

The Neglected Numbers of Judges 17–18

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Over the last half-century myriad literary readings of the Hebrew Bible have been published.¹ Perhaps no other book has proven as exceptional in exhibiting the approach’s fruitfulness as the book of Judges.² Analyzed among these readings is the phenomenon of narrative analogy in which one text possesses “a series of allusions to another text or texts” to elicit a certain interpretive judgment from the reader.³ The ubiquity of narrative analogies in the HB indicates that its authors operated as if the biblical writings were a “coherent and relevant intertextual whole” allowing analogies to thicken during the texts’ composition, transmission, and redaction.⁴

From this foundation, this article will explore how the numerals of Judges 17–18 are intentionally woven into one of the book’s overarching themes using the principle of analogy, previously neglected by interpreters.⁵

¹ See literature review in Deryn Guest, “Judging YHWH in the Book of Judges” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016), 180–188.

² For relevant reading see: Yaira Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, *BibInt* 38 (Boston: Brill, 1999); Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989). I share Alonso-Schökel’s observation: “erzählkunst finden wir, wenn nicht am typischsten, so doch vielleicht am reinsten im Richterbuch” (Luis Alonso-Schökel, “Erzählkunst im Buche der Richter,” *Bib* 42 [1961]:147).

³ Joanna G. Kline, “Intimations of Jacob, Judah, and Joseph in the Stories of King David: The Use of Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 2” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2018), 14. See also Yair Zakovitch, “Through the Looking Glass: Reflections/Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible,” *BibInt* 1 (1993): 139–152; Yair Zakovitch, *And You Shall Tell Your Son . . . : The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991); Yair Zakovitch, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation,” in *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, ed. Ronald Hendel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92–118.

⁴ D. Andrew Teeter, “On ‘Exegetical Function’ in Rewritten Scripture: Inner-Biblical Exegesis and the Abram/Ravens Narrative in *Jubilees*,” *HTR* 106 (2013): 401–402; Kline, “Intimations of Jacob, Judah, and Joseph,” 1.

⁵ I acknowledge that not every published work can serve all functions simultaneously and so I humbly point out the following examples as representative of a neglect to acknowledge the symbolic interpretation offered in this article. It goes without saying that each of the following works is masterful in its own way and the current author depended on them greatly. Gregory Wong, *Compositional Strategy of the Book of Judges: An Inductive, Rhetorical Study* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 56; Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000),

After an analysis of the 1100 shekels of silver in 17:2, this article will argue that the five Danite spies, 200 silver shekels, the Levite's 10 shekel salary, and the 600 Danites were chosen to demonstrate further Israel's "progressive deterioration."⁶

An analysis of the 1100 shekels of silver will act as a test case for the numerals to follow. Its shared distribution between the Samson cycle and Micah narrative makes for a useful test case to explore a number's potential symbolic significance. Second, we will illuminate the import of each number within Judges 17–18, out of sequence. We will analyze the 200 shekels of silver (17:4) first, including a pertinent overview of the intertextuality between Joshua and Judges, which will prove useful intermittently throughout the article. After, we will consider the significance of the five Danite spies (18:2) and their implications in an anti-conquest/anti-spy narrative, in turn providing the interpretive foundation for the Levite's salary of 10 shekels (17:10). Lastly, we will argue that the total of 600 Danite men (18:11) acts as an ironic comparison recalling the same sum found near the beginning of the book. These four numbers (plus the 1100 shekels) corroborate what Block and Wong describe as the "Canaanization"⁷ and "progressive deterioration" of Israel, respectively, summarized as the gradual moral decline of Israel and its judges.

219, 223–225; Barry Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 181–204; George F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 372–381.

⁶ Wong defines 'progressive deterioration' as the cyclical idolatry and increasing moral failure of Israel. He notes five areas where the deterioration is most acutely recognized: 1) the judges' decreasing faith in YHWH, 2) the judges' increasing self-interest 3) the decreasing participation of the tribes during military campaigns 4) the judges' increasing harshness towards internal dissenters/dissent and 5) YHWH's increasing frustration with His people (*Compositional Strategy*, 154–85, 249).

⁷ Block describes the 'Canaanization' of Israel as an embrace of pagan worship practices caused by the failure to eliminate the Canaanites, resulting in a mirroring of Canaanite immorality (Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*. NAC 6 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999], 47–48, 53, 58).

1100 SHEKELS AS TEST CASE

Meir Bar-Ilan states that a number in a biblical text is either “a random one” or selected to convey “a quality.”⁸ Before arguing for the significance of the various numbers in Judges 17–18, we will examine the more obvious 1100 shekels of silver as a test case for the type of analysis this article seeks to use. There are three reasons why the repeated use of “1100 shekels” in Judges 16:5 and 17:2–3 is significant. First, and most obvious, they are the same number and coincidence seems unlikely considering the number appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.⁹ Second, silver (כֶּסֶף) is the main object in both texts. Third, a similarity in context implies a purposeful connection. This shared context requires further elucidation.¹⁰

