (v.15). Here is yet another irony, not only because the Levite was so eager to leave the father-in-law's hospitality and now sits abandoned in a town square, but also because the Levite anxiously waits to be taken into a city in which he will be accosted. As an old Ephraimite offers to take in the group, the Levite explains where he has been traveling but does not offer the reason why (v.18). Perhaps he is ashamed of the reason that forced him on his travels. The narrative returns once again to focus on the hospitality shared between men. The old Ephraimite seems to be referring to the group with his assurance in v. 20 that "I will care for all your wants, only do not spend the night in the square "It is only the Levite, however, who is welcomed into the house: "he brought *him* (masculine singular) into his house...*they* (masculine plural) washed their feet and ate and drank."<sup>52</sup>

Shattering the shared hospitality in the house at Gibeah, "the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door" (v.22). The seriousness of the threat of the mob is emphasized. They do not only stand at the door, but they surround the house. They do knock at the door, but also beat violently so as to

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<sup>52</sup> It is true that the presence of the concubine may be obfuscated in the masculine plural of "*they* washed their feet..." but when considered with the masculine singular of the verse I find it likely that after welcoming in only the Levite the Ephraimite refers to the Levite and himself (just having come in from the fields) washing their feet in preparation for the eating and drinking that follows in the next verse.

break it. The mob's demands are blatant: "Bring out the man who came into your house so that we may have intercourse with him" (v.22).

It is at this point in the narrative that the story sounds strangely familiar to the ancient audience. On both a grammatical and syntactical level there are many similarities between the episode at Lot's house in Sodom (Gen 19:4-8) and what occurs at the house of the old Ephraimite in Gibeah.<sup>53</sup> Some scholars assume that the Genesis episode must be the earlier version that was borrowed for use by the later redactor of Judges.<sup>54</sup> Susan Niditch, however, argues that because the episode is integral to the plot of Judg 19 and appears to be tailored for use here, it is likely that a later redactor of Gen 19 borrowed from this passage.<sup>55</sup> It may be futile to engage in the "which came first" argument, as it would require the impossibility of "demonstrating that the author of Gen 19 had greater motivation for utilizing Judg 19 than vice versa."<sup>56</sup> Regardless of the exact redaction history, the repetition of the episode shows it to be a recognized type-scene, which the author is able to utilize freely and change.<sup>57</sup> The disturbing scene in which an accosting mob demands homosexual sex from a man's guest may have actually been a familiar one in its ancient context.<sup>58</sup>

One purpose of using such a type-scene is that any deviation is immediately emphasized to the reader and is surprising and unexpected. If Gen 19 is indeed the older

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<sup>53</sup> See Block, "Echo Narrative Technique," 328-329; C.F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (New York: KTAV, 1970), 444, where the parallels between these accounts are presented in chart form.

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host," 38; Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility," 3; Soggin, *Judges*, 233.

<sup>55</sup> Niditch, "The Sodomite Theme," 376-377.

<sup>56</sup> Block, "Echo Narrative Technique," 333; See Burney, *The Book of Judges*, "444; Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of the Hebrew Narrative* (Semeia Supp; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976): 56-59.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51.

<sup>58</sup> See Lasine, "Guest and Host," 38-41.

version, then the reader expects that the story in Judges will play out in much the same way as its Genesis counterpart; the accosting mob is turned away and the occupants of the house remain safe. In a surprising twist the reader is astonished to find that the old man actually makes good on his offer and throws the concubine out to the mob. Stuart Lasine points out that the story is made even more absurd because the old man offers up the Levite's concubine. The old Ephraimite purports to be concerned about his guest, but he offers up his concubine along with the daughter. In the end the daughter remains safe in the house while the concubine is ravaged.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the ominous threat of the mob the old man apparently perceives there to be no danger to his own well-being, because he goes directly out to them in order to plead with them not to treat his guest in such a disgraceful way (v.23). It quickly becomes clear that the old man does not consider the concubine to be his guest because he offers her up in his next breath along with his virgin daughter (v.24). The offer is not a bluff. The old man even suggests that he bring the women out to the mob. He assures them that they may "rape" or "ravish" them, using the verb  $\text{רָבַד}$  the same verb used to describe the rapes of Dinah (Gen 34:2) and Tamar (2 Sam 13:12).<sup>60</sup> He continues to say that they can, in fact, do whatever they want to them, literally "what seems good in your eyes" (v.24). This is an allusion to the phrase that is repeated throughout the final chapters of Judges: "everyone did what was right in their own eyes." The use of the phrase here is eerily ironic considering that the old man knows that what will be done to the concubine will be

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<sup>59</sup> Lasine, "Guest and Host," 39.

<sup>60</sup> Lasine, "Guest and Host," 39.

far from “good.” When the mob is not willing to listen to the old man he refuses to take no for an answer and throws the concubine out to them.

There is perhaps no other account in the biblical text that emphasizes abuse against a woman as much as Judg 19. The reader is already aware that the concubine is being thrown out to a violent mob that demanded a man that they might rape. The old man has already made it clear that the mob may ravish her and do whatever they want to her; no one will try to stop them. Even if there were no further description it would be clear that whoever ends up in the hands of the mob would suffer a terrible fate, but the narrator continues nonetheless.

Once the concubine is thrown out to the mob two verbs are used to describe the abuse that she endures (v.25). First is the euphemistic “to know” (יָדָע) that is commonly used in the biblical text to refer to sexual intercourse.<sup>61</sup> Second is עלל, a verb that is best translated as “to ridicule,” “to mock,” or “to make a fool of.” It is used throughout the biblical texts not to describe physical abuse, but mocking and ridicule.<sup>62</sup> By using this verb the text not only describes that the concubine is physically raped, but also that she is taunted and demoralized.

Narrative time slows throughout verses 25-28, emphasizing the concubine’s ordeal. The narrator makes it very clear that the concubine was not only with the mob for a short time, but “all through the night until the morning,” and reiterates that it is not until the dawn begins to break that the woman is released. Verse 26 continues with two more

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<sup>61</sup> See Gen 4:1, 17; 15:16; 1 Sam 1:19.

<sup>62</sup> For instance, these verbs explain the way Moses “made fools of” the Egyptians with his plagues in Ex. 10:2; Balaam’s accusation to his donkey that “you have made a fool of me” in Num. 22:29; and the mockery made of Samson by the Philistines in Judg 16:25.

temporal references that slow narrative time to a crawl and focus attention on the concubine. The concubine is released at dawn, and “as morning appeared” she fell down at the door of the old man’s house and lay there “until it was light.” Once more in verse 27, it is only “in the morning” when the Levite finally leaves the house that the concubine is found. These five temporal references serve to emphasize not only the length of time that the concubine endured the mob, but also the long and agonizing wait from the time she is released until the time that the Levite discovers her.

The description of the concubine who was “lying at the door” in verse 27 may be describing more than her physical position. The verb **לפל** is often used to describe more than just the physical fall of a person or object, but their figurative fall as well: “to fall to destruction,” “to fall to ruin,” “to be done away with.” Elsewhere in Judges this verb is used to describe the death of a *great army* (8:10), the death of Ehud (3:25), and the slain army of Benjamin (20:46). While the verb does not make clear that the concubine has died, considering her ordeal perhaps it is better to paraphrase **לפל** with “was lying in ruins” or simply, “was ruined.”

In comparison to the slow pace of the previous verses, narrative time speeds up as the Levite emerges from the house. All in quick succession the Levite rises, opens the doors, goes out, intends to go, makes demands, takes the concubine, puts her on the donkey and leaves. Narrative time may have slowed to focus on the concubine, but she is now swallowed up in a whirlwind of action done around her body, which lies still on the doorstep. The only words spoken to the concubine throughout the entire narrative is the

command to the fallen woman to “get up, we are going.” The concubine remains silent, and the reader is left to wonder whether or not she has died.

In stark contrast to the man who ran after the concubine in order to speak tenderly to her in 19:3, the Levite now shows absolutely no concern. He made no attempt to rescue her during the night, or even to find her come daylight. He emerges from the house intent to be on his way home without giving a second thought to the fate of the woman. The Levite is well aware that the concubine has spent the night being raped and abused by a violent mob, yet he commands that she get up so that they can be on their way. The scene is a disturbing one, and becomes even worse as it continues on to describe the dismemberment of the woman’s body.

The fast pace of the narrative continues in verse 29. The Levite enters the house, grasps the concubine, cuts her up, and sends out the pieces. Compounding the horror of what the Levite is doing is the gruesome possibility that the concubine may still be alive when he approaches her with his knife. A similar act occurs at two other places in the Hebrew Bible. In 1 Sam 11:7 Saul cuts up a yoke of oxen and sends out the pieces as a call to war.<sup>63</sup> In 1 Kgs 11:30-39 Ahijah tears a garment into twelve pieces in order to symbolize the division of the kingdoms. In a macabre twist on these sign-acts, the Levite dismembers not an animal or an object, but a woman, a woman who may still be alive.<sup>64</sup>

The Levite distributes the pieces of the concubine’s body throughout Israel to serve as a summons to war against the tribe of Benjamin. He demands of his kinsmen:

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<sup>63</sup> Lasine, “Guest and Host,” 41-42.

<sup>64</sup> Exum, “Fragmented Women,” 180. See also Lasine, “Guest and Host,” 42; George Foot Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895): 420; Niditch, “The Sodomite Theme,” 371; Soggin, *Judges*, 282.

“Has such a thing ever happened since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak of it” (v.30). It is not until this point in the narrative that the Levite reacts to what happened in Gibeah, but it is unclear exactly what it is that the Levite is reacting to when he says “has such a thing ever happened?” It is not until Judg 20, when the Levite gives an account to his kinsmen about what happened, that his true feelings are revealed. In 20:5 the Levite seems very concerned about the threat made against him, and he even says that the men of Gibeah intended to kill him. The Levite sends out pieces of a woman’s abused and torn body, but his concern is not for how she has been treated; it is for how he has been offended.

## Conclusion

Judges 19 is infused with chaos and confusion. It is not expected that the scorned Levite would chase after the concubine in order to “speak tenderly to her.” It is ironic that the Levite is eager to leave the copious hospitality of the father-in-law in favour of the inhospitality of Gibeah. A familiar type-scene ensues, but in an appalling twist the concubine is actually thrown to the mob of attacking men. The narrator expertly focuses the story on the abuse of the concubine and the length of her ordeal with the mob. Her agony is contrasted to the uncaring response of the Levite, who emerges from the house refreshed and ready to be on his way. In a gruesome twist of a sign-act the Levite dismembers the body of the woman. The chapter ends with no resolution of events and no explanation of what occurred. Through it all is an ambiguity of characters and morals, as there are no names, no God, and no narrative evaluation. Judges 19 leaves the reader with

a sense of confusion and disorder that exemplifies a time when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

The biblical composer uses the place of the unnamed concubine in the story to allow him to exemplify life in Israel when there was no king. She begins as an autonomous figure who is unfaithful to her husband and chooses to leave him. Yet, she quickly disappears from the narrative as the story turns to focus on hospitality and the travels of the Levite. The narrator only introduces the concubine again in order to use the abuse against her as another odd and unexpected element in the story. By the end of the story the woman lies dead and dismembered.



## CHAPTER 2: TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF JUDGES 19

### Introduction

This chapter will use textual criticism to compare the LXX versions of Judg 19 to the MT. As mentioned above, two versions of the LXX are relevant to a study of Judg 19. The LXX<sup>B</sup> (Vaticanus) dates from the fourth century C.E., and for many biblical books is the most complete manuscript of the Greek text that we possess.<sup>65</sup> The LXX<sup>A</sup> (Alexandrinus) dates from the fifth century C.E. Although disputed, many scholars find that LXX<sup>A</sup> shows much affinity with the Hexaplaric tradition, in some cases representing it closely.<sup>66</sup>

This chapter will examine several points in Judg 19 where significant differences between the LXX and the MT affect the meaning of the narrative and thus the portrayal of the unnamed concubine. There are three main reasons why such textual variations can occur. First are the *stylistic concerns* of the writer to create a text that clarifies the content or language of the source text. Thus, while copying or translating the text the writer decides that an element should be changed possibly to add clarity or to increase the narrative flow of the passage.<sup>67</sup> The second reason is the *theological or ideological concerns* that motivate a writer to alter the text so that it will reflect their theological beliefs or cultural worldview.<sup>68</sup> Thirdly, differences amongst texts may occur due to

<sup>65</sup> Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 177.

<sup>66</sup> Jellicoe, *The Septuagint*, 183-188; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 139.

<sup>67</sup> For example, MT Josh 6:26 reads, אֶת־יְרִיחוֹ אֶת־הַזָּאֵר אֶת־הַעֵיִר הַזֶּה יִדְּ הַזֶּה אֶת־הַזָּאֵר אֶת־יְרִיחוֹ. Even though the context of the verse tells the reader that the city is “Jericho,” the אֶת־יְרִיחוֹ was added to make this explicit to the reader. See P. Kyle McCarter Jr, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible*, (ed. Gene M. Tucker, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 34; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 259-260.

<sup>68</sup> For example, some mss. of MT Judg 18:30 read, יְהוֹנָתָן בֶּן־גֵּרְשֹׁם בֶּן־מֹשֶׁה, “Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses,” a reading that is also evidenced by the LXX and the Vulgate. Other MT mss. however, read

*scribal error or textual corruption*, resulting in an unintentional misrepresentation of the source text.<sup>69</sup>

I suggest that each variation between the MT and the LXX that we will discuss below is the result not of textual error or stylistic concern, but due to theological and ideological concerns regarding the content of the Judg 19 story. The analysis below will determine not only what these differences are, but the likely reason why they occurred and, finally, how they affect the portrayal of the unnamed concubine.

### The “Going out” of the Concubine

The inciting action of the narrative belongs to the concubine (19:2). All of the versions<sup>70</sup> agree that the concubine departs from the Levite and returns to her father’s house, but there is some variation regarding the circumstances of her leaving.

MT: ... וְהִנֵּה עָלָיו פְּלִלְיָהּ וְהִנֵּה עָלָיו פְּלִלְיָהּ וְהִנֵּה עָלָיו פְּלִלְיָהּ

His concubine *prostituted herself against him* and went from him...

LXX<sup>B</sup>: καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἡ παλλακὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν παρ’ αὐτοῦ...

And his concubine *went out from him*, and went away from him ...

LXX<sup>A</sup>: καὶ ὠργίσθη αὐτῷ ἡ παλλακὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ...

And his concubine *became angry with him* and she went away from him...

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הַמִּשְׁחָה בֶּן גִּרְשָׁם בֶּן הַיְהוֹנָתָן בֶּן גִּרְשָׁם בֶּן מְנַשֶּׁה with the obvious insertion of the nun to read “Manasseh,” and removing Moses from the damaging context of this idolatry that pervades this narrative. For the above and additional examples see McCarter, *Textual Criticism*, 57-61; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 264-275.

<sup>69</sup> See McCarter, *Textual Criticism*, 40 for an example of a significant loss of text from the MT of Judg 16:13-14 due to the scribal error of parablepsis, which occurs when the scribe’s eye skips from what he is reading to a similar cluster of letters or words, and continues to copy from that latter point. Tov (*Textual Criticism*, 236-258), provides a detailed description of the various types of scribal errors that can occur.

<sup>70</sup> The English translations of the Masoretic text are adapted from the New Revised Standard Version; those of the Septuagint are my own.

The MT offers the harshest description of what occurred by using the verb זָנָה to describe that the concubine “prostituted herself” against the Levite. Many scholars call the use of זָנָה into question.<sup>71</sup> On a grammatical level, the construction עַל + זָנָה is unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, where the preposition אֶל normally follows זָנָה.

