

Parallel Structures in Judges and the Formation of the Book

Abstract

This article maps next to the well-known repetitions in the book of Judges a number of other meaningful cases of repetition in the form of parallel structures in chapters 1, 14–16 and 17–21. This special use of repetition can be regarded as characteristic of the style of the editor who is responsible for of the book in its final form. The analysis of this phenomenon helps to get a better view on the structure of the book as a whole and also to explain the double references to the death of Joshua and to the twenty years of Samson as a judge as functional and not as mistakes. The special use of parallel structures at the beginning and end of the book can also be related to theories about the reconstruction of the formation of the book and the way it is connected to both the preceding book of Joshua and the following book of Samuel.

Keywords

Repetition, Juxtaposition, Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Judges 17–21

Introduction

More than in any other book in the Hebrew Bible specific words and phrases in the book of Judges are repeated. A closer look at the book of Judges will reveal even more instances of repetition than usually noted, especially in the form of parallel structures. In this article I hope to demonstrate that mapping of the repetitions in their different levels and thinking about their function shed new light on the problematic repetitions of the reference to the death of Joshua in Josh. 24.29, Judg. 1.1 and 2.8, and to the period of Samson acting as a judge in Judg. 15.20 and 16.31. This synchronic approach of the text may also yield some arguments for the attempt to reconstruct the formation of the book.

Judges 1.1–2.9 as a recapitulation of the book of Joshua

Within the first chapter of the book of Judges we find the much repeated refrain noting that the Israelite tribes sometimes ‘dispossessed’ (שׁוּיִרִשׁ־hiph.) the peoples living on the land given to them (1.19, 20), but mostly failed to do so (1.19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33). This is in line with the much repeated use of the same verb in the book of Joshua. It comes as no surprise, because these two books share the theme of the occupation of the land and it underlines the difference between the image of success in Joshua and that of failure in Judges. On the other hand, there are also a number of problematic repetitions on the book level, which cannot be explained easily. The book of Judges starts in the same way as the book of Joshua: with a reference to the death of the previous leader (‘It happened after the death of Joshua’ // ‘It happened after the death of Moses’). It suggests that the book of Judges starts where the book of Joshua ended. The rest of the first chapter of the book of Judges, however, seems to present a different situation than the one described at the end of the book of Joshua. It is in particular confusing to read about the death of Joshua a second time in Judg. 2.8, as if it had not been reported earlier.

Much effort has been invested into a precise reconstruction of the way in which the seam between the books of Joshua and Judges received its present form.¹ The available texts leave open different possibilities and the history of research shows a constant change of opinion, even by scholars changing their own point of view. With Erasmus Gaß one has to conclude that ‘(t)he compositional knot between the book of Joshua and Judges has yet to be convincingly untangled’ (Gaß 2018, 219). A simple but relevant way to enter into this complex discussion is to list the instances in which the book of Judges repeats information that was already given in the book of Joshua. It is important to note that in most cases the parallels with the book of Joshua not only use the same words but also appear in the same order:

1. The death of the previous leader (Josh. 1.1a // Judg. 1.1a)
2. Appointment of the new leader by YHWH, together with the promise to give (נתן) the land (הארץ) (Josh. 1.2 // Judg. 1.2)
3. Conflict with Adonisedek, king of Jerusalem, who is killed by Joshua (Josh. 10.1–27) // conflict with Adonibezek, who dies in Jerusalem (Judg. 1.5–7)
4. The story of Caleb, Othniel, Achsah and the conquest of Debir (Josh. 15.15–19 // Judg. 1.11–15)
5. Caleb defeats the three sons of Anaq (Josh. 15.13–14 // Judg. 1.20)
6. The Jebusites remain in Jerusalem (Josh. 15.63 // Judg. 1.21)
7. Manasseh fails to completely take its part (Josh. 17:12–13 // Judg. 1.27–28)
8. Ephraim fails to take hold of Gezer (Josh. 16.10 // Judg. 1.29)
9. Meeting of the people as a whole concerning the covenant with YHWH (Josh. 24.1–28 // Judg. 2.1–5)
10. Death and burial of Joshua (Josh. 24.28–31 // Judg. 2.6–9)

In the cases 4–5 and 7–8 the order in Judg. is not in line with the parallel passages in Joshua. With regard to the cases 4 and 5 this can be explained by taking into account that both passages concern the story of Caleb and thus can be regarded as one. It can also be compared to the way Josh. 24.28–31 is repeated in Judg. 2.6–9: with a change in the order of the lines, with the final line now being placed after the first line.