While the contextual matrix of the Samson cycle and the Micah narrative includes Dan’s search for a more hospitable land, various verbal parallels call out for an even deeper comparison. First, the Samson cycle and the Micah narrative both mention identical geographic locations: Mahaneh-Dan, Zorah, and Eshtaol (16:31; 18:2, 8, 11).¹¹ Next, the bribery of the Philistines and the deceitfulness of Delilah are juxtaposed with Micah’s

⁸ Meir Bar-Ilan, “When Being Numerate Used to Mean Something Else: The Case of Number Symbolism in the Hebrew Bible” in *Language, Culture, Computation: Computing of the Humanities, Law, and Narratives*, ed. Nachum Dershowitz and Ephraim Nissan (Berlin: Springer, 2014), 406. His main argument derives from the seemingly gratuitous detail of Sarah’s death at 127 years of age (Gen 23:1–2). He cites the Pythagorean notion of perfect numbers and triangular formations of pebbles known as tetractys used by the ancients. A tetractys with a bottom row of three pebbles would have six total pebbles (3 + 2 + 1). According to Pythagoras, a number is perfect when “the sum of its divisors (except the number itself) equals itself” (Bar-Ilan, “When Being Numerate,” 411). Euclid, a devotee of Pythagoras’ teachings, knew of four perfect numbers: 6, 28, 496, and 8128. For instance, 6 is a perfect number because it is divisible by 3, 2, and 1. If you were to add those factors together the sum would be 6. Bar-Ilan notes that the tetractys of the largest perfect number mentioned by Euclid, 8128, would have a bottom row of 127. Thus, according to Bar-Ilan, the lifespan of the original matriarch was symbolically complete. Lastly, this awareness of Pythagorean numbers begs the question of the final form of the text. How and when did these specific numbers, acting as symbolic signals, enter the text that we possess? For the importance of numerical symbols see the following: Zakovitch, *And You Shall Tell Your Son*, 52, 59–60; Joshua Berman, “But is it ‘History?’ The Historical Accuracy of the Tanakh,” *Tradition* 52 (2020): 15–21.

⁹ Serge Frolov, *Judges* (FOTL 6B; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 282.

¹⁰ Brettler argues for integrating the Samson cycle and the book’s epilogue in Marc Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, Old Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 2002), 80–81, 109.

¹¹ Joel S. Kaminsky, “Reflections on Associative Word Links in Judges,” *JSOT* 36 (2012): 425. Kaminsky also mentions the presence of the root נהק in Judges 16:9, 12; 20:31, 32.

thievery and his mother's deceptive withholding of the consecrated silver, emphasizing the compromised piety of both women.¹² In addition, the Israelite Samson is both a victimizer and a victim of deception (Judg 15:1–9; 16:4–21), whereas Micah and his mother, both Israelites, deceive one another for personal gain (17:1–6).¹³ Additionally, marshaling Wong's "progressive deterioration"¹⁴ theme, the sum possessed by Delilah, a female Philistine, is then placed in the hands of a female Israelite, Micah's mother. This transfer acts as a microcosm of Israel's gradual moral decline as Israel is steadily drawn into comparison with the Philistines who offered the same sum to Delilah.¹⁵

The structure of Israel's military campaigns within Judges provides more shared context between the Samson cycle and the epilogue of Judges. According to Judg 10:6–7, because the Israelites had served the "gods of the Philistines," the Philistines would subjugate them. While the Jephthah narrative involves the perilous Ammonites, the Samson narrative describes the burgeoning Philistine threat. Judges 13–16 portrays the Philistines as a danger to Samson (and Israel by extension), while in chapters 17–18 one should infer that the Danites were so injured by the Philistines that they reconnoitered alternative settlements, eventually seizing Laish (cf. Judg 1:34).¹⁶

Furthermore, Judges 18:30 is a strong candidate for textual emendation which would buttress the Philistine context. Burney has noticed a

¹² For the strong possibility of the mother's deception see the following: Victor H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge, 2004), 171; Amit, *The Art of Editing*, 324–328; Block, *Judges*, 455. Kent Lawson Younger, *Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 337; Klein, *Triumph of Irony*, 147.

¹³ Both Samson's and Micah's behavior is anything but honest (Judg 14:12–19; 15:4–8, 14–17; 16:6–14; 17:1–2, 13).

¹⁴ Wong, *Compositional Strategy*, 249.

¹⁵ Matthews summarizes the contextual logic well, "[Delilah's] blood money is further degraded by its use in the manufacture of an idol" Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, 173. Proving to be vital to this article's later argumentation, the Philistine context endures into the epilogue manifested in the Philistines' antagonism towards Israel in the book of Samuel.