There are several theories that attempt to explain how זָנָה may have ended up in the MT. George Foot Moore suggests that the text originally read וַתִּזְאֶן “to be angry,” but through textual corruption became וַתִּזְנֶן “committed adultery” and because the concubine was not a “wedded wife” was later changed to וַתִּזְנֶה “committed whoredom.”<sup>72</sup> Moore’s theory, necessitating that the text was changed at two instances, is highly speculative. Another possibility is that the verb was originally זָנָה (“to reject, spurn”), but this verb is regularly transitive, and it is very obscure.<sup>73</sup>

Some scholars find that the verb was originally זָעַף (“to anger”), but was changed to זָנָה.<sup>74</sup> This change may be due to a scribal error resulting from a confusion of the consonants in זָנָה and זָעַף.<sup>75</sup> Boling finds it more likely that the change resulted

<sup>71</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 273; Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 459; John Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (The Century Bible; London: Nelson, 1967), 372; Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 409; Soggin, *Judges*, 284.

<sup>72</sup> Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 409.

<sup>73</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 273-274; Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 409.

<sup>74</sup> For support of the text as זָעַף see Boling, *Judges*, 273-274; Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 459-460; Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, 373; Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 409; Soggin, *Judges*, 284.

<sup>75</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 274.

from an interpretation of the story. The concubine would be considered guilty of “whoredom” just because she had gone out from the Levite. The use of ὀργιζέιν (“to anger”) in LXX<sup>A</sup> is cited in support of this theory. While the verb זעך is translated by ὀργιζέιν in LXX 2Chron. 16:10, there are no examples in the LXX of a correlation between זנח and ὀργιζέιν.<sup>76</sup> There are three main flaws in this theory. One, that it is unlikely that the verbs זנח and זעך would be confused because they share only one consonant (ז). Two, that while ὀργιζέιν is used in translation of זעך in LXX 2Chron. 16:10, this is the only instance in which this occurs and the construction does not use על. When ὀργιζέιν does translate a phrase with the preposition על (Prov. 19:3) זעך is not the principal verb.<sup>77</sup> Three, Boling’s suggestion that the change resulted from an interpretation of the story would mean that an illogical element was actually inserted into the text. The illogical situation created by זנח in which the Levite seeks to speak kindly to a woman who has just wronged him, is puzzling to both modern scholars and ancient interpreters. It is unlikely that such an element would be purposefully inserted into the story.

Finally, some scholars suggest that there is in fact no inconsistency between זנח and translations such as ὀργιζέιν (“to anger”) of the LXX, because זנח should be understood similarly as “to feel repugnance.”<sup>78</sup> The problem with this theory is that this

<sup>76</sup> ὀργιζειν is the usual translation of זנח, see Judg 2:14, 20; 6:39, 9:30; 10:7; 14:9.

<sup>77</sup> Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 459.

<sup>78</sup> L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, “זנח,” *HALOT* 1:275. See theories of Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle De L’Ancien Testament* (Orbis Biblicus Et Orientalis 50; Fribourg:

understood similarly as “to feel repugnance.”<sup>78</sup> The problem with this theory is that this alternate meaning of **רָגַז** is based solely on its use in Judg 19:2, and the verb is used nowhere else in the Hebrew text with this meaning. Scholars find that **רָגַז** must have an alternate meaning because the context of this story would not allow the concubine to be guilty of unfaithfulness. James Barr reasons, “There is no hint of such an element elsewhere in the story of the Levite’s concubine.”<sup>79</sup>

In fact, the chief argument against the authenticity of **רָגַז** is that it creates an illogical situation in which the Levite follows a woman who has just prostituted herself against him. C. F. Burney finds that “the context demands that the cause of estrangement should be a passing tiff and not an act of unfaithfulness.”<sup>80</sup> Alberto Soggin asserts that “the responsibility for the matrimonial crisis... must have lain with the husband, at least in view of his later behaviour... the cause of the quarrel cannot have been very serious, if the wife and the father-in-law are so glad to be reconciled.”<sup>81</sup> Robert Boling finds **רָגַז** questionable because “it is strange that the woman would become a prostitute, then run home.”<sup>82</sup> I suggest that the illogical situation created by **רָגַז** is not reason to doubt its authenticity, but to support it. As shown in chapter one, the original author of Judg 19 intended to create a narrative filled with disorder, confusion, and the unexpected. The odd

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<sup>78</sup> L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, “**רָגַז**,” *HALOT* 1:275. See theories of Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle De L’Ancien Testament* (Orbis Biblicus Et Orientalis 50; Fribourg: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1982), 116; James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 286.

<sup>79</sup> Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 286.

<sup>80</sup> Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 459-460.

<sup>81</sup> Soggin, *Judges*, 284.

<sup>82</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 273.

situation in which a man would follow a woman who wronged him is in keeping with the original intention of the author.

In my view the LXX versions of Judg 19:2 do not represent translations of a text that used  $\text{קָרַב}$ , but are interpretations of one that used  $\text{הִלַּךְ}$ . I suggest that the later translators of the LXX<sup>B</sup> and LXX<sup>A</sup> were uncomfortable with the unusual elements in the Judg 19 story. One of these is a woman who commits the ultimate sin against her husband, yet he follows her and wishes to “speak tenderly to her.” The use of  $\text{ὀργιζέιν}$  in LXX<sup>A</sup> creates an ambiguous situation in which it is unclear what caused the concubine to take her leave. The concubine is not entirely blameless, for she still went out from her Levite husband in an act of defiance. Yet, the Levite is now implicated as well, for he may be the cause of the concubine’s anger. In LXX<sup>B</sup>, the cause of the quarrel is completely unknown. The translator’s choice of  $\text{ἐπορεύθη ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ}$  (“went out from him”) may not be an attempt to completely sidestep the issue, but to offer a hint at the concubine’s guilt. Although not guilty of infidelity, the concubine did defy the Levite by going out from him. The translators thus solve their uneasiness with the text by obscuring the harsh description in the MT. They leave open the possibility that there was only a small disagreement between the concubine and the Levite, and even that the Levite may be partially to blame. In such a case, it is reasonable that the Levite would chase after the concubine and wish to reconcile and “speak tenderly to her.”

To suggest that the translators were uncomfortable with some elements of the Judg 19 story that were intended by the original author to exemplify life in a chaotic Israel is not to assume that they did not understand the original intent of the text. Rather,

their uneasiness with the odd elements of the story may have been of greater concern than preserving the intended purpose of the text – a purpose that so many generations later may not have seemed entirely relevant.

In 19:2, the concubine goes to her father's house in Bethlehem Judah and remains there for four months until the Levite moves to find her. His goal is not to chastise her or punish her, but to “speak tenderly to her,” or “speak to her heart”(19:3).

וַיֵּקֶם אִישָׁהּ וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ לְדַבֵּר עַל-לִבָּהּ לְהַשִּׁיבָהוּ (Kethib) לְהַשִּׁיבָהּ (Qere) וַנִּעְרָו עִמּוֹ וְצִמָּד חֲמֹרִים וַתְּבִיאָהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ וַיִּרְאָהוּ אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה וַיִּשְׂמַח לִקְרָאתוֹ:  
 Then her husband set out after her to speak to her heart to bring him back (Kethib) to bring her back (Qere) and with him was his servant and a pair of donkeys and she brought him into the house of her father and the father of the girl rejoiced to meet him.

The MT contains a Kethib/Qere of the verb שׁוּב. The Kethib (“to bring *him* back”) is out of place given the sudden change in subject that is needed to accommodate it. The Levite has sought out the concubine, and he will attempt to win her back. The Kethib may have been introduced in order to explain the unlikely situation in 19:2, in which a man would set out to find the woman who had “prostituted herself” against him. The Levite sets out to find the concubine, yes, but it is up to her to win him back.<sup>83</sup> The Kethib also makes sense along with the use of וַתְּבִיאָהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ (“she brought him into the house of her father”). Thus, the concubine reconciled with the Levite and then led him into her father's house.

The version of 19:3 in LXX<sup>B</sup> translates the verse in a manner consistent with the Qere. In both accounts, it is the Levite who seeks to reconcile with the concubine, and

<sup>83</sup> Moore (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 410), translates the Kethib as, “that she might win him back.”

upon their meeting it is the concubine who brings him into her father's house. Also in all three accounts the father rejoices upon meeting the Levite.

LXX<sup>A</sup> also corresponds to the Qere of the MT Judg 19:3, but here the concubine does not escort the Levite into her father's house, nor is there any mention that the father is pleased to meet him. There is no evidence to suggest that the variation is due to a scribal error. It is the LXX<sup>A</sup> version that previously describes that the concubine is angry with the Levite. Perhaps the translators thought that the Levite's errant behaviour would be met by a more aloof reception from the concubine and her father.

### The Abuse of the Concubine

In a familiar type-scene the house in Gibeah is accosted by a mob that demands sex from the Levite. In the version of this type-scene in Gen 19 the mob is eventually turned away, yet here the woman is surprisingly seized and thrown out to the mob (19:25). It is unclear which man threw the concubine out of the house in Gibeah:

MT וְלֹא-אָבְדוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְשִׁמְעֹן לֹר וַיַּחְזֹק הָאִישׁ בְּפִלְגָשׁוֹ וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם הַתָּוֶן וַיִּדְעוּ  
 אֹתָהּ וַיִּתְעַלְלוּ-בָּהּ כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה עַד-הַבֹּקֶר וַיִּשְׁלַחְתָּהּ בְּעֹלֹת הַשָּׁמֶר:

The men not willing to listen, the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. They knew her and taunted her all through the night until morning and as the dawn began to break they let her go.

The pronominal suffix in the MT בְּפִלְגָשׁוֹ (“his concubine”) and the similar use of the genitive αβτοῦ in the LXX<sup>B</sup>, and LXX<sup>A</sup> does not clarify the ambiguity. Boling reasons that the reference must certainly be to the Levite, because the narrative centres on him, and any actions of the “old man” have been prefaced with that title.<sup>84</sup> The chief argument against Boling's assertion is that up until this point in the narrative, the exchange has been

<sup>84</sup> Boling, *Judges*, 276.



solely between the old man and the mob. The old man gave a verbal offer of the concubine in the first place. Although it is entirely plausible that the Levite sprung into action to eject the concubine and save his own skin, it is unusual that the narrative would so abruptly switch to him as a subject.

The Levite remains in the house throughout the night while the concubine endures the abuse of the mob. The Levite emerges from the house intent to be on his way, but he happens across the body of the concubine lying on the doorstep (19:27).

MT: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָהּ קוּמִי וְנִלְכְּהָ נָאִין עֲנֵה נִשְׁמָעָה עַל-הַמִּבְרָח וְהָיָה לְקַמְּךָ לְעֹלָמְךָ  
 And he said to her, “Up, let us be going.” *But no one answered.* And he took her on a donkey and the man got up and went to his place.

LXX<sup>B</sup>: καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτήν ἀνάστα καὶ ἀπέλθωμεν καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη ὅτι ἦν νεκρά καὶ ἔλαβεν αὐτήν ἐπὶ τὸν ὄνον καὶ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ  
 And he said to her, “Up, and let us go.” *And she did not answer, for she was dead,* and he took her on his donkey and went to his place.

LXX<sup>A</sup>: καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτήν ἀνάστηθι καὶ ἀπέλθωμεν καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ τεθνήκει καὶ ἀνέλαβεν αὐτήν ἐπὶ τὸ ὑποζύγιον καὶ ἀνέστη ὁ ἀνὴρ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ  
 And he said to her, “Up, and let us go.” *And she did not answer him, but she was dead.* And he put her on the donkey and the man rose up and went to his place.

There are no clues about the concubine’s fate before this verse. The reader is well aware that the woman has spent the night with an abusive mob, but is told only that she falls on the doorstep. When the MT states only that there is no answer from the woman, the reader is left to wonder if this is in fact because the concubine has died, or because she is so badly injured that she is unable to respond. LXX<sup>B</sup> and LXX<sup>A</sup> have added ὅτι ἦν νεκρά (“because she was dead”) and ἀλλὰ τεθνήκει (“but she was dead”) respectively. By making it clear that the concubine died on the doorstep, the ambiguity of the verse is resolved and the mob at Gibeah is clearly to blame for her death.

In my view, this addition is not motivated only by a desire to clarify an ambiguous text, but also due to the events that will occur in v. 29. The LXX additions serve to ensure that the concubine is dead when the Levite dismembers her. The biblical composer may have included the ambiguity surrounding the concubine’s fate in order to contribute to the uncertainty throughout the story.<sup>85</sup> Yet, later translators were bothered by the gruesome possibility that the woman was tortured with dismemberment and thus added the detail that she had died in v. 28.

### The Dismemberment of the Concubine

The fast pace of the narrative continues as verse 29 is filled with the actions of the Levite all in quick succession, and all inflicted upon the body of the concubine.

MT: וַיָּבֹא אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ אֶת-חַרְפָּה הַלְוִיָּתָהּ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ חֶרֶב וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַלְוִיָּתָהּ וַיִּדְּבֵק אֶת-עַצְמוֹתֶיהָ לְשִׁבְעָה עָשָׂר חֵטְבִּים וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-כָּל-חֵטְבִּי אֵל-כָּל-אֶרֶץ-יִשְׂרָאֵל

When he came into his house he took a knife and took hold of his concubine and divided her bone by bone into twelve pieces and sent her into all the regions of Israel.

LXX<sup>B</sup>: καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν ῥομφαίαν καὶ ἐκράτησεν τὴν παλλακὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμέλισεν αὐτήν εἰς δώδεκα μέλη καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὰ ἐν παντὶ ὄρει Ἰσραὴλ  
 And he took a sword and took hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve parts, and sent them to every region of Israel.

LXX<sup>A</sup>: καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν μάχαιραν καὶ ἐπελάβετο τῆς παλλακῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμέλισεν αὐτήν κατὰ τὰ ὀστέα αὐτῆς εἰς δώδεκα μερίδας καὶ ἐξάπεστειλεν αὐτάς εἰς πάσας τὰς φυλάς Ἰσραὴλ  
 And he came into his house and took a sword and took hold of his concubine and divided her according to her bones, into twelve pieces and sent them to every tribe of Israel.

LXX<sup>B</sup> lacks many of the descriptions that appear in the MT and LXX.<sup>A</sup> First, the LXX<sup>B</sup> does not begin the verse by noting that the Levite came into his house, as do the other texts. Because there does not seem to be any textual corruption that has caused the

<sup>85</sup> R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury), 200.

difference, perhaps it may stem from the stylistic concerns of the translator to avoid repetition of the similar description that has just been given at the close of the preceding verse. Secondly, LXX<sup>B</sup> does not describe the dismemberment of the concubine as “according to her bones,” or “by her pieces” as does appear in the LXX<sup>A</sup> and MT. Again, there seems to be no evidence to support the suggestion of a scribal error. It may be that this omission occurred, like the one before it, because the translator found the extra information to be unnecessary.

In all accounts, the pieces of the concubine’s body are sent out to all the “territories” or “tribes” of Israel. It is only in the MT that the pieces are referred to not with the plural “them,” but with a feminine singular “her.”<sup>86</sup> This small difference serves to bring the reader’s attention back to the fact that this is an abused woman who has been dissected and not an inanimate object. Recall that in the accounts of the MT there remains the possibility that the concubine may have been alive when the Levite began to dismember her. The LXX<sup>B</sup> and LXX<sup>A</sup> ensure that the concubine died even before the journey home. Thus here she is nothing more than an inanimate object to be disassembled for the Levite’s purpose.

The final verse of *Judg* 19 describes how the pieces of the concubine’s body were sent out. There are significant differences between the accounts at this point.

MT: וְהָיָה כָּל-הָרְאָה וְאָמַר לֹא-נִהְיִתָּה וְלֹא-נִרְאָתָה כְּזֹאת לְמִיּוֹם עֲלֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שִׁמְרוּ לָכֶם עָלֶיהָ עֲצוּ וְדַבְּרוּ פ:

And it was so that all who saw it said such a thing has not happened nor been seen since the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, take advice, and speak.

<sup>86</sup> This was called to my attention through personal communication with Eileen Schuller.