The many parallels and the way they are ordered indicate that the first part of the book of Judges in its present form is structured on the basis of the book of Joshua. The differences between the parallel parts can in most cases be explained as adaptations to the text in the book of Joshua.

The beginning of the book of Judges presents the succession of Joshua by the tribe of Judah in line with the succession of Moses by Joshua. The only other places where we find the phrase ‘and it happened after the death of’ (ויהי אחריו מות) are Gen. 25.11 and 2 Sam. 1.1. Although there is a contrast with the way the book of Joshua opens, as it lacks the reference to a leader going in the ways of Moses (Sasson 2014, 124), it should be taken into account that the message here is still positive, with a fruitful interaction between YHWH and the Israelites.

The parallel between the stories about Adonisedek and Adonibezek can be regarded as a way of showing that the tribe of Judah was as successful as Joshua, because it defeated a similar enemy. The use of the almost identical names is almost certainly no coincidence.² The relation between these kings was noted at an early stage, as can be derived from the fact that in the LXX of Josh. 10 this king was also named *Ἀδωνιβέζεξ*. According to Josh. 10 Adonisedek was defeated by Joshua. It is told that his allies, five Amorite kings, are captured

¹ Surveys are given by Noort 1998, 198–205; Rake 2006, 1–20; Groß 2009, 104–118; and Mäkipelto 2017, 217–242. See also the different contributions in Berner and Samuel 2018, 187–294.

² Sasson 2014, 131, is of a different opinion. He finds the two passages ‘hardly equivalent’.

on their flight, killed and hanged on a tree. Whether Adonisedek also suffered this fate is not clear. The author of Judg. 1 seemed to have used this gap in the story to relate his version of the conquest to the book of Joshua.³ The possibility of establishing a link with Jerusalem (the city of David) and to combine this with the link to Bezek (a city associated with Saul in 1 Sam. 11.8) must have been very important for the author of the book of Judges, because it helps him picturing Judah as going in the footsteps of Joshua. Finally, it can be noted that within the sequence of parallels the repeated reference to Jerusalem in Judg. 1.7-8 and 1.21 is in line with the order of the references to Jerusalem in Josh. 10 and 15.

The repetition of the story of Caleb, Othniel and Achsah is clearly a way of relating the books of Joshua and Judges. On the one hand it emphasizes the positive role of Caleb, on the other hand it makes the connection to the first judge, as described in Judg. 3.7–11. The only difference between the texts from Joshua and Judges is the added phrase ‘younger than he’ in describing the family line of Othniel: ‘son of Kenaz, brother of Caleb younger than he’ (Judg. 1.13). Within the context of the first chapters of Judges it emphasizes that Othniel belonged to a new generation. He is the favourable exception of the generation who did not know what YHWH had done for Israel (Judg. 2.10) and, therefore, he shows to be fit to become the first judge (Judg. 3.9).

The change to Benjamin as the tribe responsible for not driving out the Jebusites from Jerusalem (Judg. 1.21) instead of Judah (as reported in Josh. 15.63), can be related to the story in chapter 19, in which the same city and the same tribes play a role. According to Judg. 19.10–12 the travellers avoid staying the night in Jebus/Jerusalem because of the Jebusites still living there. Instead they go to Gibeah, a Benjaminite town, where they are brutally mistreated, leading to a war between the Israelites, who are led by Judah, and the Benjaminites. Apparently, the reference to Benjamin’s failure to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem in 1.21 was necessary after the report in 1.8 about Judah capturing Jerusalem. It offers the background for the story at the end of the book.