¹⁶ The geography of the original Danite settlements (Josh 19:40–48), Samson's birthplace of Zorah (Judg 13:2), and Philistine control of coastal Philistia grounds this assertion. The implied continuance of the Philistine threat is further supported in the book of Samuel. See 1 Sam 4–6, 13–14, 17, 23, 28–29; 2 Sam 5–6, 21:15–22.

potential emendation of “land” (ארץ) for “ark” (ארון) creating the following reading: “until the captivity of the ark.”¹⁷ This likely reading amplifies the Philistine context within the chapter (as well as its framing units in Judges and Samuel) as the Philistines’ exile (גליה) of the ark is central to the Samuel narrative.¹⁸ Samuel’s narrator describes this “exile” using similar terms as the proposed emendation in Judges 18:30: “the glory has departed (גליה) from Israel because the ark (ארון) of God has been captured...” (1 Sam 4:21–22).¹⁹

In summary, the 1100 shekels of Judg 16–17 share a similar context marked by deception. Wong’s “progressive deterioration” and Block’s “Canaanization” are reinforced as the deceived in Judg 13–16, an Israelite Samson, becomes the deceived in Judg 17–18, an Israelite mother and son. The obvious similarity of the 1100 shekels suggests that other numbers within Judg 17–18 also have analogical associations, especially related to a Philistine context.²⁰ Let us now turn to the numbers of Judg 17–18.

200 SILVER SHEKELS

In this section we will analyze Micah’s 200 shekels alongside Achan’s 200 shekels in Josh 6–7. To begin, let us briefly note the intertextuality between Josh and Judg, frequently linking the success in Josh with the failure in Judg.²¹

¹⁷ Charles Fox Burney, *The Book of Judges: With Introduction and Notes*, ICC (London: Rivingtons, 1918), 414–415, 435; Donald G. Schley, *Shiloh: A Biblical City in Tradition and History*, JSOTSup 63 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 31.

¹⁸ David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 39 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 49–50. Chapman makes a pertinent observation relating to the thematic parallel between the refrain of Judges 17–21 (עין + ישר) and blindness/sight in 1 Samuel 1–3 furthering the notion of a continued context of Judges and Samuel (Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 192–193).

¹⁹ It is also worthy of note that this would be one of two instances where גליה governs ארץ. Jer 1:3 is the other instance: “...the captivity (גלות) of Jerusalem.” Jer 13:19 and Lam 1:3 indicate that “Judah” was taken into exile, not its “land” while Ezek 25:3 and Ezek 39:23 describe “the house of Judah” and the “house of Israel” going into exile, respectively.

²⁰ As for the importance of numbers in the Samson cycle one may also note Samson’s gradual increase in violence described throughout. He strikes 30 Philistines (from Ashkelon) (14:19); lights 300 foxes on fire (15:4), culminating in the killing of 1000 Philistines (15:15); after which he kills 3000 Philistines in Gaza (16:27, 30).

²¹ See Kent L. Younger, “The Configuring of Judicial Preliminaries: Judg 1.1–2.5 and Its Dependence on the Book of Joshua,” *JSOT* 20 (1995): 75–92. For a few pertinent examples of intertextuality: Caleb gifting his daughter to the victorious soldier in Judg 1:11–15 and the

Trent Butler has delineated four matching elements shared between Judg 2:6–10 and Josh 24:28–30, charted below, while also observing a conspicuous fifth element only found in Judg:²²

1) Joshua's dismissal of the tribes to their inheritance.	Josh 24:28 <u>וישלח יהושע את העם איש לנחלתו</u>	Judg 2:6 <u>וישלח יהושע את העם וילכו בני ישראל איש לנחלתו לרשת את הארץ</u>
2) The obedience of Israel during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders.	Josh 24:31 <u>ויעבד ישראל את יהוה כל ימי יהושע וכל ימי הזקנים אשר האריכו ימים אחרי יהושע ואשר ידעו את כל מעשה יהוה אשר עשה לישראל</u>	Judg 2:7 <u>ויעבד העם את יהוה כל ימי יהושע וכל ימי הזקנים אשר האריכו ימים אחרי יהושע אשר ראו את כל מעשה יהוה הגדול אשר עשה לישראל</u>
3) The death of Joshua.	Josh 24:29 <u>ויהי אחרי הדברים האלה וימת יהושע בן נון עבד יהוה בן מאה ועשר שנים</u>	Judg 2:8 <u>וימת יהושע בן נון עבד יהוה בן מאה ועשר שנים</u>
4) The burial of Joshua.	Josh 24:30 <u>ויקברו אתו בגבול נחלתו בתמנת סרה אשר בהר אפרים מצפון להר געש</u>	Judg 2:9 <u>ויקברו אותו בגבול נחלתו בתמנת חרס בהר אפרים מצפון להר געש</u>
5) A new generation		Judg 2:10b <u>ויקם דור אחר אחריהם אשר לו ידעו את יהוה וגם את המעשה אשר עשה לישראל</u>

Butler's fifth contrastive element, though absent in Josh, is paradigmatic in Judg: the rising up of a generation "who did not know YHWH nor what He had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10). This fifth element stresses the

description of tribal allotments in Judg 1:27–28 are nearly exact quotations of Josh 15:16–19 and Josh 17:12–13 respectively. The death of Moses in Josh 1:1 (ויהי אחרי מות משה) and the death of Joshua in Judg 1:1 (ויהי אחרי מות יהושע) use the same construction. Failure in Judg is most often expressed using the judges cycle formula, easily described as rebellion, retribution, repentance, relapse (Wong, *Compositional Strategy*, 47–74).

²² Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, WBC 8 (Nashville: Zondervan, 2009), 42. Common language between the two is underlined.

antipodes of success and failure embodied by Josh and Judg respectively, while the five elements legitimate the expectation of a relationship between Judg 17–18 and Josh 2–7.