LXX<sup>B</sup>: καὶ ἐγένετο πᾶς ὁ βλέπων ἔλεγεν οὐκ ἐγένετο καὶ οὐχ ἑώραται ὡς αὕτη ἀπὸ ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης θέσθε ὑμῖν αὐτοὶ ἐπ' αὐτήν βουλήν καὶ λαλήσατε

And it was so, that all who saw it said, “such a day as this has not happened nor has been seen from the day of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt until this day. You take advice concerning it, and speak.

LXX<sup>A</sup>: καὶ ἐγένετο πᾶς ὁ ὁρῶν ἔλεγεν οὔτε ἐγενήθη οὔτε ὠφθη οὕτως ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης καὶ ἐνετείλατο τοῖς ἀνδράσιν οἷς ἐξαπέστειλεν λέγων τάδε ἐρεῖτε πρὸς πάντα ἄνδρα Ἰσραὴλ εἰ γέγονεν κατὰ τὸ ρῆμα τοῦτο ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης θέσθε δὴ ἑαυτοῖς βουλήν περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ λαλήσατε

And it was so that all who saw it said, such a thing has not happened nor has been seen from the day of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt until this day. And he commanded the men whom he sent out, “Thus you will say to every male Israelite: There has never been anything like this from the day the Israelites left Egypt until the present day, therefore you take advice concerning this and speak.

In the MT version of this verse, those who happen to see the divided remains of the concubine remark amongst themselves that such a thing has never been witnessed.

The first three verbs in the verse, **רָאוּ**, **הִלְכוּ** and **דָּבַר** should be understood as

frequentatives, therefore denoting that on an ongoing basis the remains were being seen

and remarked upon.<sup>87</sup> The three imperatives at the end of the verse seem abrupt and out of

place. Who is issuing the commands? Is it the people who see the remains? The Levite?

The narrator? Such difficulty has led commentators such as Burney to assert that textual

corruption must have occurred due to homoioteleuton with the word **לִשְׁרָאֵל** at the end of

verse 29. The phrase **וַיִּצְוּ יְשׂרָאֵל**... was thus lost, leaving the speech of verse 30 without

a speaker. In order to rectify the situation the phrase **וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה כָּל־הָרְאִיָּה וְאָמַר** was later

added. Burney insists on a textual emendation to replace **וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה כָּל־הָרְאִיָּה וְאָמַר** with **יְשׂרָאֵל**

**וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה כָּל־הָרְאִיָּה וְאָמַר** בְּהַתְּאֵמַר לְכָל־אִישׁ. Thus the opening phrase of verse 30

<sup>87</sup> Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, 379; Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 421.

reads, “and he commanded the men that he sent saying thus shall you say to all the men of Israel.”

Burney’s suggested emendation is gleaned from a phrase in LXX<sup>A</sup> that does not appear in LXX.<sup>B</sup> LXX<sup>A</sup> clarifies that the Levite himself commanded those whom he sent out, presumably with pieces of the concubine, instructing them in what they should say to every Israelite man.

### Conclusion

It is common to find differences between the LXX and MT versions of a given biblical story. I suggest that the two main differences between the LXX versions of Judg 19 and MT Judg 19 result from the interpretive work of the translators. The translators are motivated to change the text at the point of the concubine’s “going out” (19:2) and to clarify the ambiguity surrounding her death (19:28). They are uncomfortable with a man who would chase after a woman who was unfaithful, and they are uneasy with the possibility that the Levite dismembered the concubine while she was still alive. As shown in chapter one, the biblical composer likely included these elements in an effort to depict chaos and disorder. This is not to suggest that the later translators did not understand that the story had this purpose. Their interpretive work shows that they were more concerned to resolve the incongruous elements of the text than to preserve its overall purpose. The changes made to the text allow a more sympathetic portrayal of the Levite, as a man who would not foolishly run after his errant wife or be guilty of the heinous crime of dismembering a woman while she was still alive.

The portrayal of the unnamed concubine in the LXX versions is ambiguous. The interpretation of her “going out” in both the LXX<sup>A</sup> and LXX<sup>B</sup> make it unclear what transpired between her and the Levite. While she is not accused of infidelity, she is still guilty of going out from the Levite. She is not entirely innocent, nor can she be fully to blame. In the following chapter, we will see how ambiguity allows Josephus and Pseudo-Philo to alter significantly the portrayal of the concubine.

### **CHAPTER 3: JUDGES 19 IN PSEUDO-PHILO'S *LIBER ANTIQUITATUM* *BIBLICARUM* AND JOSEPHUS' *ANTIQUITIES***

#### Introduction

Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* and Josephus' *Ant.* are best classified in the genre of rewritten Bible. In the previous chapter we analysed the Septuagint, which offers a systematic translation of the Hebrew text. By contrast, Pseudo-Philo and Josephus approach the biblical text with the aim of retelling and thus explaining the biblical narratives in their own words. In *Ant.* 5.136-149 and *L.A.B.* 45 we find versions of Judg 19 that are significantly different from the story as it appears in the MT.

In this chapter we will analyse how Judg 19 is interpreted in these retellings, and how the unnamed concubine is portrayed. As we shall see, Josephus and Pseudo-Philo focus their interpretation on some of the same aspects of Judg 19 that were altered in the Septuagint. The previous chapter proposed that the differences between the MT and versions of the LXX likely occurred because the translators were uncomfortable with some of the odd and unexpected elements of the story. It may be that the retellings of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo are guided by a similar reaction to the text.

In the present chapter, I shall present the retellings of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo separately, rather than in comparison to one another. Each part contains an introduction to the text and its authorship, followed by an analysis of the text and finally some conclusions about each retelling.

## 1. Pseudo-Philo's Retelling of Judges 19

The retellings in *L.A.B.* span the biblical stories from Adam to the death of Saul. The book of Judges is given a central place. Out of the sixty-five chapters in *L.A.B.*, there are more devoted to Judges than to all of the pentateuchal books combined.<sup>88</sup>

Early manuscripts identify the author of *L.A.B.* as Philo of Alexandria. As early as the sixteenth century, however, scholars began to suggest that it was unlikely that Philo was the original author. The writing style used by the author of *L.A.B.* is dissimilar to that used by Philo.<sup>89</sup> In contrast with Philo's Greek compositions, *L.A.B.* was originally composed in Hebrew. Most likely, the text was later translated into Greek and from Greek into the Latin text that we have today.<sup>90</sup> When *L.A.B.* circulated as an anonymous Greek text, it may have been mistakenly copied along with the authentic works of Philo. Alternately, a desire to identify it may have led people to assume that it belonged to another well-known Greek author such as Philo.<sup>91</sup>

D.J. Harrington summarizes the reasons why it is likely that *L.A.B.* was composed for a Jewish audience in Palestine. The text has many similarities to other Palestinian works such as 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. There is also some evidence that Pseudo-Philo was

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<sup>88</sup> Feldman, "Josephus' *Antiquities*," 59; Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*," in *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Society of Biblical Literature: Early Judaism and Its Literature; ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1991), 83.

<sup>89</sup> Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 195-198.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, "Pseudo Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1985): 298-299; Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 215-224; Murphy, *Rewriting the Bible*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 196-197.



well acquainted with the geography of Palestine.<sup>92</sup> Finally, Pseudo-Philo's interest in sacrifice, the Law, eschatology, and angelology also suggest a Palestinian origin.<sup>93</sup>

Most scholars agree that *L.A.B.* was written in the first century, but there is ongoing debate about whether it was composed before or after the destruction of the Temple. In my view the most convincing arguments support a post-70 dating. For instance *L.A.B.* 19:7 describes that a place where people serve God was destroyed on the 17th day of Tammuz. Rabbinic writings, as well as the work of Josephus, relate this date to the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>94</sup> Also in support of a post-70 date is the emphasis on study rather than sacrifice (*L.A.B.* 22) and the possibility of an anti-Christian polemic (*L.A.B.* 32).<sup>95</sup>

While *L.A.B.* is best understood as part of the genre of rewritten Bible, some further designations can be made about the characteristics of this text.<sup>96</sup> Louis Feldman describes *L.A.B.* as "Midrashlike," because it often brings other biblical texts into a discussion of a given passage.<sup>97</sup> There is a tendency in *L.A.B.* to harmonize the biblical text, explaining inconsistencies and ruling out disputing interpretations. *L.A.B.* often fills in names and numbers that do not appear in the biblical text, and it forges relationships

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<sup>92</sup> See the references to Ekron, Samaria, and Judah in *L.A.B.* 55:7.

<sup>93</sup> Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation," 300.

<sup>94</sup> See *m.Ta'an.* 4:6; *y. Ta'an* 4.7; Josephus' *War*, 6.93-94.

<sup>95</sup> See Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 201-204; Michael Philip Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo-Philo: Doctrine and Scriptural Exegesis in a Jewish Midrash of the First Century AD.* (2 vols., PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1975), 318-327. For the counter argument in support of a pre-70 date see Murphy, *Rewriting the Bible*, 7; Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation," 299, and a summary of these in Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 199-201.

<sup>96</sup> To my knowledge, *L.A.B.* was first classified as rewritten Bible by Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 95.

<sup>97</sup> Feldman, "Josephus' *Antiquities*," 61. Wadsworth goes further to assert that *L.A.B.* be characterized as "one of the oldest examples of post-biblical Jewish midrash" (Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 328).

between characters and narratives that are unrelated in scripture.<sup>98</sup> Of course, *L.A.B.* can only be Midrashlike because it moves freely through the biblical stories, changing the order of some narratives and entirely omitting others. Moreover, we see no consistent method of exegesis used throughout the text.

Informing Pseudo-Philo's writing throughout *L.A.B.* is a polemic against idolatry. Pseudo-Philo emphasizes biblical tales that involve idolatry, and he adds this element into other stories that do not contain it. A concern with idolatry fits with *L.A.B.*'s probable first-century context; there was an overwhelming presence of Roman iconography at this time, and new religious movements were common, and perceived by some as a threat to Jewish identity.<sup>99</sup> Pseudo-Philo understands idolatry not only as the worship of idols and foreign gods, but also in the broader sense as unfaithfulness towards God that comes through association with foreigners and intermarriage.<sup>100</sup> For Pseudo-Philo idolatry is "the root of all evil."<sup>101</sup>

In *L.A.B.* we find a greater role for *some* women of the biblical narratives. Characters such as Tamar (*L.A.B.* 9.5), Jael (*L.A.B.* 31), Deborah (*L.A.B.* 30-33), and Jephthah's daughter (*L.A.B.* 39-40), are elevated beyond their place in the biblical text. Four unnamed women in the book of Judges are given names in *L.A.B.*: the mother of Sisera (*L.A.B.* 31.8), Samson's mother (*L.A.B.* 42.1), and Jephthah's daughter (*L.A.B.* 40.1).<sup>102</sup> There are even some plays on words that turn the masculine into feminine such

<sup>98</sup> Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 328-333.

<sup>99</sup> Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 357; Frederick J. Murphy, "Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo," *JBL* 107 (1988): 286.

<sup>100</sup> Murphy, "Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo," 279-280.

<sup>101</sup> Murphy, "Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo," 279.

<sup>102</sup> Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo," 94.

as “woman of God” (*L.A.B.* 33.1) and “the bosom of our mothers” (*L.A.B.* 40:4).<sup>103</sup> Mary Therese DesCamp finds Pseudo-Philo’s portrayal of women to be so favourable that she goes so far as to assert that the author must be a woman.<sup>104</sup> Yet, even though there are many positive portrayals of women in *L.A.B.*, some women are not given a more important place in Pseudo-Philo’s retelling and are even further subjugated than their places in the biblical text. Betsy Halpern-Amaru shows that Pseudo-Philo elevates women who are associated in some way with motherhood, but for women who have no maternal association he “either underdevelops the portrait or portrays the woman as ineffective and dependent.”<sup>105</sup> Thus, we see that even though many other women in the book of Judges are given names in *L.A.B.*, the concubine remains unnamed, and she even becomes the object of divine displeasure.<sup>106</sup>

Pseudo-Philo begins his retelling of Judg 19 with the Levite’s arrival in Gibeah:

At that time a certain man from the tribe of Levi came to Gibeah, and when he wanted to stay there the sun set. He wanted to enter there, but those who dwelled there did not let him. He said to his servant, “Go and lead the mule, and we will go to the city of Nob; perhaps they will let us enter it.” . . . He came there and sat down in the square of the city but no one said to him, “Enter my house.” (*L.A.B.* 45.1)<sup>107</sup>

Pseudo-Philo shows how he freely modifies the biblical text by entirely omitting the concubine’s “going out” and the sojourn at the father’s house.<sup>108</sup> In fact, the reader is unaware of the concubine’s existence until she is snatched from the house in Gibeah. This

<sup>103</sup> Harrington, “Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation,” 300.

<sup>104</sup> DesCamp finds that Pseudo-Philo’s portrayal of women is not only overwhelmingly positive, but gives us a view from “the women’s court where marriage, babies, nursing, pregnancy, and motherhood are the main concerns... The view is personalized, female, and fiercely committed to Judaism.” See Mary Therese DesCamp, “Why are these Women Here?” *JSP* 16 (1997): 79. See also Pieter van der Horst, “Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*,” *JSP* 5 (1989): 44-45.

<sup>105</sup> Halpern-Amaru, “Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo,” 106.

<sup>106</sup> Halpern-Amaru, “Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo,” 100.

<sup>107</sup> The English translations of *L.A.B.* are those of Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 168-169.

<sup>108</sup> Begg, “The Retellings of the Story of Judges 19,” 37.

omission makes clear that the unnamed concubine is a character of no real importance to Pseudo-Philo. He is sure to mention the Levite, his servant, and even his mule at the start of the passage, but the concubine is not at the forefront of this narrative.

In the MT of Judg 19:12 the Levite refuses to turn into a city of foreigners for fear of danger. Instead he insists on traveling farther on to Gibeah, only to have that city of his kinsmen be the place where he is accosted. Pseudo-Philo changes this significantly. In *L.A.B.*, the Levite first comes upon Gibeah and attempts to enter, but “those who dwelled there did not let him in.”<sup>109</sup> The second city to which they come is Nob, and the Levite reasons that it is here that they should try to enter. Some irony can still be found, as the Levite was turned away from the city where he may have been safe and was allowed to enter the city in which he would be accosted. The element of irony, however, is not emphasized the way that it is in the biblical text. In *L.A.B.* it is not the Levite’s own choice to bypass the first city; he attempted to enter but was turned away. Pseudo-Philo’s choice of Nob as the city in which the crime occurs likely stems from his desire to hold the priest of Nob guilty for cultic sins, as in his retelling of 1 Samuel 22. This choice contributes to Pseudo-Philo’s continuing polemic against idolatry.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Most commentators understand that “Gabao” is a misinterpretation at some level of the text for the intended “Gibeah.” Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 1028-1029.

<sup>110</sup> See Eyal Regev, “The Two Sins of Nob: Biblical Interpretation, an Anti-Priestly Polemic and a Geographical Error in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*,” *JSP* 12 (2001): 85-104, who argues that, “the author mistakenly replaced Gibeah (the hill) with the hill of Nob since the two locations are very close geographically.” Regev dismisses the literary reasons for the change because he finds that Pseudo-Philo’s retelling of Judg 19 “speaks of the sin of rape and murder,” thus missing that it actually speaks against the idolatry of Micah and the failure of Nob to recognize idolatry. Thus, Regev misses the link of this episode with polemic against idolatry, which would then correlate with the idolatry of the priests of Nob. In both narratives the inhabitants are slaughtered for their sinful behaviour. Wadsworth agrees, stating “the outrage committed at Nob by the townsfolk in *L.A.B.* 45 can, therefore, be seen as the author’s attempt to give the town’s inhabitants a reputation for evildoing” (Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 362).

Whereas all characters are anonymous in MT Judg 19, Pseudo-Philo names the Levite “Beel,” and the man of Nob “Bethac.”<sup>111</sup> In Judg 19:1 the Levite is established as being, “from the hill country of Ephraim.” Inasmuch as Pseudo-Philo does not include 19:1-8 in his retelling, he makes no mention of geography and labels Bethac only as a Levite like Beel.<sup>112</sup> As in Judg 19, the Levite enters the town and sits in the square, but no one invites him in.