It is often overlooked but important to note that the parallels between the beginning of Judges and the book of Joshua as a whole do not stop here. There are clear correspondences between the stories in Josh. 24 and Judg. 2.1–5. In both Shechem (Josh. 24.1) and Bochim (Judg. 2.1) the Israelites are addressed as one people. Both Joshua and the messenger of YHWH mediate the words of YHWH and remind the people of the fact that YHWH made a covenant with their ancestors, leading them out of Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land. Reading Judg. 2.1–5 next to Josh. 24 emphasizes that what happens in Bochim shows that Joshua had been right when he uttered his doubts about the Israelites being able to keep to the covenant, and was rightly worried about the consequences (Josh. 24.19–20).

The repetition of the report of Joshua’s death and burial can be seen as conclusion of the series of parallels with the book of Joshua. Also the differences between the two reports can, again, be explained as the former quoting the latter (Noort 1993, 113-115; Spronk 2019, 87-88).⁴ A simple, but convincing argument can be derived from the fact that is more likely that in Judg. 2.7 the author/editor added ‘great’ to ‘every deed of YHWH’ than that someone quoting the text would feel the need to diminish YHWH’s work by leaving out this adjective in Josh. 24.31. With regard to the difference in the name of Joshua’s burial place – Timnath Serah (Josh. 24.30) and Timnat Heres (Judg. 2.9) – the book of Joshua seems to have preserved the original name, which is also used in Joshua 19.50. The Hebrew word תִּמְנַת in the name in Judg. 2 can be interpreted as a reference to the sun, as in 14.18 (also in Job 9.7). It

³ Welten 1965, 145–146; Na’aman 2005, 359. This suggestion is also discussed and reluctantly accepted by Groß 2009, 125. Cf. also Spronk 2019, 55.

⁴ Mäkipelto 2017, 234, concludes that ‘(t)he earliest extant version is mostly preserved in LXX Joshua [...] The version in MT Judges, in turn, is a later adaptation to a new context and it has emerged mainly through expansive harmonization.’

can be regarded, therefore, as part of the later idealization of the good old days of Joshua, in which the miracle of the sun in the valley of Ajjalon (Josh. 10.12–13) plays a prominent part (cf, Noort 1993, 129).

One should be careful with ascribing the double reference to Joshua's death in the first chapters of the book of Judges to sloppy editorial work. The clear parallel structures indicate that the beginning of the book of Judges should be read as a deliberate recapitulation of the story of the conquest of the land in the book of Joshua. It can be seen as an example of narrative juxtaposition. In the Hebrew Bible juxtaposition is a well-known technique 'deliberately used by editors and authors to shape the readers' interpretation of stories, episodes, and scenes in biblical narrative' (Gilmour 2014, 212). As will be further demonstrated below, the use of juxtaposition in the book of Judges appears to be characterized by the amount of repetition.⁵ According to Jacobus Marais this phenomenon of looking at events or retelling stories from different perspectives in the book of Judges also explains contradictions:

I want to put forward the hypothesis that the fields/frames of reference in the book of Judges represent perspectives. The episodic structure of Old Testament narrative has long since been recognised. It is my contention that not only phrases, clauses and sentences are juxtaposed in Old Testament narrative, but episodes and frames of reference too. This juxtaposition occurs on both the level of the text continuum and the level of semantics. Each episode, or frame of reference, thus represents a particular perspective. The whole of the book of Judges is a juxtaposition of perspectives in which juxtaposition dominates the causal, chronological or formal logical relationships between them. Paradoxes, deconstructions and inconsistencies abound and are an integral part of the representation. (Marais 998, 68)

Whereas Marais distinguishes different perspectives within the book of Judges, one can also see the beginning of the book of Judges as a new perspective on the conquest of the land. What is important to note here, is that the parallel structure indicates that it is not simply chronologically put after the book of Joshua, but also next to it. This explains the contradictory repeated reference to the death of Joshua. In Judg. 1.1 it is part of the chronological order and in 2.8 it is part of the parallel structure.