In the first six verses of Judg 17, Micah’s mother realizes her silver is stolen and utters a curse against the thief, causing her son Micah to confess his culpability.²³ The mother then “consecrates (קדש) the silver” to YHWH, presumably in its entirety (17:3; see footnote 12). Yet, she hoards the lion’s share and forks over a relatively paltry sum of 200 shekels for the construction of a “molten image” (פסל ומסכה). Why 200 shekels? Based upon the analogical relationship between Josh 2–7 and Judges 17–18, the answer is obvious. Josh 7 tells the story of Achan, who, rather than “devoting” (חרם) the spoil of Jericho to YHWH, keeps 200 shekels for himself. The rarity of “200 shekels” (מאתים + שקל/כסף) paired with the intertextual relationship of Josh and Judg indicates an intentional connection.²⁴

Various similarities indicate a detailed analogy between the two sums of silver. In Josh 6:19 YHWH states, “all silver and gold” are “holy” (קדש) to YHWH. Josh 6:24 indicates Israel’s obedience to this injunction. However, Achan retains 200 shekels of holy silver (Josh 7:21), the same amount dedicated by Micah’s mother during the commissioning of a molten image, outlawed according to the Deuteronomist (Deut 27:15, cf. Josh 1:7–8). Achan’s theft is a minor yet lethal blemish in an otherwise successful conquest of Jericho, whereas Micah’s mother’s self-sanctioned oath and covetousness inaugurates what would later be associated with Jeroboam’s national syncretistic cult,²⁵ eventually engendering national apostasy and continual

²³ Amit, *The Art of Editing*, 324.

²⁴ “200” (מאתים) appears 76 times in the Hebrew Bible. The roots which we typically translate “shekel” שקל or “silver” כסף appear 403 and 176 times respectively. “200” (מאתים) modifying either root כסף or שקל appears 1 and 2 times respectively including the two passages at hand, Josh 7:21 and Judg 17:4, with the other being 2 Samuel 14:26 in reference to Absalom’s hair.

²⁵ Mark Walter Bartusch, *Understanding Dan: An Exegetical Study of a Biblical City, Tribe and Ancestor* LHBOTS 379 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 181–202.

indictment by the Deuteronomist.²⁶ While Micah willingly confessed (feigned repentance?) to his theft for fear of the curse uttered by his mother, Achan was chosen by lot and appears sincerely repentant: “Truly I have sinned against YHWH” (Josh 7:20).²⁷ Both sums are possessed by men of Judah: Jonathan the Levite of Judah (Judg 17:7; 18:30) and Achan (Josh 7:17–18).

Moreover, Judg 18:31, the last verse of the Danite’s migration story, indicates that the molten image remained at Laish for as long as the ark (see emendation above) remained at Shiloh (cf. Ps. 78:56–66; 1 Sam 1–4). The city of Shiloh is significant in the book of Joshua. First, it is the location where Joshua apportions the land among the tribes of Israel, including Dan (Josh 18:9–10; 19:40–51). Second, the tribes west of the Jordan gathered at Shiloh to deliberate how to handle the alleged idolatry of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (Josh 22:12). The eastern tribes parse through the confusion, classifying the newly erected altar as a mere symbol signifying an enduring solidarity between east and west (Josh 22:27). Whereas Dan received his proper allotment and Israel acted in solidarity to preserve pure Yahwistic worship at Shiloh within the book of Joshua, Judg 17–18 sees both these successes reversed through the conquest of Laish. Dan scorns their God-given allotment in exchange for a new land detached from Joshua’s apportionment, destroying an entire village, and finally construct a new syncretistic cult. The city of Shiloh in the book of Joshua evinced success, while Laish in the book of Judges manifested abject failure. This juxtaposition matches the anagrammatical nature of Shiloh and Laish. When Shiloh (שִׁילוֹ) is reversed, both in a metaphorical and consonantal sense, Laish (לַיִשׁ) is erected.²⁸

²⁶ Eva Danelius, “The Sins of Jeroboam Ben-Nabat,” *JQR* 58 (1967): 95–114.

²⁷ Amit, *The Art of Editing*, 324–326.

²⁸ Scott B. Noegel, “Paranomasia,” *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 26. See Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1991) for examples of anagramming in the Hebrew Bible. Garsiel also notes the presence of puns, based upon Midrashic name derivations, between the name of the Danite cities, Zorah (צִרְעָה) and Eshtaol (אֶשְׁתָּאֵל) and the Danites request for an oracle from the priest—“Ask!” (שֶׂאל)—along with the description of the Sidonians as “possessing wealth (עֵצֶר).” He argues that the author mentions the names of the

The silver is also emphasized in the Micah pericope. First, the spatiality of the silver and the narrative's point-of-view are almost always convergent. The "molten image" (פסל ומסכה) crafted from the 200 shekels of silver creates an *inclusio* in Judg 17–18: Micah places it in his בית אלהים (17:5) and the tribe of Dan places it in their own בית אלהים at Dan/Laish (18:31). Alongside the narrative's focus on the silver's spatial orientation in Judg 17–18, the grammar of the text itself attracts the reader to the silver. There is a total of 81 *wayyiqtol* verbs in the pericope with 15 governing the silver/molten image. While source critical methods perceive utter disunity of the passage due to the silver's changing of hands at such a rapid rate (see Judg 17:1–4), an analysis of the text's final form indicates a deliberate attempt to draw an analogy between the molten image and Achan's silver.³² Thus, the foregrounding of the silver's movement and the rapid speed at which the silver changes hands emphasize its importance.³³