Bethac is well aware of the wickedness that goes on in his city and wonders why Beel is not aware of it. This is the first reminder of Gen 19, inasmuch as cities like Sodom and Gomorrah have well-known reputations for wickedness and debauchery. Bethac ushers the group to his house for safety. He explicitly cites the episode in Gen 19 reasoning that “The Lord will shut their minds before us as he shut up the Sodomites before Lot.” Bethac’s confident statement is ironic, in light of the attack that is to follow. Bethac’s statement also begs the question of why the group is in fact not protected by the Lord. The Lord himself will answer this question at the close of the narrative with reference to Pseudo-Philo’s polemic: idolatry is to blame.

No sooner has Bethac confirmed the safety of the travelers than all the inhabitants of the city come and demand to see the visitors:

All the inhabitants of the city came together and said to Bethac, “Bring out those who came to you today. Otherwise, we will burn them in the fire both you and them.” . . . He went out to them and said to them, “Are not these our brothers? Let us not do evil to them lest our sins be multiplied amongst us.” . . . They answered, “It has never happened that strangers give orders to the local inhabitants.” (L.A.B. 45.3)

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<sup>111</sup> It is unclear what the meaning is behind these names, which appear in a variety of spellings, Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 1030.

<sup>112</sup> See Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 331-332 on Pseudo-Philo’s fondness of supplying names and numbers in narratives.

By referring not to some men, as in MT Judg 19, but to the entire city, *L.A.B.* heightens the strength of the mob. The reader familiar with the MT might assume that “those who came to you today” includes the concubine. Judging only by *L.A.B.*, however, a reader would assume that the inhabitants of the house are only Bethac, Beel, the servant, and a mule.<sup>113</sup> Just as the old man of Judg 19 does not consider the concubine to be one of his guests, neither does Bethac, for he pleads with the mob saying, “Are these not our brothers?” He does not refer to any women.<sup>114</sup> In MT Judg 19, homosexual sex with the Levite is clearly the intent of the mob. By contrast, Pseudo-Philo does not make clear why the mob demands the inhabitants. In Wadsworth’s view, “the author of *L.A.B.* is seeking to spare the finer sensibilities of his readers.”<sup>115</sup> Unlike MT Judg 19, the mob makes a specific threat of violence towards both the inhabitants and towards Bethac if he does not offer them up. Thus, Bethac is putting his own life in danger by protecting his guests.

It is only at this point in the narrative that the reader learns of the existence of a concubine.

they entered by force and dragged him and his concubine off, and they took them outside. After letting the man go, they abused his concubine until she died, for she had strayed from her man at one time when she committed sin with the Amalekites, and on account of this the Lord God delivered her into the hands of sinners. (*L.A.B.* 45.3)

In the MT the concubine is offered to the mob as the men remain in the house. Here the mob takes both the concubine and the Levite by force, and Pseudo-Philo adds a note of brutality by describing them as “dragging” them outside. Christopher Begg finds that this

<sup>113</sup> Pseudo-Philo may have read the  $\text{אֵלֵינוּ}$  of the biblical text as  $\text{אֵלֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ}$  “these are my brothers.”

<sup>114</sup> Unlike Judg 19 in which the old man has a daughter who is also offered to the mob, Pseudo-Philo does not include such a character.

<sup>115</sup> Wadsworth, *The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 362.

presentation of the concubine's abduction serves to "whitewash the role of the host and his Levite guest" who do nothing to dissuade the mob. Understood along with the added brutality of the mob, however, it seems more that Pseudo-Philo is exonerating both Bethac and Beel from any blame for failing to protect the concubine; they are depicted as powerless against all the inhabitants of the city. Beel cannot help the concubine because he himself is seized.

In comparison to the MT, Pseudo-Philo's description of the abuse against the concubine is terse. The sexuality of the act is not stated explicitly, as it is in the MT. It is only implied. By noting that the concubine died from the abuse, *L.A.B.* resolves the ambiguity of the MT with regard to the state that the concubine was in when the Levite later finds her. This interpretation is similar to that of LXX<sup>A</sup> and LXX<sup>B</sup>, which add that the concubine was dead when the Levite discovered her on the doorstep (19:28).

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Pseudo-Philo's retelling of *Judg 19* is the reasoning for the concubine's death. In the MT, the abuse of the concubine is blamed on the mob in Gibeah.<sup>116</sup> In *L.A.B.*, however, God ordains the abuse of the concubine as a punishment for her sin with the Amalekites. Here, Pseudo-Philo's polemic comes into play. The concubine's co-mingling with the foreign Amalekites is the ultimate in corruption and idolatry, and she is rightly punished for it. Possibly, Pseudo-Philo's assertion that the concubine mingled with foreigners builds upon a tradition in which the

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<sup>116</sup> Even if the violation is thought to be against the Levite and not against the concubine.

concubine is unfaithful to the Levite (Judg 19:2), as evidenced in the MT and to some extent in versions of the LXX.<sup>117</sup>

Pseudo-Philo uses the abuse against the concubine not only to show the consequences of idolatry, but also to show that no one can hide such a sin. The reader is unaware of the concubine's existence until the mob breaks into the house. Suddenly the concubine is found out, and miraculously, even though they desired the man all along, the mob sets Beel free and chooses to abuse and murder the woman. The sin of the concubine is discovered, just as all idolatry will be found, and she is justly and severely punished, just as all idolaters will be punished.

In the MT narrative time slows in order to stress the abuse of the concubine, but in *L.A.B.* there is no reason to do so. It is only important that the concubine is killed and that it is clear that her idolatrous actions are to blame for her own death. Pseudo-Philo is concise at this point of the retelling, matter-of-factly noting that the dead concubine is transported to Kedesh.

When it was morning, Beel went out and, finding his concubine dead, he put her on the mule and hurried away and came to Kedesh. He took her body and cut it up into pieces and sent it throughout the twelve tribes, saying, "These things were done to me in the city of Nob, and those dwelling there rose up against me to kill me, and they took my concubine while I was locked up and killed her. If it is good in your eyes to be silent, the Lord will judge. But if you wish to take vengeance, the Lord will help you." (L.A.B. 45.4)

Pseudo-Philo has already mentioned that the concubine is abused until she dies, but he expels all ambiguity from the biblical text by also noting that the concubine is dead when Beel finds her. In fact, so sure is Beel that the concubine is dead that Beel does not bother to speak to her as the Levite does in the MT.

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<sup>117</sup> Begg, "The Retellings of the Story of Judges 19," 37.



As in the MT of Judg 19, Beel dismembers the concubine's body and sends it out to the twelve tribes. He then says, "these things were done to me" (*L.A.B.* 45:4). In *L.A.B.* Beel uses the concubine's body as evidence, not of what was done to her, but of what was done to him. As in Judg 20:5, he claims that the mob intended to kill him. In Judg 20:5, the statement appears untrue, but Pseudo-Philo's earlier addition that the mob threatened fire makes Beel's statement here accurate. Pseudo-Philo's retelling appears to have another anachronism, however, as Beel claims that he was locked up when the concubine was taken away. According to the earlier account in *L.A.B.* Beel was taken out of the house with the concubine and then let go, and at no point was he locked up.

Beel's commission to his kinsmen is one of immense irony. Beel warns that those who are silent will be judged and those who exact revenge will be helped. By contrast the Lord's following speech to "the adversary" reveals that it is those who exact revenge who will be punished. Those who remained silent about this supposed crime and focused instead on another would be helped. Pseudo-Philo's statement that "if it is good in your eyes" is reminiscent of the statement that ends Judges: "in those days, there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judg 21:25).

In an addition unique to Pseudo-Philo the Lord has a conversation with "the adversary."

All the men of the twelve tribes were disturbed... and said to each other, "If such depravity has been done in Israel, shall Israel remain quiet.?"

The Lord said to the adversary, "Do you see that this foolish people was not disturbed at a time when they ought to have died, when Micah acted so craftily to lead the people astray... And so, because they were not zealous then, therefore let their plan turn out badly and their heart be confused so that those who allow evil will be destroyed along with the sinners." (*L.A.B.* 45.5-6)

The irony and foolishness of the tribesmen's behaviour is revealed as the Lord asks why they were not disturbed over the gross idolatry of Micah, but are now so worried over what happened in Nob.

Sin abounds in this retelling. Beel and Bethac are spared but the concubine is delivered to murderers because of her sin of idolatry. Beel proclaims that the inhabitants of Nob are wicked, and the Lord calls them "sinners" at the last word of the chapter. Beel and his tribesmen are proclaimed as "foolish" for ignoring Micah's blatant sin and thus allowing evil to abound. The unifying sin is the one against which Pseudo-Philo campaigns: idolatry.

Pseudo-Philo uses the concubine's death as an impetus for the war against Benjamin. In contrast to Judg 19, *L.A.B.* stresses that God does not condone the war. Pseudo-Philo must draw attention back to the idolatry of Micah that was overlooked, while at the same time explaining why Benjamin defeats Israel. His answer is to blame the concubine. She deserved to die and therefore no one should be reacting to her death, but should be paying attention to the greater sin before them.

The differences between Pseudo-Philo's account of Judg 19 and that of the Masoretic text are informed by two concerns. On one hand, Pseudo-Philo does not interpret Judg 19 as a story that is meant to exemplify a chaotic time in the life of Israel. There are elements within Judg 19 with which he appears to be uncomfortable: an unfaithful woman whose husband follows after her, the homosexuality of the accosting mob, and the unfavourable portrayal of the Levite who callously treats the fallen woman. In his retelling, the concubine's "going out" no longer appears, and the accosting mob

does not shame the Levite by desiring homosexual sex. Likewise it is clear that the Levite cannot be held accountable for the fate of the concubine, and there is no focus on the Levite's unfeeling treatment of the abused woman. Most significantly, Pseudo-Philo utterly vilifies the concubine, making her guilty of associating with the foreign Amelikites and deserving of the terrible fate that befalls her. By finding a reason for the tragedy he is able to make sense of Judg 19, and justify the disturbing way in which the concubine is treated.

On the other hand, Pseudo-Philo uses this story to further his polemic against idolatry. In this way he alters Judg 19 so that it focuses on the repercussions of idolatry. The residents of Nob are guilty of idolatry, as are Beel and his kinsmen because they ignored Micah's idolatry. Finally, the concubine is guilty of idolatry for her association with the Amelikites. By finding that the reason for the concubine's fate is the sin of idolatry, Pseudo-Philo is able to demonstrate the seriousness of the transgression and to offer an example of what may befall those who conduct themselves like the concubine.

In other narratives in *L.A.B.* Pseudo-Philo raises the status of female characters, naming them and affording them much autonomy. The concubine, however, remains unnamed, and she is a plot device, a literary tool. By blaming the concubine for idolatry Pseudo-Philo is able to justify the disturbing abuse in Judg 19 and solidify his polemic against idolatry.

## 2. Josephus' Retelling of Judges 19

Unlike the scant information that we can piece together about the authorship of *L.A.B.*, much is known about Josephus' life and his purpose for writing. With relative certainty we know that as a Jewish priest living in Rome, Josephus wrote the twenty volumes of *Ant.* in 93/94CE.<sup>118</sup> Josephus seems have two purposes for his writing of *Ant.* On the one hand, he sets out to create an historical account of the events of the Jewish people. Following the conventions of Greco-Roman historiography, he stresses the accuracy of his account, asserting that "the precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth each in its place...I have promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything" (*Ant.* 1.17). On the other hand, Josephus does intend for his work to be used by a Gentile audience, and he wants to present an appealing account of Jewish history that will defend his faith against any misrepresentation.

As with other texts in the genre of rewritten Bible, Josephus' retelling explains difficult passages and smoothes out disparaging content. All the while he creates a text that is keenly Hellenized with stylized plots and an emphasis on characteristically Greco-Roman tropes such as irony, hubris, and romance.<sup>119</sup> Josephus creates idealized portrayals of many of the biblical characters, often falling just short of the Philonic method of representing them as either virtues or vices.<sup>120</sup> Also appealing to his Gentile audience, Josephus moves through the biblical tales systematically for those who are unfamiliar with the biblical text.

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<sup>118</sup> Feldman, "Josephus' *Antiquities*," 59; Spilsbury, *The Image of the Jew*, 7n26.

<sup>119</sup> Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 563-564.

<sup>120</sup> Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Biblical Women in Josephus' *Antiquities*," *JJS* 39 (1998): 142.

No simple generalization can be made about Josephus' portrayal of women in *Ant.* Feldman asserts that Josephus has a "condescending attitude toward women," and that his misogyny leads him to make many unfortunate comments about the status and ability of the female sex.<sup>121</sup> For instance, Josephus weakens the powerful role that Deborah has in the biblical text. He diminishes her place as judge and military leader and entirely omits the Song of Deborah (*Ant.* 5.200-210).<sup>122</sup> Halpern-Amaru, however, argues that Josephus' departures from the biblical portrayals of women are not motivated by a desire to downgrade their roles. Rather, he models them after specific typologies. She posits five: biblical women are either heroines in the style of Sarah, Rebekkah, and Rachel, or villiannesses like Potiphar's wife and the Midianite woman.<sup>123</sup>

In part, Josephus portrays the unnamed concubine as a "Sarah figure." Halpern-Amaru explains that "Sarah narratives are husband-centred; thematically, they usually involve a vulnerable husband, a beautiful wife and some issue of female chastity."<sup>124</sup> Female characters cast as a Sarah figure are submissive, beautiful, chaste, and devoted to their spouses.<sup>125</sup> We will see that although there are many similarities between the concubine and a Sarah figure, Josephus' portrayal of the concubine cannot be fully understood as a Sarah figure.

In the introductory phrases of his retelling of Judg 19 in *Ant.* 5.136-149 Josephus defines the status of both the Levite and the unnamed concubine.

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<sup>121</sup> Feldman, *Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, 162, 564.

<sup>122</sup> Feldman, *Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, 153-162.

<sup>123</sup> Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Josephus' *Antiquities*," 144.

<sup>124</sup> Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Josephus' *Antiquities*," 156.

<sup>125</sup> See Sarah in *Ant.* 1.162-236. Other examples of "Sarah figures," include Jochebed (2.210-216), Manoah's wife (5.276-280)

A Levite, a man of the lower ranks, from the tribal territory of Ephraim where he lived, married a woman from Bethlema (this site is in the tribe of Judah). (*Ant.* 5.136)<sup>126</sup>

Likely playing upon the term **רְחֹקִים** (“remote parts”) in the Hebrew text (19:1), Josephus describes the Levite as “a man of lower ranks” (**δημοτικωτέρων**), a designation that is absent from the MT.<sup>127</sup> Feldman argues that **δημοτικωτέρων** is intended to be pejorative and may appear because of an ongoing rivalry between priests and Levites, since Josephus was one of the former.<sup>128</sup> Feldman admits, though, that his argument is questionable, and he cites several cases in which **δημοτικωτέρων** is not used in a pejorative sense; most notably, Josephus uses it once to describe Moses (*Ant.* 3.212).<sup>129</sup> Why does Josephus provide such a designation? By introducing the Levite not as a larger-than-life hero, but as a lowly commoner, Josephus is able to add drama and suspense.<sup>130</sup> The Levite, like a true hero, will rise to the occasion by the end of the story. Thus, this introductory description of the Levite serves to set up a more exciting plot dynamic. Josephus’ animosity towards Levites is not enough to allow him to disparage one in his retelling. As Feldman reasons that “the quarrel between the priests and the Levites is, so

<sup>126</sup> The English translations of Josephus’ *Ant.* are those of Christopher Begg, *Flavius Josephus’ Judean Antiquities Books 5-7* (ed. Steve Mason; vol. 4 *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). My thanks to Dr. Begg for generously allowing me to use his work here.