Repetitions in the middle part of the book

The repeated circle of punishment and deliverance in chapters 2–13 can also be seen as a form of juxtaposition, because it consists of separate stories that can be read next to each other. From Judg. 2.11 on, most of the stories about the individual saviours and judges are introduced by the recurring phrase 'the Israelites did what is evil in the eyes of YHWH' (2.11; 3.7, 12; 4.1; 6.1; 10.6; and 13.1). It may be no coincidence that it is repeated seven times. The resultant pattern introduced by these repetitions in chapters 2–13 is that YHWH time and

⁵ See on the phenomenon of juxtaposition in the Hebrew Bible next to the monograph of Gilmour (2017), relating the Elisha cycle to the Elijah cycle and to the story of Jehu's dynasty, also Shinan and Zakovitch 2015, 322–342. The parallel structures in the book of Judges are not mentioned in these studies. Apparently, they are of a different type than the cases of juxtaposition mentioned in these studies. With regard to the study of Marais, Gilmour remarks that he sees 'juxtaposition as being the alternative to causal and chronological relations between narratives', whereas she wants to show in her study 'that a theory of juxtaposition can incorporate both chronological/causal and non-chronological arrangements' (p. 12).

again punishes the Israelites for abandoning him by giving them into the hand of their enemies, and also saves them again after they have shown remorse. This recurring pattern clearly functions as a way to emphasize the apostasy of the Israelites. Every time they make the same mistake and fail to learn from the past this aggravates their guilt. Next to this, one can note a decline in the quality of the saviours and judges sent by YHWH, although there are no explicit references to a movement from positive to negative. It is clear that the first, Othniel (Judg. 3.5–11), is also simply the best and that none of his followers will reach his status. A deterioration can be derived from the repeated rebellion by the Ephraimites. It first happened to Gideon (Judg. 8.1–3). The way he handled the matter appears to be much better than how it was handled by Jephthah (12.1–6), where it ended in one Israelite tribe killing thousands men of another tribe.

Another example of juxtaposition in this middle part of the book of Judges concerns the story of the victory over the Canaanite army lead by Sisera in chapter 4, which is retold in the song in the next chapter. When it comes to the form of repetition, it should be noted that it lacks the parallels in structure as they are found in the way Judg. 1.1–2.10 recapitulates the book of Joshua. The same can be said about the other stories in the middle part of the book. Apart from the similar introduction they all have their own structure. This changes again in the final part of the book.

Parallel Structures in the story of Samson

The story of Samson (chapters 13–16) is characterized by the use of a number of much repeated key words: ‘to tell’ (נגד) 23x, ‘to know’ (ידע) 6x, ‘to see’ (ראה) 16x (especially in chapter 13), ‘to go down’ (ירד) 10x, ‘to go up’ (עלה) 14x, and ‘to bind’ (אסר) 17x (in chapters 15–16).⁶ Many scholars have noted the clear parallel between the attempts by Samson’s bride to get him to tell her his secret in 14.16–17 and Delilah’s actions in chapter 16. This appears to be only one of many repetitions in chapter 16 of the events in chapters 14–15.⁷ The same words are used in both versions of the story and also the sequence of events is in most cases the same:

1. Samson goes to a Philistine town and sees (וירא) a woman (אשה) (14.1 // 16.1)
2. Samson likes the woman (14.3b // 16.4)
3. The Philistines say (ויאמרו) to the woman that she should seduce (פתי) Samson to discover his secret (14.15b // 16.5a)
4. The woman accuses him of not loving (אהב) her, pressing him hard (הציקתהו) for many days (הימים) and Samson tells (נגד) her his secret (14.16–17 // 16.15–17)
5. Samson declares his wish for revenge (נקם) (15.7 // 16.28)
6. Samson is bound (אסר) with new ropes (עבתיים חדשים) (15.13b // 16.12a)
7. Samson kills thousands of Philistines (15.15 // 16.27, 30)
8. Samson calls out (ויקרא) to YHWH (15.18a // 16.28a)
9. Samson at the brink of death (מות) (15.18b // 16.30a)

⁶ Noted and discussed by, amongst others, Crenshaw 1978, 52–56; Exum 1981, 3–9; Kim 1993, 387–398. According to Robert Alter also the verb פעם used in 13.25 to denote in a special way that the spirit of YHWH was ‘stamped’ into Samson, is a ‘thematic word,’ because it is related to פעם, ‘time’ in 15.3, 16.15, 18, 20, and 28 (Alter 1990, 49–51).