In summary, the 200 shekels of silver is a specific number employed in both stories to compare the abhorrence and immorality of both Micah/Dan's cult and Achan's theft. Achan's polluting sin (Josh 7:13) was localized and its potential damage was mitigated through stoning. Thus, the aura of success that shapes the book of Joshua is preserved. However, the pollutive effect of Micah's silver is unbridled as the molten image travels throughout Israel, finally coming to a rest in Laish where it would define an entire tribe.³⁴ Both Achan's and Micah's sins resulted in tribal and even national disaster, and, while Joshua eliminated the idolatrous contagion, the cult at Laish of Dan endured.

³² Moore offers a typical argument, "the money passes back and forth in an unaccountable way" (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 372–381).

³³ Klein, *The Triumph*, 147–148.

³⁴ The Israelites intentionally placed Rahab outside of the camp as she could be a potential pollutant ruining their consecrated status (קדש) demanded by Joshua in Josh 3:5. Achan's thievery and hoarding of the objects under הרם cause YHWH to demand yet another consecration (קדש, Josh 7:13) highlighting the implicit polluting effect of the 200 shekels passed around in Judg 17–18.

FIVE DANITE SPIES

Next, we will examine the analogical relationship between the spies of Jericho and the Danite spies to explain the author’s numerical choice of five. According to Judg 1:34, the Danites fail to conquer their original allotment and search for new lands (18:1–2). Complementing the discussion of Josh and Judg’s intertextuality, Uwe Bauer appeals to both Wagner’s spy-narrative form and von Rad’s war-story form in his comparison of Joshua’s and Dan’s conquests. About the first form, both Josh 2–7 and Judg 17–18 include 1) a selection and 2) sending of spies, 3) the reporting of the mission to the reader, 4) an announcement of their return, 5) a declaration of YHWH’s gifting of the land, and 6) an immigration process. On the second form, Bauer observes the ironic implementation of ironic war-story elements in Judg 17–18: the most pertinent being the Danites improper **הָרָם** (element 14).³⁵ The presence of both forms in both texts makes one expectant of an analogical comparison between Joshua’s spies and Dan’s spies.

There are also intertextual markers between the two texts that are worthy of mention. Both parties are described using a D-stem participle of **גלל** and are “sent” (**שלח**) (Josh 2:1, Judg 18:2).³⁶ Similar grammatical constructions

³⁵ According to Bauer the Danites carry out “their own ‘unholy’ war of conquest which has nothing to do with YHWH . . . as a pure act of violence upon the inhabitants of Laish.” Unable to destroy the inhabitants of their allotted portion in Judges 1:34 the Danites find the courage to destroy the peaceful residents of Laish. Moreover, in Judges 17–18, God is indeed consulted (element 4), but by a syncretistic priest engaging in a perfunctory oracle (Judg 18:5–6). Unlike Jericho (Josh 2:9), the city of Laish is “given into the hands...” of the Danites (Judg 18:10) by YHWH despite no obvious oracular proceedings as well as evidence to the contrary per Josh 19:40–48. YHWH, who typically proceeds before the Israelites by proxy, via the ark or Levites, is conspicuously absent during the Laish conquest (element 7). Micah, the sole Levite is absorbed “into the midst of the people” (**בקרבו העם**) indicating a contrast with Jericho’s conquest (Josh 3:3; 6:4) where the Levite leads the charge. Moreover, this presents the Levite’s failure to remain separate (**קדיש**) from both an improper **הָרָם** [an inherently cultic act, see John H. Walton, *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites*, (Downer Hills: IVP Academic, 2017), 167–194] and eventual installation of an aberrant cult (18:30–31). Lastly, while the inhabitants of Jericho are undoubtedly described as enemies of YHWH (element 9) within the Deuteronomic corpus this designation is lacking regarding Laish (Deut 7:1) [Uwe F.W. Bauer, “Judges 18 as an Anti-Spy Story in the Context of an Anti-Conquest Story: The Creative Usage of Literary Genres,” *JSOT* 25 (2000): 37–47].