<sup>127</sup> Josephus may have been basing this description in part on the use of **רְחֹקִים** “recesses, extreme parts” in Judg 19:1. See Begg, forthcoming; Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair of the Concubine and Its Repercussions,” *JQR* 90 (2000): 267. William Whiston (ed., *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. online: <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/JOSEPHUS.HTM>) translates as “a man of a vulgar family.”

<sup>128</sup> See Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair,” 267-269, for further discussion of priestly changes throughout *Ant.* and Josephus’ animosity towards Levites.

<sup>129</sup> See Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair,” 267-269.

<sup>130</sup> Feldman, *Josephus’ Rewritten Bible*, 563-564.

to speak, a family quarrel; and Josephus could not allow his confederates in the Temple service to be degraded to such a low level”<sup>131</sup>

By noting that the Levite “married a woman,” Josephus changes the status of the unnamed woman from that of “concubine” (ψῆλῆς), as in the MT, to a wife. On the one hand, describing her as a legal wife heightens the status of the woman. On the other hand, the term he chooses (γύναιον), can be used to describe a weak and pitiable woman who is of lower status, or as a diminutive like “little woman” or “wifey.”<sup>132</sup> In either case, the change serves to remove the Levite’s association to a lowly concubine and to legitimize the ensuing romance between the woman and the Levite. Further in the narrative Josephus describes not only the girl’s father, but also both parents who are “his parents-in-law” (πενθερῆος) thus emphasizing the Levite’s legal relationship to the parents of his wife. There is no room to speculate that the Levite is of questionable moral character, for he is legitimately married, and the marriage is recognized and honoured by his in-laws.

Where Judg 19 is entirely ambiguous regarding what caused the concubine to leave, Josephus explains in detail what transpired:

He greatly loved the woman and was captivated by her beauty, but failed in his attempt to win a like response from her. She was ill disposed [towards him], and therefore inflamed his passion all the more. There were continual quarrels between them, and finally the woman, feeling oppressed by these, left her husband and went to her parents in the fourth month. Given his love for her, the man took this badly and went to his parents-in-law; resolving their quarrels, he was reconciled to her. (*Ant.* 5.136-137)

<sup>131</sup> Feldman argues that this passage is meant to add to the romantic motif of this narrative as “Josephus’ way of increasing drama rather than an attempt to elevate the reputation of the Levite as a Levite” (Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair,” 268.) Yet, in the next sentence he concedes that “Alternatively, we may suggest that Josephus is eager to protect the Levites from dishonour.”

<sup>132</sup> See *Ant.* 6.332 to refer to a woman who is also called “ignorant”; *Ant.* 8.318 of Jezebel; *Ant.* 1.220, of an Egyptian wife; *Ant.* 7.184 of an old woman; *Ant.* 5.333 of Ruth, stressing that she is young; *Ant.* 1.257 of Rebekkah; *Ant.* 6.329 of the witch of Endor.

As he does in his portrayal of the “Sarah figure,” Josephus emphasizes the beauty of the woman and the Levite’s strong desire for her. He emphasizes the passion of the Levite. Josephus here creates a clever situation in which the Levite is technically at fault for badgering the woman; he can surely not be blamed because his crime in essence is loving her too much! Josephus may be expanding on the ὀργισθη ἀντὶ of the LXX,<sup>A</sup> (19:2) by maintaining that the concubine is angry with the Levite and explaining the reason why.

Both Christopher Begg and Louis Feldman assert that Josephus seeks to stress a romantic motif throughout this retelling. By beginning the narrative by describing the Levite’s undying love for his wife, Josephus sets the stage for this motif.<sup>133</sup> There is no doubt that this insertion carries a romantic motif throughout the chapter, but it also serves to create a sympathetic portrayal of the Levite. In the MT the Levite is shamed by a concubine who prostitutes herself against him, and in LXX<sup>A</sup> there is even some hint that he may be at fault. Josephus explains that the concubine was not unfaithful, nor did the Levite commit any sin. What we have here is a timeless battle of the sexes for which no one can be faulted. The Levite is a sexually virile man who only seeks the love of his beautiful wife.

In the MT the concubine stays with her parents for four months before the Levite sets out to bring her back. In this way the Levite appears callous and unconcerned,

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<sup>133</sup> See Begg, forthcoming; Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair,” 269-273. Feldman makes much of the verb ἐράω used here to describe the Levite’s love for the woman, asserting that this verb shows that Josephus intends to emphasize the romantic love between the Levite and the woman. Josephus does use this verb to describe Jacob’s captivation with Rachel in a clearly romantic tale.<sup>133</sup> The verb is also used, however, to describe Amnon’s love for his sister Tamar (Ant. 7.165), of Joseph’s feelings for his brother’s daughter (Ant. 12.188), and of Samson’s love of an unnamed maiden who he tells his parents to capture (Ant. 5. 286). Clearly, the use of ἐράω here may not be meant to recall the love affair between Jacob and Rachel, or to add to a romantic motif.



content to allow four months to elapse before seeing after the concubine. In *Ant.* it is during the fourth month that the woman departs, thus leaving very little time before the Levite sets out to find her. Josephus not only omits the time period that the Levite and the woman spend apart, but he assures the reader that the Levite does love her and that he indeed took their squabble badly.<sup>134</sup> With this small change, gone is the callous Levite who waited four months before seeing to his missing wife.

In Judg 19, it is unclear what dynamic exists between the concubine, her father, and the Levite. The father's repeated assertions that the Levite stay another day are only directed to the Levite, and seem to have nothing to do with the woman. In fact, she fades from a narrative that becomes about men eating and drinking. Finally, in 19:10, when the Levite is ready to depart the text notes: "and the concubine was with him." Josephus significantly shortens the episode:

He spent four days there, with her parents treating him kindly. On the fifth day, he decided to leave for his own home. He set out towards evening; for the parents dismissed their daughter reluctantly and so wasted the day. A single attendant followed them; they also had a donkey on which the woman was riding. (*Ant.* 5.138)

The departure is delayed until evening, but not because of the eating and drinking of the men, but because the girl's parents "dismissed their daughter reluctantly." Josephus has clearly changed the bland description in Judg 19:10 ("He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys, and his concubine was with him") to "they also had a donkey on which the woman was riding." The changes that Josephus has made to this passage serve to

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<sup>134</sup> Feldman reasons that this episode is, "more romantic in that it seems to indicate that the woman left her husband in a huff after staying with him for four months" (Feldman, "Josephus' Portrayal of the Benjaminite Affair," 272). The mere lengthening of time that the couple quarrelled does not serve to heighten the tension in their relationship, or add any romantic or erotic element.

establish the moral character of both the Levite and his wife.<sup>135</sup> It is clear that the parents do not fault the Levite for the quarrel, for he is warmly welcomed and treated kindly. The parents are reluctant to dismiss their daughter, which means that they do not blame her for wrongdoing, and are not forcing her to leave with the Levite – a possibility given in the MT.

The small detail of the woman riding the donkey contrasts with the callous description in Judg 19 in which the concubine seems to be an extra piece of luggage. In *Ant.*, the Levite and the woman have resolved their differences, and with the blessing of their parents, they make their way home.

In the MT, the Levite's servant suggests that the small party should turn into a city to spend the night (19:13). Josephus adds that his reasoning is "so that nothing, unpleasant happen to them, who were traveling by night and were not far from the enemy, seeing that an opportune time often makes even friends dangerous and suspect" (*Ant.* 5.139). The Levite protests, just as in the MT, reasoning that they are foreigners, and he opts to turn into "a city of their own people to lodge there" (*Ant.* 5.140). The servant's comment that even friends can become dangerous is keen foreshadowing of the events that will occur amongst their supposed friends at Gibeah.

When describing events in Gibeah, Josephus, as in the MT, notes that the old man who will offer hospitality is also from the tribe of Ephraim.

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<sup>135</sup> Feldman argues that Josephus' changes to this passage serve to emphasize the Levite's insistence to get the woman to leave with him, thus stressing the romantic relationship between them. The passage describes only the relationship of the parents to the woman and the Levite and in no way stresses the relationship between the Levite and the woman. Feldman's assessment of this portion of the story is inaccurate.

When none of those in the market place offered him hospitality, an old man, who was of the tribe of Ephraim but living in Gaba, met him, as he was coming in from the fields. He asked who he was and why he was traveling when it was already dark, having taken the makings of the evening meal with him. He stated that he was a Levite who was conducting his wife from her parents to his own home; he further disclosed that his residence was in the tribal territory of Ephraim. Then the old man, on account of their kinship and their belonging to the same tribe, as well as their chance meeting, brought him to his house to give him hospitality. (*Ant.* 5.141-142)

Josephus takes this as an opportunity to emphasize this kinship by repeating again that the reason for the old man's hospitality is "on account of their kinship and their belonging to the same tribe" (*Ant.* 5.143). These additional comments serve to highlight the irony of the event, for it is in the familiar city and with his kinsman that the Levite and his wife will be accosted.

Josephus' account of the scene at Gibeah is very different from that in Judg 19:22-25.

Some young men of the Gabaenes, however, who had observed the woman in the midst of the market-place and admired her beauty, once they learned that she was lodging with the old man, despising their weakness and fewness, came to the doors. When the old man appealed to them to depart and not inflict violence or outrage, they demanded that he hand over his woman guest so as to be done with the matter.

The old man said that he was a relative and a Levite and that they would be doing a terrible thing by offending against the laws, for the sake of pleasure. They, however, thought little of and ridiculed what was just and threatened to kill him, should he impede on their desires.

Being forced into a difficult situation and not wanting quietly to allow his guests to suffer outrage, he offered them his own daughter, saying this it was more legitimate for them to thus satisfy their lusts than by an outrage upon his guests. In this way he thought that he would not wrong those whom he had received.

They, however, did not slacken in their craving for his woman guest, but kept demanding that she be handed over. Although he begged them not to venture on such a transgression, they snatched her away... (*Ant.* 5.143-146)

Most significantly, Josephus changes entirely the motivations and actions of the accosting mob. Josephus omits the homosexuality of the mob, for it is the woman whom they desire, having witnessed her beauty in the marketplace. In the MT the mob demands the concubine only once, at which point the old man pleads for them to desist. In his next

breath, and without further response from the mob, the concubine is thrown out to them. In Josephus' version the demands of the mob and the pleading of the old man are exchanged four times before the woman is taken by force. The threat of the mob grows as Josephus describes them as not only ignoring the old man's repeated pleadings, but actually threatening to kill him. In the MT the old man is under no personal attack and in fact feels so unthreatened by the mob that he goes out of the house to speak to them (Judg 19:23). In *Ant.* the mob is a force to be reckoned with, something that cannot be stopped.

The old man's next move of offering up his own daughter is justified by Josephus who reasons that it was only because he was forced into a difficult situation and did not want to harm his guests. Unlike Judg 19, the concubine is not offered along with the man's daughter. Thus, it appears that the man is concerned to protect the concubine as well as the Levite. Josephus makes it clear that the mob would not stop by repeating that they "did not slacken" (*Ant.* 5.146) and "kept demanding" (*Ant.* 5.146). Finally, despite one last protest from the old man the mob takes away the woman by force. This is significant, since in Judg 19 the woman is offered up to the mob by either the Levite or the old man.

By creating a situation where the mob removes the woman by force, Josephus assures his readers that neither the old man nor the Levite can be held accountable for her death. In Josephus' version the verbal exchanges between the old man and the mob are clearly emphasized, thus highlighting the ferocity of the mob, as well as the integrity of the old man who tried repeatedly to stop them. Because the woman is taken by force, it is clear that the old man and the Levite could do nothing to protect her.

Josephus downplays how the woman is treated by the mob.

poised to abandon themselves to the compulsion of their pleasure, brought the woman to their homes. Having satiated their outrageous desires throughout the night, they dismissed her at day-break. (*Ant.* 5.146)

Josephus begins by inserting the detail that the mob took the concubine into their homes. The MT leaves open the possibility that the concubine may not have been taken very far at all, leaving the reader with the question of why someone did not venture out to save her. Perhaps Josephus adds that the woman was forced into the homes of the mob in order to make it clear that the Levite could not have rescued her. Josephus' description of the abuse against the concubine is also more sanitized than that of the biblical text. Even though Judg 19 uses the euphemistic "to know," it is a clear indicator of sexual intercourse and is coupled with a description of the taunting that the concubine endured (19:25). In *Ant.* narrative time gives no pause to the abuse of the concubine, as Josephus only notes after the fact that once the mob is satisfied, they let her go.

In the MT it is unclear at what point the concubine actually died. By noting the abuse of the woman, her falling down at the door, and then her inability to answer the Levite, the text establishes only that she must have been very near death. This leaves open the possibility that she was still alive when the Levite dismembered her (19:29). By contrast, Josephus states:

She, exhausted by what had happened, came to the house of her host and from grief over what she had been through and in her shame not daring to come into her husband's presence – for she reasoned that he especially would be irredeemably hurt by these events—breathing out her soul, she died. (*Ant.* 5.147)

Josephus does not choose to describe the woman as near death, but "exhausted," (*τεταλαιπωρημένη*), giving no indication that she has just been through a horrific

ordeal.<sup>136</sup> The woman does not fall down at the doorstep, but as she comes to the house of the old man, she is so overcome with shame that she breathes her last and dies.<sup>137</sup>

There are several reasons why Josephus might choose to change the circumstances of the concubine's death in this way. Like the LXX and Pseudo-Philo, Josephus may want to confirm that the woman is most definitely dead by the time the Levite finds her. In this way there is no possibility that the Levite dismembered the woman while she was still alive. It seems that after considering the shame she could bring upon her husband, the woman actually chose to breathe her last. Suggesting that the woman chose to die also removes any guilt from the Levite regarding her death. The Levite was not able to protect her from the mob, nor was he to blame for her death because she chose to die before he reached her. In the MT the concubine's death casts suspicion on the Levite. In *Ant.* it reflects positively both onto the Levite, whose wife would rather breathe her last than bring any hurt upon her husband and onto the woman, who is an honourable and devoted wife.

Josephus' description of the actions of the Levite is rather curious and sheds doubt on the theory that Josephus' primary motivation in this narrative is to create a romantic story.

Her husband, thinking his wife to be lying in a deep sleep, and suspecting nothing horrible, tried to rouse her, intending to comfort her by saying that she had not voluntarily handed herself over to those who had committed the outrage. It was rather they who, coming to the house of their host, had snatched her away. (*Ant.* 5.148)

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<sup>136</sup> Josephus' use of the verb sometimes indicates physical hardship, but seems to more often refers to mental distress, and never to indicate a dire, or near death situation. See *Ant.* 2.334, 3.37, 13.255, 14.475, 17.171, 13.255.

<sup>137</sup> St. J. H. Thackeray (ed., *Josephus*. vol. 5. [LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926]) and Whiston (*Works of Flavius Josephus*, Online), translate as "gave up the ghost."

The Levite emerges from the house where the woman now lies dead. Thinking that she must be asleep, he attempts to wake her up. His goal is to comfort her by explaining that what happened to her was not her fault because she was taken away by force. The actions of the Levite make little sense. Why would the Levite not suspect that something bad had occurred to his wife, who was snatched away by a violent mob who wanted to rape her? Why would he assume that she was only sleeping? I suggest that he may be responding to the ambiguities in Judg 19, which bring into question the character of the Levite. In Judg 19 the Levite emerges from the house about to go on his way when he sees the concubine lying on the threshold and callously demands that she “get up” (19:28). It appears as if the Levite has forgotten about the concubine and is about to head home. Moreover, it is unclear at what point the concubine actually dies, thus making it possible that she was still alive when the Levite slung her over his donkey for a long journey that culminated in her dismemberment.