⁷ This is also noted by Exum 1981; Kim 1993, 386–401; O’Connell 1996, 217, 222–223; Zakovitch 2003, 29–30; and Broida 2010, 24–25.

10. Samson judged Israel for twenty years (15.20 // 16.31b).⁸

Comparing the two sequences of chapters 14–15 and chapter 16, the latter mostly surpasses the former, usually negatively. With Robert O’Connell one can speak of ‘escalated parallelism’.⁹ In the stories about Samson’s conflicts with the Philistines the number of the defeated enemy escalates numerically. It can also be found in the length of the description of the way the two women seduce Samson to reveal his secret.

The assumption of a deliberate use of a parallel structure can help to explain the repetition of the length of Samson’s judgeship. The reason why it seems to have been reported prematurely in 15.20 that Samson was a judge for twenty years, which is repeated in 16.31, has always puzzled the commentators.¹⁰ It is often explained as a trace of the work of a compiler who added chapter 16 or inserted a text before chapter 16 and apparently forgot to skip the now misplaced reference to Samson’s period as a judge at the end of chapter 15. It can also be regarded, however, as a rhetorical device underscoring the parallelism between chapters 14–15 and chapter 16.¹¹ It invites the reader to compare the outcome of chapter 15 to that of chapter 16. According to chapter 15 Samson threatens to die after having killed thousand Philistines, but he survives. According to chapter 16 he threatens to die powerless and shameful, but in the end his death is a success because he takes three thousand Philistines with him.

The comparison with other instances of chains of repetition in the book of Judge is of interest here. When one takes into account that the repeated reference to the number of years as a judge is associated with the death and burial of the judges, there is a parallel with the repetition of the report of the death and burial of Joshua in Judg. 2.8–9. In both cases of narrative juxtaposition chronology appears to be of only secondary importance.

The parallelism between the two episodes can be used as an extra argument for the broadly accepted reconstruction of the formation of the story of Samson. The author/editor seems to have written an introduction (chapter 13) to an older story (chapters 14–15), emphasizing the role of YHWH, who is mentioned 18x in this one chapter and no more than 8x in the next three chapters, and of the human hero of the story as someone called by YHWH.¹² He then probably also added the stories of Samson and the harlot in Gaza, and of Samson and Delilah in chapter 16.¹³ These were structured in the same way as the stories in

⁸ Next to these parallels, the different stories are also bound together by the play on the numbers seven and three, as noted by Kim 1993, 257. In chapter 14 the number seven is used five times (vv. 12, 15, 17 [2x], 18) and the number three once (v. 15), after the first mention of seven. In chapter 16 the number seven is used four times (vv. 7, 8, 13, 19) and the number three again once (v. 15), this time before the final mention.

⁹ O’Connell 1996, 3, 84, 99, 101, 125, 139, 154, 162, 182, 189, 203, 222 (about chapters 14–16), 261, 266, 344.

¹⁰ See the overview by Butler 2009, 344–345.

¹¹ According to Broida (2010, 33) ‘the very verse that most impedes the sense of a coherent plot emphasizes the coherent structure.’ Zeelander 2012, 55–79, mentions examples of ‘actions, ideas, motifs, and key words that repeat at the end often have a constructive role in bringing narratives to a satisfactory conclusion’ (p. 79). However, she does not mention Judg. 16.31 in this connection. Chisholm (2009, 171–182) suggests that by moving the statement about the number of years forward to 15.20, the author would have created ‘an ominous mood for the story to follow’ (179), because conventionally this statement would be followed by the report of his death and burial.

¹² Something similar can be observed in the story of Gideon with the added story emphasizing the role of YHWH in Judg. 6.1–6 as ‘the final act of revision through introduction’ (Milstein 2016, 209–214).

¹³ According to Kratz (2000, 213) the core text is found in 14.1–15.8, which at an early stage (before it became part of the book Judges) was expanded with 15.9–19 and the biggest part of chapter 16 and

chapters 14–15. In this final chapter the most important elements of the introduction were taken up again: the vow of dedication to YHWH and the role of the deity, who is completely absent in chapters 14–15.