³⁶ Each group contains a single descriptor; “spies” (**מרגלים**, Josh 2:1) and “men of strength” (**בני חיל**, Judg 18:2).

characterize the orders given to each group: two imperatives, the first of each from the root הִלֵךְ, the second, a verb of perception followed by a direct object: “Go! Look over the land!” (לְכוּ רְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ, Josh 2:1) and “Go! Explore the land!” (לְכוּ חִקְרוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ, Judg 18:2). Joshua’s spies “laid down” (שָׁכַב, Josh 2:1) at Rahab’s house, a *foreigner* who exhibits allegiance toward Israel’s God (Josh 2:8–14). In contrast, the five Danite spies “stayed overnight” (לִיָּן, Judg 18:2) with Micah, a *native-born* Israelite portrayed as idolatrous.³⁷ Joshua sends two spies to *save* the life of Rahab, a foreigner, after the destruction of Jericho (Josh 6:22). Contrastively, the five Danite spies embolden their fellow Danites to *threaten* the life of Micah, a native-born Israelite (Judg 18:14, 25), eventually taking the lives of countless innocents at Laish.³⁸ Joshua sends out his spies “secretly” (סֵרֵשׁ, Josh 2:1), whereas the Danite spies accost the Levite commanding him to “keep quiet!” (הִחַרְשׁ, Judg 18:19). Secrecy defines the *modus operandi* of Joshua’s spies and describes an aggressive threat from the Danite spies (Judg 18:19).³⁹

³⁷ Both narratives depict the spies tarrying at the “house” of another (Josh 2:1, Judg 18:1–6). (HALOT, s.v. “לִיָּן” and “שָׁכַב”). While one could interpret the combination of שָׁכַב + בּוֹא in Josh 2 as indicating sexual acts between Rahab and the spies, the current author sees this as unlikely for the following reasons: 1) HALOT’s categorization of the שָׁכַב of the two spies as either the pedestrian act of “lying down” and/or an action involving “sleep”; 2) Rahab’s hiding the spies plus 3) her authentic ‘confession’, indicates an air of innocence to the encounter; and 4) the combination of various analogies to other narratives such as Baal worship at Peor (Num 25), the Hebrew midwives (Exod 2), and Achan’s theft (Josh 7) paint Rahab with an overtly positive brush. For an opposite approach, see Thomas Dozeman, *Joshua 1-12 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 6A (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2015), 238–240.

³⁸ Charles F. Fensham, “The Treaty between Israel and the Gibeonites,” *BA* 27 (1964): 96–100. Judg 18:1, setting the stage for the conquest of Laish, indicates that the tribe of Dan was “seeking” (מִבְקֵשׁ) an inheritance because one had not “fallen to them” (נִפְלָה לָוּ). Comparatively, upon the spies’ arrival, Rahab indicates that fear had “fallen” (Josh 2:9) upon the inhabitants of Jericho (נִפְלָה אִימַתְכֶם עָלֵינוּ), because, as indicated by Rahab’s speech, those of Jericho are aware that their land has been given to Israel by YHWH. In turn, men from the city begin “seeking” (Josh 2:22, מִבְקֵשׁ) Joshua’s spies. This connection in particular exhibits a rotation of correspondence, a concept first brought to my attention by Dr. Andrew Teeter. The perception of the Danite spies, initially juxtaposed to the spies at Jericho, is fashioned to allow for comparison to the King of Jericho’s envoy, resulting in a negative portrayal. This is an example of what Fokkelman calls “the dialectics of similarity and difference” (J.P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative* [Louisville: Westminster, 2000], 112–122).

³⁹ Furthermore, Fensham shows that the breaking of bread and sharing of provisions is an integral element of ratifying a treaty. It is natural to assume that Micah’s hosting of the Danite spies (18:2–6) would involve the sharing of a meal, which could be compared to Rahab’s own hospitality and the more explicit covenant between herself and the spies. Thus, the Danites

The collocation of verbal connections between Josh and Judg within this pericope raises the question, what is one to make of the five spies? To answer this question adequately, a brief acknowledgement of the spy narrative in Numbers 13 is necessary because it provides a broader analogical network from which to interpret. Numbers 13 makes explicit mention of 12 spies, each representing a tribe of Israel (Num 13:2). Yet only two of these spies, Joshua and Caleb exhibit trust in God’s land-promise. About Joshua’s choice to send only two spies to Jericho (Josh 2:1), Hall and Harstad both argue that the number may find correspondence to the number of faithful spies in Israel’s previous reconnaissance mission.⁴⁰ Joshua has whittled down the candidates to two faithful spies intending to avoid Israel’s previous failure. With such stress placed on the number of spies in both Num and Josh, one would expect the five Danite spies to also have symbolic value.⁴¹

Throughout Judg, Israel’s behavior provokes God’s punishment through the oppression of local Canaanites. Yet, Judg 17 is the first time an Israelite oppressor is absent (though the Philistines lurk in the proverbial shadows).⁴² Who are the enemies of chapters 17–18? As Israel deteriorates and becomes increasingly Canaanite the very number of spies sent out to reconnoiter the land of a helpless victim is commensurate with the number of wicked Philistine lords oppressing Israel. The number of spies representing the Danites announces their status as Israel’s enemy. Judg 16:5 mentions the

are at least portrayed as breaking cultural mores by robbing their previous host (18:14–20), whereas Joshua’s spies keep their word by rescuing Rahab and her family (Josh 6:17, 22–25). Fensham, “The Treaty,” 98.

⁴⁰ Adolph L. Harstad, *Joshua* (Saint Louis: Concordia House, 2004), 326; Sarah Leihar Hall, *Conquering Character: The Characterization of Joshua in Joshua 1-11* LHBOTS 512 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 30.