Josephus has already established that the woman was indeed dead by the time the Levite found her. He then explains that the Levite thought that his wife was merely sleeping and that nothing terrible had happened to her. In my view, Josephus resolves the difficulties with Judg 19 by explaining why the Levite did not seem alarmed or distraught upon seeing his lifeless wife. Josephus is obviously drawing on Judg 19 when he describes the Levite’s actions in softer terms (“he tried to rouse her”), rather than the callous ones of the biblical text (“get up we are going”). Just to be sure, Josephus further notes the intention of the Levite with this action: he was “intending to comfort her.” The Levite reasons that he is able to comfort her because she did not willingly go to the mob,

but was snatched away by them. This addition again addresses the callous actions of the Levite in Judg 19:27-28, in which it seems that the Levite is angry towards the concubine. Furthermore, this addition serves to stress yet again that the Levite was powerless to help the woman because she taken away by force. In other words, Josephus' changes at this point in his retelling are largely in reaction to the portrayal of the Levite in Judg 19. I thus propose that his primary concern is not to create a romance, but to improve the negative portrayal of the Levite in the biblical text.

In the MT the Levite callously loads the concubine's lifeless body onto his donkey as if it were cargo and proceeds to expeditiously cut it up into pieces to be handed out amongst his kinsmen. Josephus notes that the Levite is not unfeeling, but has been affected by what occurred. He states:

When, however, he learned that she was dead, made prudent by the immensity of the calamities, he placed his dead wife on his beast and brought it to his own home. Cutting her up piece by piece into twelve parts, he sent these round to each tribe, ordering the bearers to tell the causes of the woman's death and the disgraceful deed of the [Benjaminite] tribe. (*Ant.* 5.149)

When the Levite realizes that the woman is dead he is struck by the seriousness of the event. Josephus does not refer to the woman only as a dead body, but as his "dead wife," again focusing on the humanity of the situation. Here we do not see the Levite's untrue testimony to his kinsmen about what happened or a selfish insistence that revenge be sought for how *he* had been wronged. Rather, the Levite seems concerned that his kinsmen consider the cause of the woman's death.

In my view, the way that Josephus retells the story in Judg 19 is largely motivated by his desire to create a sympathetic portrayal of the Levite. Josephus appears to be uncomfortable with the aspects of Judg 19 that are embarrassing or damaging to the



Levite, such as the concubine's unfaithfulness, the attack of a homosexual mob, and the Levite's callous reaction. Josephus resolves his uneasiness with the text by reworking these elements of the story, often with a romantic motif. First, he legitimizes the relationship between the Levite and the woman. The reason for the rift between them is not infidelity, but merely a lover's quarrel. Secondly, in his version of the scene at Gibeah the Levite is not shamed by an attack from a homosexual mob. Thirdly, Josephus protects the Levite from any question of his chivalry or honour by ensuring the reader that there was no way that he could save the woman against the very powerful mob. Moreover, his wife hopes to save him from shame by choosing to die rather than to show herself to him. Finally, the Levite is concerned about her fallen body.

As discussed above, Josephus portrays the woman in Judg 19 in part as a Sarah figure. Like Judg 19 "Sarah narratives" centre on the husband, who is a vulnerable character and on an issue that questions the chastity of the female character (the Sarah figure). Passion and erotic love are often emphasized, but the Sarah figure remains a chaste and devoted wife.<sup>138</sup> For instance, Josephus alters the wife/sister narratives of the biblical text (Gen 12:11-20; 20:1-18) so that neither the Egyptian Pharaoh nor Abimelech compromise Sarah's chastity (*Ant.* 1.162-165; 1.207-212). Similarly, Josephus exonerates the woman of Judg 19 from her unfaithfulness in the MT (19:2). In *Ant.* the woman is chaste, and the quarrel between her and the Levite is only due to their love for one another. The beauty of the woman is emphasized, mentioned first as a reason for the Levite's love for her and again as a reason why the mob desired her. The abuse of the

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<sup>138</sup> Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Josephus' *Antiquities*," 158.

woman is somewhat softened as Josephus does not slow narrative time to focus on it as in the MT and describes that the woman was merely “exhausted” after her ordeal. Finally, in an ultimate act of submissiveness and wifely devotion, the abused woman is so overcome with the concern that her husband will be hurt by what happened that she breathes her last and dies.

The key difference between the typological Sarah figure and Josephus’ portrayal of the woman in Judg 19 is that while Josephus is extremely concerned to remove Sarah (and figures like her) from any hint of sexual violation, the woman remains raped and abused. While Josephus does freely alter the biblical text, to eliminate the death of the concubine would be a radical change that would affect the course of the rest of the Judges story. Josephus places the entire Judg 19-21 story at the beginning of his retelling of the book of Judges, using it to describe the consequences for the errant actions of Israel.<sup>139</sup> Thus, the woman’s death and dismemberment is the impetus for a civil war. Nevertheless, as Halpern-Amaru argues, Josephus’ changes to the Judg 19 story seem to be motivated by a concern to create a more favourable portrayal of the Levite. Josephus casts the woman as a Sarah figure only insofar as it reflects well on the Levite.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Begg, “The Retellings of the Story of Judges 19,” 35.

<sup>140</sup> Halpern-Amaru, “Portraits of Biblical Women in Josephus’ *Antiquities*,” 159.

## Conclusion

In their retellings of Judg 19, Josephus and Pseudo-Philo alter the same aspects of the story. These include the “going out” of the concubine (19:2) and the Levite following after her (19:3), the homosexual attack of the mob (19:22), and the unfavourable portrayal of the Levite. These unusual and troubling elements fit the intention in Judges to exemplify a disastrous time in Israel, but neither Josephus nor Pseudo-Philo choose to frame the story in this way. Rather, Pseudo-Philo uses it to create a biting polemic against the evils of idolatry. Josephus, by contrast, creates a romantic and tragic story that will appeal to a non-Jewish audience while at the same time satisfying his Jewish readers. Thus, he downplays the violent and gruesome aspects of the story, and he absolves the Levite from all the grievous behaviour described in MT Judg 19. The authors address the once troubling elements of the text in a way that will fit into their respective retellings.

Both authors use the unnamed concubine as a character that allows them to further the purpose in their retellings. For Pseudo-Philo, the concubine is the cause of idolatry in the story and an example to all who would fall prey to the sin as she did. The concubine deserves her terrible fate because she is guilty of associating with the Amelikites. Even God chastens those who are concerned about her. In *L.A.B.* the role of the concubine is even less than it is in the biblical text. For Josephus the concubine is a submissive wife who shows that her husband is worthy of her ultimate devotion. She is so ashamed of her rape that she would rather die than to bring any shame onto her husband. In one sense in

*Ant.* the status of the concubine is elevated, but only so far as it allows Josephus to create a story according to his own agenda, which is sympathetic to the Levite.

## **CHAPTER 4: RABBINIC INTERPRETATIONS OF “THE STORY OF THE CONCUBINE OF GIBEAH”**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapters of this study we have seen evidence that many ancient writers were uncomfortable with certain aspects of Judg 19. Chapter one argued that, in its original context, Judg 19 is a narrative intended to exemplify life when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg 21:25). In chapter two, we noted how the translators who were responsible for the LXX made small changes to the narrative, and I suggested that these changes were motivated by their concerns with the text; most notably, they softened the depiction of the concubine as “going out.” In chapter three we discussed how Josephus and Pseudo-Philo reworked the biblical story to fit their own agendas. Despite all the changes made by these translators and authors, we have not encountered any attempt to remove the abuse against the concubine or even to downplay its severity. There is little effort to explain her place in the narrative. Although the texts that we have examined are concerned with many elements in Judg 19, they do not seem concerned with what happens to the concubine. In this chapter we will turn to discuss rabbinic traditions about Judg 19. We shall see how some rabbinic traditions focus not on the Levite, but on the unnamed concubine.

This chapter will analyse five rabbinic traditions that address Judg 19 in different ways. We will look first to the translation of Judg 19 that is found in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, considering the differences between the Targum and the MT. We will then consider a passage in the Tosefta (*t. Meg.* 3.32-3.33), which lists certain biblical stories

and discusses whether they should be read in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic. The story of the unnamed concubine is named among them as a text that should be read and translated. The version in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Meg.* 25a-25b) also includes it, together with an explanation. Next, we will consider a fascinating discussion in *b. Git.* 6b that seeks to explain why the concubine “went out” in Judg 19:2. Finally, we will consider the discussion about those who were involved in the matter of the concubine in *b. Sanh 103b*.

There are differences in the genre, date, and provenance of the rabbinic literature in this chapter in comparison to the texts that we have already presented. The Septuagint of Judges is a translation that was likely written in the first or second century C.E., although the Alexandrinus and Vaticanus versions date to the fourth and fifth centuries respectively.<sup>141</sup> Josephus’ *Ant.* and Pseudo-Philo’s *L.A.B.* are biblical retellings from the first century C.E., which reflect Palestinian traditions.<sup>142</sup> This chapter will begin with the rabbinic text closest in genre to the translations and retellings that we have considered so far, namely *Tg. Ps.-J.* This Targum is normally an expansive translation that elaborates on the biblical story in ways sometimes as extensive as *L.A.B.* and *Ant.* Although the final form of this text dates to the medieval period, it too originates in Palestine, and is identified by Vermes along with *L.A.B.* and *Ant.* as “rewritten Bible.”<sup>143</sup>

Then, we will turn to passages from the Tosefta and Babylonian Talmud that mention Judg 19. Here, Judg 19 is not retold but is cited in discussion and commented on.

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<sup>141</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 138-139.

<sup>142</sup> As discussed above, although *Ant.* was written in Rome, it reflects much of Josephus’ own Palestinian origins.

<sup>143</sup> Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 95.

Similar to Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.*, the *Tosefta* originated in Palestine, but it dates from several centuries later, sometime around 300CE.<sup>144</sup> The present form of the *Tosefta*, along with the Babylonian Talmud, dates to the Amoraic period.<sup>145</sup> While Pseudo-Philo (if we are to assume a post-70 dating) and Josephus lived and wrote in a time that witnessed the destruction of the Temple, the *Tosefta* and *Bavli* emerge in an age well after its disappearance. By this time, Judaism was forced to deal with the harsh reality of finding an identity apart from the Temple. We may expect that the concerns of the Jews at this time may not compare to those that we find in the retellings of the previous chapter, such as Pseudo-Philo's preoccupation with idolatry or Josephus' desire to portray the Levite favourably. To my knowledge, these five texts represent all of the discussions of the "story of the concubine of Gibeah" in the classical rabbinic literature.<sup>146</sup> The only other passages I have located refer to "the narrative of Gibeah in Benjamin" and thus do not refer to the story of the concubine, but to the narrative in Judg 20-21.<sup>147</sup>

### 1. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*

An Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* may have originated in Palestine as early as the first or second century C.E.<sup>148</sup> The present form of

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<sup>144</sup> Neusner, *Tosefta*, xiv.

<sup>145</sup> Neusner, *Tosefta*, xv.

<sup>146</sup> I have come to this conclusion only after manually searching both the scriptural and subject indexes to the Babylonian Talmud, electronically searching the *Bavli* for words related to the story such as "פִּילגֶשֶׁת" and reading through secondary literature relating to the passage.

<sup>147</sup> One example of such a tradition is found in *b. Sop. 36b*.

<sup>148</sup> Leivy Smolar and Moses Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Prophet* (New York: KTAV, 1983), xxvii. The dubious designation of this Targum to "Jonathan" is related to *b. Meg. 3a*, in which the Targum of the Prophets is attributed to Jonathan ben Uzziel, a disciple of Hillel who worked in Palestine in the first century C.E.. This identification is best explained as "a late and isolated attempt at

*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* results from a long process of revisions which eventually brought the text into Babylonia and it was redacted into its final form in the medieval period.<sup>149</sup> Targumim were used in the synagogue primarily alongside the Hebrew texts as a vernacular translation.<sup>150</sup> The making of Targumim was a fluid practice. The Targumim changed through time and location and went through many redactions.<sup>151</sup>

A Targum is not a retelling of the biblical stories nor is it a literal translation of the Hebrew source text. While *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* does serve the purpose of translating the Hebrew texts into Aramaic, it also interprets the text, and conveys the perceived meaning.<sup>152</sup> In many ways, the Targumim are similar to the highly interpretive genre of Midrash.<sup>153</sup>

Surprisingly, Judg 19 in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.* varies little from the MT. Of the variants between the MT and *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.*, most are very minor; for instance, the Targum describes the Levite as “of the house of Ephraim,” rather than “of Ephraim” as in the MT (19:1).<sup>154</sup> These small differences do little to alter the meaning of the text; neither do they suggest the interpretive work of the translator.<sup>155</sup> The only significant variation between

enhancing the authority of the Targum by attributing it to a famous disciple of Hillel” (Harrington and Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, 1).

<sup>149</sup> Harrington and Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, 13-14.

<sup>150</sup> Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 148.

<sup>151</sup> Willem Smelik, *The Targum of Judges* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995): 642.

<sup>152</sup> Pinkhos Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Former Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), 52; Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 632.

<sup>153</sup> Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 86-91.

<sup>154</sup> The English translations of *Tg. Ps.-J.* are those of Harrington and Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*.

<sup>155</sup> There are about 20 minor variants between MT and *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.* Of these both Pinkthos Churgin and Wilhem Smelik identify only three as significant. Judg 19:7, the MT uses פָּצַח “to urge strongly,” compared to תִּקַּף “seize, overpower” in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.*; Judg 19:22 בְּנֵי בֵּלְיָל “sons of Belial” in the MT, and its translation בְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים “sons of wickedness” in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.*; and 19:9 וַיָּחֲזֵק לְחֹדֶר יוֹמָא “he seized the door of the house” in the MT, and its translation וַיָּחֲזֵק לְחֹדֶר יוֹמָא “he seized the door of the house” in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.*



the texts is the treatment of the concubine as “going out” in Judg 19:2. The MT states that the concubine “prostituted herself” (וַתִּזְנוּתָהּ) against the Levite. If the זָנָה of the Hebrew text is original, then *Tg. Ps.-J.* renders it with the dissimilar בָּסַר (“despised”). I suggest that the use of בָּסַר betrays the interpretive work of the translator. Like the LXX, the translators soften the harsh accusation of זָנָה and instead depict the concubine as leaving the Levite because she hated him. What occurred between the concubine and the Levite is unclear and there is no indication of who may be at fault for the rift. The concubine was upset with the Levite, but the translation leaves open the possibility that the Levite may have done something to anger her. Even if it is not acceptable for the Levite to follow after a woman who wronged him, it is reasonable that he would initiate the reconciliation if he were partly to blame.

Even this difference between the texts is subtle. It is unusual that *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg 19* differs so little from the MT. This Targum is generally characterized by its elaboration on the biblical text.<sup>156</sup> For instance, *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg 5* is significantly different from “The Song of Deborah” in the biblical text. Pinkthos Churgin cites several ways in which the Song of Deborah has been purposefully changed in order to relate to Hadrian’s persecution after the Bar-Kokhba War.<sup>157</sup> One possible reason for the lack of interpretation in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg 19* is that the story in Judg 19 does not easily lend itself to the type of homiletical expansion often found in Targumim. It is difficult to

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לִינָה “see the day has drawn to a close” compared to בִּיתָן בְּעֵן הַבַּיִת לַחֹדֶר יוֹמָא דִּינָה “lodge here now, this day only.”

<sup>156</sup> Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 632.

<sup>157</sup> Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, 126-129.

understand; there are many disturbing events; there is no main character with whom the reader can identify; and there is no lesson or teaching that is apparent from its content.

The lack of interpretation may also be explained by the fact that this story is not found in the Torah, but in the less frequently expounded Prophets.

The Targum of Judges is especially important to our study in this chapter in light of traditions in the Tosefta and Bavli that discuss whether Judg 19 should be translated into Aramaic. Although we certainly cannot assume that these texts refer to the translation represented by *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg*, the Targum is one witness to the concerns that informed the translation of Judg 19 into Aramaic.