Parallel Structures in chapters 17–21

The final five chapters of the book of Judges are clearly linked by the repeated formula in 17.6; 18.1; 19.1; and 21.25, that there was ‘no king in Israel in these days,’ to which is added in the first and last reference that ‘every man did what was right in his eyes.’ This takes the place of the repeated references to the Israelites doing what is ‘evil in the eyes of YHWH’ in chapters 2–13. The reference to the lack of a king underlines the fact that chapters 17–21 do not mention leaders like the preceding saviours and judges at all. The stories about the Danites in chapters 17–18 and the Benjaminites in chapters 19–20 also display other common features (cf. Block 1999, 474–475; Nelson 2017, 344–345). Just as in Judg. 1–2 recapitulating the book of Joshua and in the two parts of the story about Samson, the story of the Danites and the story of the Benjaminites can be regarded as juxtaposed narratives with a parallel structure. Compared to the parallel structures analysed above the repetitions are less on the level of similar words and more thematic. Nevertheless, the number and order of similarities is certainly not coincidental.

1. A resolved domestic quarrel: a son returns to his mother the money he stole from her (17.1–3) and a man wins back the concubine who had left him (19.1–3).
2. The Levite living as a stranger (גֵר) in Bethlehem travels to Mount Ephraim (17.7–8) has a counterpart in the Levite living as a stranger (גֵר) in Mount Ephraim who travels to Bethlehem (19.1–3).
3. Micah treats the Levite as his son (17.9–11), just as the Levite is shown great hospitality by his father-in-law (19.4–8).
4. The Danite spies consult God/YHWH through a priest and get a positive answer (18.5–6), whereas also the Israelites consult God/YHWH (the third time a priest is mentioned) and get a positive response (20.18, 23, 27–28).
5. The Danites kill all the people of Laish (18.27–28), just as the Israelites kill all the people of Gibeah (20.37) and later virtually all Benjaminites (20.48).
6. The reference to a sanctuary in Dan with Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses, as priest (18.30) is paralleled by the reference to a sanctuary in Bethel, where Phineas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, is the priest (20.26–28).

When placed next to each other, it is clear that just as in chapters 14–16 the latter episode can be seen both as escalation and as deterioration. This is especially clear in the fact that the second story mentions three times an enquiry of YHWH. This element is emphasized by the problematic aspect that YHWH seems to mislead the Israelites the first two times. That things are getting worse is also evident in the identity of the people being killed: first the inhabitants of Laish, which is described as related to the Phoenician city of Sidon, and later the people of Gibeah followed by most other members of the tribe of Benjamin.

The combination of references to Dan and Bethel as the location of a sanctuary is remarkable. Within the Hebrew Bible they are associated with Jeroboam’s initiative to install cultic centres in these two places as alternatives for the temple in Jerusalem after the

chapter 13, and at the moment it was incorporated in the book of Judges with 13.1; 15.20 and 16.31. Similar views can be found with Witte 2000, 526–549, 547–548; and Groß 2009, 647–660.

separation of the kingdom, which in the book of Kings is presented as the primary sin of the kings of Israel (1 Kgs 12.30; 2 Kgs 10.29). It is also noteworthy and from a chronological point of view problematic that in 18.30 and 20.28 the priests of these sanctuaries, Jonathan and Phineas, are presented as grandsons of Moses and Aaron and thus as part of the second generation. This reminds of the reference in 2.10 to the generation that came up after the generation that had still witnessed the good deeds done by YHWH in the time of Joshua. In chapter 2 this is part of the general description explaining the repetitive cycle of sin, punishment, remorse, and redemption. These references to the second generation after Moses and Aaron both at the beginning and at the end of the book of Judges is chronologically confusing and much discussed (Chisholm 2013, 34–53). This problem was already noticed by Josephus, who solved it in his *Antiquities of the Jews* by placing the stories of chapters 19–21 immediately after his retelling of the first two chapters. He only briefly refers to the migration of the Danites, conflating what was told in Judg. 1.34 with the story of Judg. 18 (*Ant.* 5.175–178). Among modern commentators we find similar attempts to reconstruct a convincing chronology, replacing the stories of chapters 17–18 and 19–21.¹⁴ A more plausible way to explain the place of these chapters in the book of Judges is to regard the text in its present form as another form of juxtaposition, namely as the second panel of a diptych. What happened after the introduction ending with the report of Joshua’s death and burial is told in two panels. The first (2.10–16.31) is characterized by the refrain that ‘the Israelites did what is evil in the eyes of YHWH,’ the second (chapters 17–21) by the refrain that ‘everyone did what is good in his own eyes.’ This two-part structure is in line with the stylistic iteration that we have already identified within and between individual episodes as a structuring principle for the book of Judges as a whole.¹⁵