⁴¹ Thus, the research here disagrees with Malamat who describes the number of spies in Judges 18 as “obscure” and of which “no basis can be found,” (Abraham Malamat, “Danite Migration and the Pan-Israelite Exodus-Conquest: A Biblical Narrative Pattern,” *Bib* 51 [1970]: 1–16).

⁴² Judg 1 and Judg 3 depict Adoni-Bezek and the king of Mesopotamia as immediate threats, respectively. Chapters 6–8, the Midianites and Amalekites, Chapters 10–12, the Ammonites, Chapters 13–16, the Philistines. The Philistines represent the implicit threat, but this conflict does not take center stage until 1 Sam. See Stephen B. Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 50, 63–64.

“lords of the Philistines” (סרני פלשתים) as those who entice Delilah with the now infamous 1100 shekels of silver, and seven passages in Judges refer to specifically five lords (סרן) of the Philistines. All but one of these references (3:3) are found in chapter 16 immediately before the book’s epilogue.⁴³ At first the five Philistine lords oppress the weak Israelites (Judg 3:3–4; 10:7), and now the five Danite (read: Israelite) spies go on a reconnaissance mission of their own and attack their fellow countrymen, filling the conceptual space of the evil Philistines.

In summation, the data lends itself to Block’s and Wong’s theses of gradual moral disintegration within the book of Judges. The proximity of the Philistine threat in Judg 13–16, the consistent numbering of exactly five Philistine lords (סרן), and obvious intertextual analogies between the Jericho and Micah pericopes suggest that the narrator chose five as the number of spies to further the book’s theme of moral-unraveling.

MICAH’S OFFER TO THE LEVITE

The symbolic value of Micah’s offer to the Levite is dependent upon the consensus that Moses’s lifespan holds symbolic significance, and Joshua’s, by extension, does too. Deuteronomy 34:7 states that Moses lived for 120 years generating various symbolic explanations for this unusually round number.⁴⁴

⁴³ Judg 3:3; 16:5, 8, 18, 23, 27, 30. 1 Sam 6 makes explicit mention of the five Philistine rulers who are to make “five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines” (6:4) as a guilt offering. 1 Sam 6:17–18 describes the golden tumors as representing each of the five Philistine cities. The root סרן is used 21 times in the HB and always refers to the rulers of the Philistines.

⁴⁴ Cairns states that “40 years” indicates a complete generation as indicated by the lives of “Eli, David, Solomon, Joash, and Moses” and therefore “three times forty years may be symbolic of his preeminence.” (Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 271). Moreover, he takes Genesis 6:3 as evidence of God’s capping the individual lifespan of any given person at 120 years, and therefore indicating that Moses’s “full life of service had been under the careful watch of God and was now complete,” (*Word and Presence*, 453). Hall summarizes that in ancient Syria, the ideal lifespan was 120, observing Moses’s life as neatly broken into three 40-year spans, as “he was forty when he fled Egypt, eighty at the time of the Exodus” and 120 at the time of his death (Gary Harlan Hall, *Deuteronomy*, The College Press NIV Commentary [Joplin College: College Press, 2000], 453). Lundbom describes the Sumerian tale of Enlil and Namzitarra which mentions a lifespan of 120 years like Hall’s interpretation of Genesis 6:3 (Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 829).

Regardless of the exact explanation, if Moses’s life span contains any significance at all, then it is likely that Joshua’s lifespan is also significant. For example, Kitchen argues that Joshua’s lifespan of 110 years is a polemic against the Egyptian ideal of the same number.⁴⁵ While such a polemical argument could be made based upon Egypt’s dominance within the Exodus story and Joshua’s conquest, this argument does not offer a comprehensive picture of the number’s significance.

Micah, hoping to acquire God’s blessing through a personal Levite, offers the wayfarer “10 shekels of silver each year” (לימים אתן לך עשרת כסף) as a salary (Judg 17:10). This 10 shekel salary is best explained by a symbolic relationship mediated by Joshua’s life span, 110 years, and the 1100 shekels of idolatry that begin the pericope.⁴⁶ A yearly salary of 10 shekels offered to the wandering Levite multiplied by each year of Joshua’s successful and obedient life of 110 years amounts to the 1100 shekels of silver, representing a symbolic *inversion* of Joshua’s success.⁴⁷ The book of Joshua portrays the conquest in triumphant fashion; not so for the book of Judges. Along with a general summary of the sin of the people and their increasing failure to continue Joshua’s systematic conquest of Canaan, the people are depicted as succumbing to Joshua’s dire warning—“if you transgress the covenant . . . then the anger of YHWH will be kindled against you” (Josh 23:16). Thus, it is plausible to conceptualize Joshua’s success as becoming inverted through the serialized failures catalogued in Judges.⁴⁸

To summarize, Joshua’s lifespan presented in both Josh and Judg combined with the rarity of 1100 shekels of silver, provides a matrix in which a 10 shekel salary can be interpreted, while upholding the enduring theme

⁴⁵ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 351.

⁴⁶ “10 shekels” (עשרת כסף) occurs four other times in the Hebrew Bible—a rare construction.

⁴⁷ Remembering Frolov’s quote: “given that the number is not round and does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the correlation cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence” (Frolov, *Judges*, 282). Meir Bar-Ilan’s numerical symbolism also obtains.