## **2. *t. Meg.* 3.31-3.38**

As noted above, the Tosefta is a halakhic text that emerged in Palestine likely around 300CE.<sup>158</sup> Although its final form is an Amoraic work, it claims to collect Tannaitic traditions and likely contains many traditions that are in fact Tannaitic. Philip Alexander surmises that the material in *t. Meg.* 3.31-3.38 is Tannaitic. He supports this by noting that the Bavli version of the list (*b. Meg.* 25a-25b) is cited as an anonymous *baraita*. He finds that the material in the lists may date specifically to the late second century C.E.<sup>159</sup>

The Tosefta is structured into six orders like the Mishnah, and it also contains most of the same tractates as the Mishnah.<sup>160</sup> Generally, the Tosefta presents material

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<sup>158</sup> Neusner, *The Tosefta*, xiv.

<sup>159</sup> P.S. Alexander, "The Rabbinic Lists of Forbidden Targumim," *JJS* 27 (1976): 181-182.

<sup>160</sup> Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 150.

from the Mishnah and expands upon it in what can be described as commentary or “amplification.”<sup>161</sup> The Tosefta, however, should not be considered as strictly a commentary on the Mishnah. Although the Tosefta comments on many Mishnaic traditions, there are also many traditions in the Tosefta that are not found in the Mishnah.<sup>162</sup> Some *baraitoth* in the two Talmuds do correspond to the Tosefta, but there are many Talmudic discussions that do not find their basis in the Tosefta.<sup>163</sup> While acknowledging the possible relationships between the passages from the Tosefta and Bavli discussed below, we will thus consider them independent of one another.

As part of a discussion regarding proper recitation of biblical texts in *m. Meg.* 4:10 we find a discussion of certain biblical stories and whether they are appropriate to read (in Hebrew) and/or translate in Aramaic, presumably in a synagogue or other public setting.

The Mishnaic list is brief and does not include the story of the unnamed concubine:

The story of Reuben (Gen 35:22) is read out but not interpreted; the story of Tamar (Gen 38:13-24) is read out and interpreted. The first story of the calf (Exod 32:1-20) is read out and interpreted, and the second (Exod 32:21) is read out but not interpreted. The Blessing of the Priests (Num 6:24-26) and the story of David and of Amnon (2 Sam 11:2-17; 2Sam 13:1-9) are read out but not interpreted.<sup>164</sup> They may not use the chapter of the Chariot (Ezek 1:4-28) as a reading from the Prophets; but R. Judah permits it. R. Eliezer says: They do not use the chapter *Cause Jerusalem to know* (Ezek 16:1) as a reading from the Prophets. (*m. Meg.* 4:10)<sup>165</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Neusner, *The Tosefta*, xiii.

<sup>162</sup> See, Strack and Stremberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 152-155.

<sup>163</sup> See Strack and Stremberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 155-156.

<sup>164</sup> It is likely that “the story of David and of Amnon” refers to two separate traditions: the story of David and Bethsheba, and the story of Amnon and Tamar. Both stories are represented in the Tosefta, but the Bavli conflates two traditions and as a result ends up omitting the story of David and Bethsheba, but discusses “the story of Amnon and Tamar” and “the story of David and Amnon.” The first mention of the name Tamar refers to the unrelated story of Tamar and Judah, in Gen 38.

<sup>165</sup> English translations of the Mishnah are those of Herbert Danby, ed., *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 207.

Eight texts are listed. Four of them should be read but not translated, two should be both read and translated, and two should be neither read nor translated.<sup>166</sup> It is significant that of the nine passages here, four of them refer to illicit sexual unions; that of Reuben and Bilhah (Gen 35:22), Tamar and Judah (Gen 38:13-24), David and Bethsheba (2 Sam 11:2-17), and Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam 13:1-9).

A similar list appears in the Tosefta, mentioning three biblical stories that do not appear in the Mishnaic version. The story of Lot and his two daughters (Gen 19:30-38) is added to the beginning of the list. The story of Absalom and his father's concubines (2 Sam 16:21-22), and the story of the unnamed concubine (Judg 19) are grouped together along with story of Amnon and Tamar. All of these stories involve illicit sexual unions and they are all from the Prophets:

The story of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam 13:1-9) is read and translated.  
 The story of Absalom and his father's concubine (2 Sam 16:21-22) is read and translated  
 The story of the concubine of Gibeah (Judg 19) is read and translated. (*t. Meg.* 3.32-3.33)<sup>167</sup>

The first two statements have an identical structure: "The story of \_\_\_\_\_ (rapist) and \_\_\_\_\_ (victim of rape) is read and translated." The reference to Judg 19 differs. The story is identified only as that of "the concubine of Gibeah," with no mention of the Levite or the inhabitants of Gibeah or of the main male character, the Levite. In the entire passage in the Tosefta, no other narrative is referenced by only the female character. In the Mishnaic list, the story of Tamar and her father-in-law Judah is referred to as "the story of Tamar," but in the Tosefta this appears as "the story of Judah and Tamar." The

<sup>166</sup> There is a variant to this passage in which the Blessing of the Priests and the story of David and Amnon are to be "neither read out nor interpreted."

<sup>167</sup> English translations of the Tosefta are those of Neusner, *Tosefta*, 651-653.

name of Judah may have been added to an existing tradition, but when the story of the concubine was added it was only identified with reference to her. There is no mention of the Benjaminites or the Levite. The authors of the Tosefta seem to assume that the identification of the concubine suffices as a name for the whole narrative.

It is significant that these three stories appear together in the Tosefta's list. Each one tells a story of rape: Amnon rapes his sister Tamar; Absalom rapes his father's concubines; and the concubine of Gibeah is raped by the accosting mob. In all three stories, moreover, rape is a play on the power of the male characters in the story. As the narrator describes the rape of Tamar, the older and more powerful Absalom is a looming figure in the narrative, mentioned several times throughout the story (2 Sam 13:1, 3, 20a, 20b, 22). Absalom tells Tamar not to take the assault to heart, although he takes it as a personal offence and eventually murders Amnon for what he did (2 Sam 13:28, 32). The murder sparks a feud between Absalom and his father David, which leads to a devastating coup in the kingdom of David (2 Sam 15:4-6, 13-14). In the next story mentioned in the Tosefta (*t. Meg.* 3:32), it is Absalom who rapes his father David's concubines with the express intention of exemplifying his takeover of David's kingdom (2 Sam 16:21). Absalom even sets up a tent on the palace rooftop so that everyone in the kingdom will witness the act (2 Sam 16:22). This act deepens the rift between Absalom and David and fuels their military action against one another. The final story in this group is that of the unnamed concubine of Judg 19. There, the mob shames the Levite by raping his concubine and breaching hospitality (Judg 19:22). The act is the impetus for a bloody civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin is nearly decimated (Judg 20-21).

From the evidence in the Tosefta, it seems that the concern over many of these texts is related to stories that contain illicit sexual unions, including rape. We see in the Tosefta, unlike the Mishnah, that the story from Judg 19 is added. Given the context of other stories about rape, combined with reference to the story as “the story of the concubine of Gibeah,” the inclusion of Judg 19 may be due to a concern regarding the mistreatment of the unnamed concubine.

### 3. b. *Megillah* 25a-25b<sup>168</sup>

The version of the list in *b. Meg.* also includes a reference to Judg 19. As mentioned above, the list is introduced in the Bavli as a *baraita* and thus presented as a Tannaitic tradition.<sup>169</sup> Although the Bavli is commenting on the Mishnaic version, it may here integrate traditions found in the Tosefta. Alternately, the Bavli may preserve a Tannaitic tradition that is parallel to the Tosefta. For instance, the Bavli’s version does not include the story of Absalom and the rape of David’s concubines.

In the Bavli, the story of the concubine is listed in a large group of biblical passages that are all characterized by the directive that they are to be “both read and translated.”

The curses and blessings are both read and translated. Certainly! —You might think [that we should forbear] lest the congregation should become disheartened; therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. Warnings and penalties are both read and translated. Certainly! —You might think that [we should forbear] for fear that they may come to keep to the commandments out of fear; therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of Amnon and Tamar is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] out of respect for David. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of the concubine in Gibeah is both read and

<sup>168</sup> The English translations of the Babylonian Talmud are adapted from I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (18 vols.; London: The Soncino Press, 1938).

<sup>169</sup> Alexander, “The Rabbinic Lists,” 181-182.

translated. Certainly! —You might think [that we should forbear] out of respect for Benjamin. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection.] (*b. Meg.* 25b)

As we have seen, much of the list as it appears in the Tosefta seems to be informed by a concern for texts that depict illicit sex and the rape of women. In the Bavli, however, there are different concerns, namely to explain with a single principle why these texts might be deemed unacceptable for public reading but are in fact acceptable. The Bavli's version includes commentary after each reference to a story and states that the stories each seem to shed doubt on the respect of the males in them. Perhaps some Jews were indeed concerned about reading and translating the story of the concubine out of respect for the tribe of Benjamin<sup>170</sup> or concerned that the story of Tamar and Amnon disrespects David. The Bavli, however, may also be taking an explanation that is appropriate for a few texts and imposing it on the rest of them. Whether or not Judg 19 was first included in the list due to its depiction of rape, the Bavli explains its presence here in terms of a concern for the respect of biblical men. Interestingly, however, this concern for respect is overruled. The Bavli explains that the stories should be both read and translated, despite the disrespect they may cause.

The place of the story of the concubine in the Tosefta's list appears to reflect a concern with its depiction of rape. In the Bavli, the tradition is cited in another context, and the story of the concubine is found amidst a dissimilar group of texts that are only unified by the directive that they should be both read and translated. The redactors have given an explicit reason for the place of the story in the list, and this reason is the concern of some for the males in the story. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that both the Tosefta's

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<sup>170</sup> This is likely because the accosting mob at Gibeah were Benjaminites, and also because the tribe of Benjamin was nearly decimated in Judg 20-21.

version and the Bavli's use the phrase "story of the concubine" to identify Judg 19, with no reference to any of the males in the story. Judges 19 is the only story that is identified solely by the name of a woman. Even though the context of the list has changed to focus on the possible concern of respect for the males of the stories, it is not called, for instance, "the story of the Levite and his concubine." The authors of the Bavli assume that the reader will recognize the story just by mentioning this unnamed woman.

#### 4. b. *Gittin* 6b-7a

The story of the concubine of Gibeah is also discussed in b. *Git.* 6b-7a which contains two related traditions. The first occurs in the context of a discussion about the authority of R. Abiathar. The second uses the story as a springboard for a discussion about the problem of husbands who terrorise their households. In the first, Judg 19 is introduced to provide an example of R. Abiathar's exegetical authority:

Commenting on the text, "And his concubine played the harlot against him," R. Abiathar said that the Levite found a fly with her, and R. Jonathan said that he found a hair on her. R. Abiathar soon afterwards came across Elijah and said to him: "What is the Holy One, blessed be He, doing?" and he answered, "He is discussing the question of the concubine in Gibeah." "What does He say?" said Elijah" "[He says], My son Abiathar says So-and-so, and my son Jonathan says So-and-so," Said Abiathar: "Can there possibly be uncertainty in the mind of the Heavenly One?" He replied: "Both [answers] are the word of the living God. He [the Levite] found a fly and excused it, he found a hair and did not excuse it." Rab Judah explained: He found a fly in his food and a hair in her place (בְּאֵזְרוֹ סִקּוּם); the fly was merely disgusting, but the hair was dangerous. Some say, he found both in his food; the fly was not her fault, the hair was. b. *Sanh.* 6b)

The verse commented on is Judg 19:2, the same verse that is shown throughout this study to be a point of much contention and the only place where *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg*19 departs significantly from MT. This tradition explains why the concubine left, based on the term נָנִי in the MT, and possibly also the term בַּסֵּר in *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg*, since it gives



a reason why she might detest her husband. From just the MT it is difficult to understand how the ensuing discussion is related to 19:2, because the weighty matter of the concubine's infidelity is not discussed. Rather, the discussion moves immediately into a conversation that considers a very minor issue that may account for her departure. R. Abiathar claims that the Levite found a fly on her, while R. Jonathan claims that it was a hair. There is no room for discussion of the concubine's infidelity; the conversation is immediately focussed on debating what type of small infraction occurred. The possibility of infidelity and adultery is dismissed through lack of mention as the tradition moves on to consider a very minor question: was it a fly or a hair?

The tradition changes from a common debate between Rabbis to a momentous one, as the biblical prophet Elijah and even God are introduced. Elijah enters the discussion and explains to R. Abiathar that God himself is also considering the question of the concubine at Gibeah. Not only is God depicted as involved in the rabbinic debate, but he is described specifically as considering "the question of the concubine in Gibeah." Despite the anonymity and seeming unimportance of the concubine in Judg 19, she is here presented as the topic of divine interest. Insofar as this tradition suggests a rabbinic concern for problems in Judg 19, the concern is not focussed on the Levite or the Benjamites. The passage is concerned with the concubine and with explaining Judg 19:2.

According to this tradition, Elijah reports that God found both Abiathar and Jonathan to be correct in their assertions, because the Levite found *both* a fly and a hair

on the concubine.<sup>171</sup> The Levite found a fly in his food and deemed it merely disgusting so he excused it, but he found a hair “in her place,” which was dangerous, and so he did not excuse it. The phrase “in her place” (בִּאֲוֶתָהּ מִקּוֹם) may be euphemistic, for female genitalia, as suggested by the parallels in *b. Nid.* 47b and *b. Git.* 69b. The Soncino translation thus renders it with the Latin *in loco concubitus*. It seems that the intended meaning is that the Levite found a pubic hair that he did not excuse.

The concerns over the fly and the hair are minor, and they are not a violation of purity or other laws. They are deemed filthy and only potentially unhealthy. The Hebrew term used to describe the fly as “disgusting” (מִאֲוֶתָהּ) is used elsewhere in the Bavli in the context of a woman who is not attracted to her husband and therefore finds him repulsive (*b. Ketub.* 63b) and of a goat that is covered in blemishes (*b. Yoma* 63b). The hair is described as “dangerous” (מִכִּנְתָּהּ), using a Hebrew term that *b. Hul.* 96b also uses to describe birds and mice infesting food; these are not deemed ritually unclean, but only a risk to health.

At the close of this discussion in *b. Git.* 6b-7a, it is significant that R. Judah explains that only “some say” that both the hair and the fly were found in the Levite’s food, while “some say” that the hair was actually her fault. The issue of fault is raised, but in the end, the text places blame on the concubine for virtually nothing. In light of the early Jewish retellings that we considered in previous chapters, it is surprising that the passage does not attempt to pin blame on the concubine. On the contrary, the tradition

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<sup>171</sup> With a very brief mention Willem Smelik finds that this tradition “assumes the concubine actually played the harlot.” He offers no explanation for this interpretation of the text, and in my view I see no support for it. See Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, 607.

suggests that any infraction was small; if the concubine was guilty of anything, it is only of a very minor misdeed.

This theme is continued in *b.Git.* in the following tradition, which focuses on men who terrorise their households:

R. Hisda said: A man should not strike fear in the midst of his household. Behold the concubine of Gibeah. Her husband put on her extraordinary fear (אִימָה יְהִירָהּ) and she caused to fall many thousands in Israel. Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: If a man strike fear in the midst of his household, he will eventually commit the three sins of unchastity, blood-shedding, and desecration of the Sabbath. Rabba b. Bar Hanah said: The three things which a man has to say to his household just before Sabbath commences, "Have you set aside the tithe? Have you placed the Erub? Light the lamp," should be said by him gently, so that they should obey him readily. R. Ashi said: I was never taught that rule of Rabba b. Bar Hanah, but I observed because my own sense told me to. (*b. Git.* 6b-7a)

The point of this discussion is to discourage men from subjecting their households to fear, because something unfortunate will inevitably occur as a result. In this context, it is stated that the concubine "caused to fall many thousands in Israel." This refers to the deaths of the Benjaminites, who are nearly decimated in Judg 20-21. It is implied that this was a result of the concubine's fear of her husband, who should not have mistreated her. The statement is not an indictment of the concubine, but an example of why the male leaders of a household must act with kindness to those hierarchically below them.