Within the second panel there is not only the repeated structure of chapters 19–20 as a parallel to chapters 17–18. Repetition can also be observed in the final chapter, because the two stories about women for the Benjaminites appear to have been built up in the same way (Nelson 2017, 341–342):

1. The mourning (נָחַם) Israelites point to YHWH as responsible for the bad situation of Benjamin (vv. 2–3, 6 // v. 15).
2. The Israelites ask themselves what to do (מִה־נַּעֲשֶׂה) ‘for those that remain regarding wives’ (לְנוֹתְרִים לְנָשִׁים) (v. 7 // v. 16)
3. The Israelites think of a solution by offering the girls an Israelite city: Jabesh-Gilead (vv. 8–11) // Shiloh (vv. 19–22).
4. The Benjaminites act as they were told to do, they return (שׁוּבוּ) and receive the women (הַנָּשִׁים) (v. 14 // v. 23)

As with the other cases of repetition one can find here some intensification in the second part in that here the Benjaminites are encouraged to disturb a feast for YHWH in Shiloh, which is also known from the book of Joshua (18.1) as a holy place. Again, the parallels between the two stories are in line with the results of a diachronic analysis of the text, leading to the conclusion that we are dealing with two originally independent sources for the same story (Edenburg 2016, 58–75; Schulz 2016, 108–122). The author of the book of Judges seems to

¹⁴ See Talmon 1986, 52; Butler (2009, 490) reorders the stories as follows: 1; 3.7–11, 31; 4–5; 13–16; 17–18; 3.12–30(!); 19–21; 10–12; 6–8; 9.

¹⁵ According to Beldman (2017, 138) the relation between chapters 17–21 with the previous chapters is best described it as a circle which would ‘project a sense of futility,’ because ‘the effect of the end looping back temporally to the beginning establishes the sense of a ‘complete lack of goal.’ Yairah Amit speaks of ‘the principle of cyclicity’ (Amit 1999, 315).

have based this final chapter on the second story, about the girls of Shiloh captured into marriage by the Benjaminites, and added to this the story about Jabesh.

Links between the book of Judges and the books of Samuel

The book of Judges is not only connected by repetition to the previous book in the Hebrew Bible, but also to the next book. It has been noted by many scholars that in the books of Judges and Samuel one comes across an opening line, which runs like a thread through Judg. 13 until 1 Sam. 9 (Leuchter 2007; Levin 2011, 136):

Judg. 13.2 – ‘There was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah’

Judg. 17.1 – ‘There was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah’

Judg. 19.1 – ‘... there was a man a Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim’

1 Sam. 1.1 – ‘There was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah’

1 Sam. 9.1 – ‘There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish’

Next to this it can be noted that the story of the birth of Samson in Judg. 13 and the story of the birth of Samuel in 1 Sam. 1 appear to have much more in common than this opening line, using the same words and themes in mostly the same order:

1. ‘There was a certain man’ (Judg. 13.2a // 1 Sam. 1.1)
2. His wife is barren (Judg. 13.2b // 1 Sam. 1.1b)
3. She receives a divine message that she will bear a son (Judg. 13.3 // 1 Sam. 1.17)
4. She has to abstain from drinking alcohol (Judg. 13.4) // she did not drink alcohol (1 Sam. 1.15a)
5. The boy shall be consecrated/given to God/YHWH all his life and ‘no razor shall come upon his head’ (Judg. 13.5 // 1 Sam. 1.11)
6. The woman bears a son and gives him a name (Judg. 13.24a // 1 Sam. 1.20a)

The parallels do not always follow precisely the same order, but they are certainly not coincidental. They indicate that the story of the birth of Samson can be read as foreshadowing the story of Samuel. This is especially clear in the repeated phrase about not cutting the hair of the boy. It uses the same word מַנְרִיחַ for ‘razor’ instead of the more common פֶּעַר (cf. Num. 6.5, where it is also used in relation to being consecrated to YHWH). It is usually stated that the motif of the razor fits better in the story of Samson, where it plays an important role in chapter 16, than in the story of Samuel, where it does not return in the chapters after 1 Sam. 1. This is used as an argument that it was added to 1 Samuel 1.11 to place Samuel in the tradition of Samson (Dietrich 2010, 45–46). It is also possible, however, to consider that it may have been the other way around: that the story of Samson was described in such a way that it foreshadowed the story of Samuel. The motif of the not cutting of the hair, which was according to Num. 6.5 one of the rules for someone dedicated to the service of YHWH like Samuel, has been given a new and more prominent meaning in the story of Samson. Something similar can be noted when one compares Hannah’s vow in 1 Sam. 1 to the similar command by the messenger of YHWH in Judg. 13. The very fact that the latter is related to

the divine sphere instead of coming from a human being can be interpreted as another example of ‘escalated parallelism’.

As was remarked above, there is consensus among scholars trying to reconstruct the growth of the text, that chapter 13 was added as an introduction to older stories about Samson, emphasizing the role of YHWH. To this can be added now that the author/editor responsible for this addition also may have used the story of Samson’s birth to relate the stories about Samson to the beginning of the following book in the Hebrew Bible, emphasizing the contrast between Samson and Samuel, who were both devoted to YHWH but acted very differently as leaders of Israel (Spronk 2020, 135–136).

Not only the beginning but also the end of the story of Samson can be related to the following books in the Hebrew Bible, because the end of Samson’s story has a clear parallel with the end of the books of Kings:

Judg. 16.21a – ‘The Philistines held him down and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him in two bronze fetters.’

2 Kgs 25.7 – ‘They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.’

This unique combination of being blinded, bound with bronze fetters (using the same Hebrew words in Judges and in Kings), and brought to the capital of the enemy, must have been intentional. Just like Samson’s birth story ties him to the beginning of the books of Samuel, the story of his demise relates him to the end of the books of Kings. All this supports the suggestion that the author/editor of the book of Judges was familiar with the stories in the books of Samuel and Kings. This author/editor used the art of repetition to bring together stories and traditions from older sources into the book we now know as the book of Judges and to relate this book to the previous and following books of the Hebrew Bible.

Conclusion

In the book of Judges repetition is found on different levels: not only in the repetition of words and phrases, but also in the presence of larger parallel structures. It characterizes the book in both form and contents. Judg. 1.1–2.9 functions as a counterpart of the book of Joshua. It shows that history can repeat itself, but it also emphasizes the differences. From 2.10 until the end of chapter 16 the story of decline and rescue is explicitly introduced and then replayed time and again. Chapters 17–21, again, repeat the story of decline of the second generation after Joshua, represented by the grandsons of Moses and Aaron. Chronologically they are placed next to the stories of chapters 2–16, thus forming a diptych.

Chapter 16 repeats chapters 14–15, showing how difficult it was for Samson to learn from his mistakes. The stories in chapters 17–18 and 19–21 also show a similar structure, whereas the story of the taking of the girls from Jabesh-Gilead (21.1–14) is paralleled by the story of the taking of the girls from Shiloh (21.15–23), emphasizing the dire straits which the Benjaminites had landed in.

Just as the book of Judges appears to be related to the book of Joshua by the use of a parallel structure in the first chapters, so it is connected with the books of Samuel by the parallel structures of Judg. 13 and 1 Sam. 1. This can be used as an argument for the hypothesis that the book of Judges in its present form is a relatively late construct, which was created as bridging the gap between the story of the occupation of the land and the history of the kings (Spronk 2010; Carr 2011, 291; and Spronk 2019, 16–19). Be this as it may, it may

have become clear that the author of the book of Judges, working with material from different sources, in many ways used the art of repetition in creating a coherent story.¹⁶

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