Further in the discussion is a non-biblical example cited to illustrate the point that if a man puts fear in his household it is he who is held responsible for the result. Thus, if a man strikes fear in his house *he* will commit the three sins of unchastity, bloodshedding, and desecration of the Sabbath. The household is not to blame if he makes it onerous for them to listen to him. It is his responsibility to deal with people kindly so that they will be able to obey him. Likewise, the reader infers that it was the responsibility of the Levite to

treat the concubine kindly, and his failure to do so caused her to bring about the deaths of many. The tragic events of Judg 19 were ultimately caused by the Levite's errant behaviour.

That the redactors considered the tradition of R. Abiathar and of R. Hisda and placed them together in this context says much about their views of the unnamed concubine. When placed together, these traditions portray the Levite of Judg 19 as a man who overreacts to very small things, such a fly in his food, and who continually places the concubine in fear. If anything, the traditions seem to be trying to absolve the concubine of any possible guilt, by showing that any misdeed was minor and that she was, in any case, under much duress due to the abuse of the Levite.

#### **5. b. *Sanh.* 103b**

In b. *Sanh.* 103b the rabbinic exegetes see a relationship between the story of Micah in Judg 17-18 and the story of the unnamed concubine in Judg 19. Judges 19 is mentioned in the context of a debate regarding those figures who are absent from the Mishnaic list of people with no portion in the world to come. The text begins by considering the case of King Jehoiakim and it moves to discuss the place of a "commoner" such as Micah:

Raba said to Rabbah b. Mari: Why did they not count Johoiakim [among those who have no portion in the world to come]...He answered: I have heard no explanation concerning the kings [why Jehoiakim was not included]: but I have heard one concerning the commoners. [Thus:] Why did they not include Micah? —Because his bread was available to travellers, as it is written, Every traveller [turned] to the Levites.

And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea. R. Johanan observed: This refers to Micah's graven image.

It has been taught: R. Nathan said: From Gareb to Shiloah is a distance of three mils, and the smoke of the altar and that of Micah's image intermingled. The ministering angels wished to thrust Micah away, but the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them, "Let him alone, because his bread is available for wayfarers." And it was on this account that the people involved in the matter of the concubine at Gibeah were punished. For the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them, "You did not protest for My honour, yet you protest for *flesh and blood*." (בשר ודם) (b. *Sanh.* 103b)

It is questioned why Micah, guilty of idolatry, would be included in the world to come.

The answer is "because his bread was available to travelers." This may be a reference to Micah's hospitality and his offer to the Levite in Judg 17:10-3. A similar reference occurs further in the passage. The discussion continues to focus on the story of Micah and a graven image, as found in Judg 17-18. R. Johanan relates a quotation from Zechariah 10:2 ("And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea") to Micah's graven image. It is unclear, however, how this correlation is established.

In the biblical story Micah's mother commissions an idol to be made for her son, who then creates a shrine and installs one of his own sons as a priest (Judg 17:4-5). Later, the tribe of Dan raids Micah and takes the idol along with the contents of the shrine (Judg 18:18-26). The Danites eventually set up the idol and shrine at Laish, which they rename Dan (Judg 19:29). The final verse of the narrative, Judg 18:31, notes that the idol remained at Dan as long as "the house of God was at Shiloh."

In the Bavli, R. Nathan identifies the place of the shrine not as Laish, but alternately as "Gareb." He reasons that it is a distance of three "mils" from Shiloah, such that smoke from the legitimate altar at Shiloah and smoke from Micah's idolatrous shrine commingled. This displeased God's ministering angels, who wished to "thrust Micah away." But, according to R. Nathan, God disagreed "because his bread is available for wayfarers." Repeated a second time, this statement may refer to an aggadic tradition that

identifies Micah with hospitality. Because of his hospitality Micah is spared for the world to come, and he is spared from the wrath of God's angels.

R. Nathan explains here that all those involved in “the matter of the concubine of Gibeah” were punished. Here again the episode at Gibeah is identified with reference to the concubine. R. Nathan reports that God is displeased because the people did not protest for his own honour, but they did protest for the honour of flesh and blood (בשר ודם). The Soncino edition paraphrases בשר ודם as “for the honour of a woman,” assuming that God is displeased that the tribes protested over the honour of a mere woman, but not for his own honour. The more literal “flesh and blood,” however, is more fitting to the context. The likely contrast here is between those things that are divine and those that are human. The biblical text notes no opposition from other tribes toward the idolatrous actions of either Micah or the tribe of Dan. The shrine is securely set up at Laish/Gareb, and the only dispute concerns who will have possession of the idol. God is depicted as comparing this to the next narrative in Judg 19, in which an entire nation is quick to plunge into a civil war because of what happened at Gibeah. The people did nothing in the face of such blatant idolatry, but for another reason they are willing to go to war. As such, the ones who will be punished “are those involved in the matter of the concubine.” This refers not the Benjaminites who attacked the house, but the rest of Israel who incited the civil war.

The description of God's displeasure in this passage recalls Pseudo-Philo's depiction of God in *L.A.B.* As we have seen in chapter three, God makes a very similar statement in *L.A.B.*, when he explains to “the adversary” that he is angered because the

people incite war over what occurred at Gibeah, but are not at all disturbed by Micah's graven image (L.A.B. 45.6). Here too, it seems that the text depicts God as displeased that Israel did not protest for his own honour, but did protest for that of humankind.

## Conclusion

In earlier texts the main areas of concern regarding the story in Judg 19 surround the Levite: the way he is wronged by the concubine, the way he is attacked by a homosexual mob, and the unfavourable portrayal of him as a callous and somewhat foolish man. Many centuries later, some Jews also seem to be troubled by Judg 19. Their concern, however, does not rest with the Levite. Rabbinic traditions about Judg 19 focus on the unnamed concubine and her role within the story.

The inclusion of "the story of the concubine of Gibeah" among the lists of contested texts indicates that there was a discussion about whether the text should be read and translated in public. In the Tosefta, Judg 19 is listed alongside two other biblical tales of rape, thus suggesting that its inclusion in the list may have been due to a similar concern for the rape of the unnamed woman. The Bavli also includes Judg 19 in its list of questionable texts for public consumption, but here the context changes. The Bavli's version explains why the story of the concubine is in the list: not because of the rape and abuse in the story but because the story might be disrespectful to Benjamin. Nevertheless, the Bavli confirms that Judg 19 should be both read and translated. In b. *Git.* 6b-7a, "the story of the concubine" is discussed as an exegetical problem that concerns even God. Here, the concubine is absolved of any perceived guilt for the events that occurred as a

result of her departure from the Levite's house. According to the Bavli, she may only be guilty of a very minor infraction. Moreover, the Levite is cited as an example of a man who caused sin by putting his household in great fear.

In every rabbinic text that references the episode in Judg 19, the chapter is identified as "the story of the concubine of Gibeah." Strikingly, it seems that the story is perceived to be about her and there is a concern to understand her role in the story. An unnamed woman, raped, dead and dismembered within the biblical text becomes the focus of much attention and contemplation in rabbinic circles many centuries thereafter.



## CONCLUSION

The starting point for this thesis was the silent, unnamed, abused woman in Judg 19. In the Hebrew text she is part of a story that raises more questions than answers. It is filled with many unusual elements, which are compounded by the gruesome abuse and violence against an unnamed concubine. In this study we posed the question: How was the unnamed concubine understood and interpreted in antiquity? In answer to this question, we have analysed passages from early Jewish literature.

In these texts interpretation of the story in Judg 19 occurs in many ways. In translations such as the Septuagint and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* small changes are made to the biblical text, usually affecting only a word or phrase. In the rewritten Bible of Josephus' *Ant.* and Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* the biblical story is completely reworked and retold. Finally, in the Tosefta and the Bavli the story of the unnamed concubine is mentioned in discussions about the events in the story and about the place of the story in public reading of the Bible.

I suggest that interpretations of Judg 19 occur for two main reasons. First, the ancient interpreters were uncomfortable with an unfavourable portrayal of either the Levite or the concubine. The translators responsible for the LXX and *Tg. Ps.-J.*, along with Pseudo-Philo and Josephus, seem concerned about the unsympathetic portrayal of the Levite. In the MT, the Levite is not only shamed by the infidelity of his wife, but also because he then follows her to her father's house (19:3). In LXX<sup>A</sup>, *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg.*, and Josephus' *Ant.* the infidelity of the concubine is only implied by her "going out." In addition, the Levite becomes partially to blame because he caused her to be angry. In this

way the Levite is not shamed by the infidelity of his wife, and it is reasonable for him to seek reconciliation since he himself seems to have done something wrong.

In the MT the mob desires not the concubine, but the Levite, and specifically demands to have sex with him (19:22). Even the threat of homosexual rape is shameful to the Levite, forcing him into a passive role within the story.<sup>172</sup> Josephus and Pseudo-Philo both make it abundantly clear that the Levite was not the object of homosexual advances. The mob desired the woman all along, and did not shame the Levite with a threat of homosexual sex. Also in *L.A.B.* and *Ant.* the power of the mob is emphasized, and the concubine is not thrown out to the mob, but they *snatch her away*. This serves to depict the Levite more favourably, for he did not willingly offer up his concubine, and perhaps would have helped her had he been able, but was powerless against an overwhelming mob.

In the MT it is unclear at what point of the story the concubine dies, leaving open the possibility that the Levite dismembered her while she was still alive (19:28). In *LXX<sup>A</sup>*, *LXX<sup>B</sup>*, *L.A.B.*, and *Ant.*, it is made clear that the concubine was already dead when the Levite found her on the doorstep. Most likely, the purpose of this addition serves not only to clarify an ambiguous text, but to allow no possibility for the reader to surmise that the concubine was still alive when the Levite dismembered her.

In stark contrast to the many interpretations that seem very concerned with the portrayal of the Levite, rabbinic literature is concerned about the concubine's role in the story. There is a concern to determine what is meant by her "going out" in Judg 19:2. Her

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<sup>172</sup> Exum, "Fragmented Women," 182-183.

“going out” is reframed to be not an act of infidelity, but a minor misdeed concerning which the Levite likely overreacted. There is further discussion that the concubine should not be blamed for any wrongdoing, because she was forced to do so when she was terrorised by her husband.

A second reason for interpretation of Judg 19 is that later interpreters did not choose to understand the story within its original context. The odd and unexpected elements of the story that were once used by the biblical composer in order to convey a time of chaos in the life of Israel now serve no such purpose and are only peculiarities within the story. In the translations of the LXX and *Tg. Ps.-J. Judg* there is no reworking of the biblical story, but the changes made to the text show that the interpreters are more concerned to resolve the troubling matters within the text than to preserve its original purpose. In their biblical retellings, Josephus and Pseudo-Philo completely reframe the story and change its purpose. Pseudo-Philo creates a polemic against idolatry. Josephus aims to offer a favourable portrayal of the Levite by creating an entertaining story with many romantic elements. In rabbinic literature the story is discussed as part of traditions about Micah’s place in the world to come, lists of forbidden Targumim, and husbands who terrorise their households. While Judg 19 remains important, its significance is no longer for what it says about a time in Israel when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg 21:25).

The similarities in the way that different texts interpret Judg 19 suggest that there were some common traditions circulating about certain aspects of the story. Using James Kugel’s terminology, we can speak of these traditions as “exegetical motifs.” Kugel

explains that early interpreters did not interpret whole stories, or large passages of Scripture, but tended to focus in on one peculiarity in a verse.<sup>173</sup> Small expansions of a biblical verse could be passed throughout the ancient world by both word and text, forming an exegetical motif that could be adopted or adapted into other texts and combined with other exegetical motifs to form an interpretation of an entire passage.<sup>174</sup> The common interpretations of Judg 19 may be examples of such exegetical motifs. We have the motif of “the concubine as angry with the Levite,” used to explain the departure of the concubine in Judg 19:2. This motif is evidenced in LXX<sup>A</sup>, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, and *Ant.* The concubine’s anger with the Levite may also be implied in *b. Git.* 6b-7a. because the Levite judges the concubine harshly when she is guilty of only a minor infraction and is described as a man who terrorises his household. We also find the “. . . and she was dead” motif evidenced in LXX<sup>A</sup>, LXX<sup>B</sup>, *Ant.*, and *L.A.B.*, whereby it is asserted that the concubine was dead when the Levite found her. Although not as well attested, *Ant.* and *L.A.B.* also share the motif of “the mob as desiring the concubine,” inasmuch as both assert that the mob did not direct any homosexual advances toward the Levite. Finally, both *L.A.B.* and *b. Sanh.* 103b interpret the story in Judg 19 in relation to the story of the idolatry of Micah in Judg 17-18. In both texts the episode at Gibeah is directly compared to Micah’s idolatry. Also in both texts we see God’s displeasure with the attention paid to the matter at Gibeah, while the idolatry is overlooked.

By breaking the interpretations down into such exegetical motifs we see that the bulk of the motifs are shared amongst the LXX<sup>A</sup>, LXX<sup>B</sup>, *L.A.B.*, *Ant.*, and *Tg. Ps.-J.*

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<sup>173</sup> Kugel, *The Bible As It Was*, 24.

<sup>174</sup> Kugel, *The Bible As It Was*, 24.

Interestingly, there is little affinity between these texts, and those of the Tosefta and Bavli. Moreover, the overall concern for the Levite that is found in all of the other interpretations is not found in rabbinic literature. The Tosefta and Bavli coming much later than the other texts and in a very different genre, appear to be disconnected from the tradition of interpretation attested in the other texts of early Jewish literature. The interpretations of rabbinic literature approach the story in Judg 19 with different concerns and a different way of explaining the text.

Our goal in this study has been to work towards a clearer picture of how the unnamed concubine is portrayed in early Jewish literature. In conclusion, we should ask: How do these interpretations of Judg 19 affect the portrayal of the concubine and her role? In the translations of the LXX and *Tg. Ps.-J.* the portrayal of the concubine is rather ambiguous. She is still guilty of going out from the Levite, but the Levite is also to blame for provoking her anger. The harsh description of her prostituting herself against the Levite in MT Judg 19:2 is erased, but the question of why she went out from the Levite still remains. In the LXX the concubine is at least spared from the heinous death of being dismembered while still alive, for the translators assert that she was dead when the Levite found her on the doorstep.

In Josephus' *Ant.* the concubine is the epitome of a submissive, faithful wife who would rather die than bring any shame upon her husband. She is portrayed much like a "Sarah figure" who is passive, chaste, and devoted to her husband. While Josephus does remove her from any suggestion of infidelity and softens the abuse against her, he does so in order to create a favourable portrayal of the Levite.

In Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* we may expect to find that the concubine's position in the story is elevated from that in the biblical text, because Pseudo-Philo often heightens the importance of female characters. Yet, the description of the concubine in *L.A.B.* is even more negative than that of the MT. The concubine is to blame for idolatry, and she is deserving of her own demise. Even God chastises those who show concern for her.

Finally, in the Bavli, we see that the concubine is exonerated from the accusation of infidelity/prostitution in the MT. She is found guilty of only a very small misdeed and the Levite's own fault in this is called into question. In earlier texts, changes to the portrayal of the concubine seem to occur as a result of concerns for the characterization of the Levite. When the story in Judg 19 is discussed in rabbinic literature, the concubine seems to be at the forefront, and there is a consideration of her role in the story. It is most significant that in every rabbinic text that discusses the story in Judg 19 it is referred to as "the story of the concubine in Gibeah."

The concubine is not the main character in the story of Judg 19. The biblical author did not create his tale with her in mind. The abuse against her allowed him to create a story about the chaos in Israel when there was no king. Later interpreters approach this story in an effort to understand and explain it. In so doing all of them alter the portrayal of the unnamed concubine, but only as a result of their efforts to rehabilitate the portrayal of the Levite. It is only in rabbinic literature that we see a concern for how the concubine is portrayed. Just as the concubine is a small and insignificant character in the biblical text, it is easy for her to become so within the history of interpretation. In this study we resist this by purposefully focussing on her place in early Jewish literature.

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