⁴⁸ Even Jericho, arguably Joshua’s most memorable success, is reversed as the Ammonites and Amalekites recapture it upon his death (Judg 3:13).

Israel's "Canaanization" and "progressive deterioration."⁴⁹ The 10 shekel salary, presumably bankrolled through the sum originally promised to YHWH (Judg 17:3), emphasizes the futility of Israel's transient success under Joshua, as each year of his life is symbolically compromised and reversed.⁵⁰

600 DANITES

The last number for consideration is 600 Danites. Frolov states a common perspective that the number is "evocative of the six hundred-thousand-foot soldiers" of Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 11:21.⁵¹ If this is the sole allusion at play, one is left wondering why the author of Judges 18 chose איש to denote "men" rather than אלף, to denote "thousand" or "military unit,"⁵² which are used in both Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 11:21 (שש מאות אלף). Hypothetically, the author could have chosen six thousand (ששת אלפים) to allude to the intertexts of Exod and Num via אלף, while retaining a small number to describe the Danite thugs. The more likely proposal offered in this section makes sense of this objection, preserves the obvious Exodus allusion, all while providing a stronger literary connection within the book of Judges.⁵³

⁴⁹ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, lii.

⁵⁰ Moreover, the very placement of Joshua's death in the macrostructure of Judg demands attention. Wong notes that there are various affinities between the prologue and epilogue of Judg that are unique to the rest of the book. These include Caleb's promised marriage to Othniel contrasted with the Benjaminites theft of wives, similar "oracular consultations" concerning which tribe shall be first to engage in battle, and חרם properly implemented against Hormah (1:17) and improperly implemented against Jabesh-Gilead (21:11) (Wong, *Compositional Strategy*, 27–78). Pertinent to the present study is the presence of the numeral 110 which is only found between these two units, with Joshua's death and lifespan noted three separate times in Judg 1:1; 2:8, 21. Therefore, one can perceive Joshua's lifespan too being mentioned in the epilogue by means of mathematical relationship between 10 and 1100.

⁵¹ Frolov, *Judges*, 282. Webb concurs, believing the 600 Danite soldiers are an ironic play on the 600,000 men from Exodus and Numbers (Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 334–335). Malamat too views the 600,000 as an important shared location between the Danite migration and the Exodus. ("Danite Migration," 52).

⁵² For a brief synopsis of translational values of אלף see Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 199.

⁵³ Schulz calls the repeated mention of the 600 Danite men "überflüssig und deplatziert." Thus, she not only casts doubt on its original placement, but also shows her attempt to make sense of potential discrepancies between the Samson cycle and the epilogue "um die Nordwanderung der Daniten auf 600 Männer zu begrenzen" (Sarah Schulz, *Die Anhänge Zum Richterbuch: Eine kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Ri 17-21*, BZAW 477 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016], 178). While this is a legitimate concern, I concur with Brettler that Judg's

Judg 3:31 introduces Shamgar, whose heroism is given one verse. Shamgar’s role is brief, but the facts gleaned from his story fit all too well with the Philistine/Samson context we have come to expect. First, Shamgar is a wanderer lacking an explicit tribal designation as are the Danites and Samson who become wanderers in their own right.⁵⁴ Second, Shamgar slaughters a group of Philistines, as does Samson. Third, Shamgar’s implement of destruction, an “ox goad” can be compared to Samson’s “jawbone of a donkey” (Judg 3:31; 15:16). The former is sharp tool used to herd livestock and Samson employs a blunt bone from a similar beast of burden for his own massacre. The intensification of weaponry highlights the savagery of Samson’s carnage while enhancing the theme of the book’s progressive deterioration. Fourth, it is attested that Shamgar’s name is of Hurrian origin meaning “Shimige has given” in reference to the Hurrian sun-god.⁵⁵ Likewise, “Samson” derived from the root for “sun” (שמש) displays a connection between the two characters.⁵⁶

Still, why should one care about Shamgar? Like the logic of five Danite spies, the “progressive deterioration”⁵⁷ of Israel approaches its nadir as Israel begins to act like those Philistines who were once Shamgar’s enemies in Judges 3:31 (cf. 3:3). Shamgar, a savior of Israel slaughters 600 Philistines, a group of oppressors attempting to seize what God had designated for Israel. Contrastively, 600 Danites slaughter countless citizens of Laish and *take* their “spacious land” after threatening the life of an Israelite and his house (Judg 18:25).⁵⁸

“final shape seems to reflect shaping toward particular goals” (Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 104, 109–116). Brettler makes the point that the seemingly disparate material is subservient to a greater bookish goal, which, from his perspective, is ultimately political.

⁵⁴ Note the anagram of Shamgar (שמגר) with Gershom (גרשם) derived from “sojourner.” Jonathan, Moses’s grandson is also described as “sojourning” in Judg 17:7–9 three times, which includes the construction שם גר graphically identical to Gershom (גרשם).

⁵⁵ Karel van der Toorn, “Shamgar,” *DDD* 773–774.

⁵⁶ D.E. Aune, “Heracles,” *DDD* 402–405.

⁵⁷ Wong, *Compositional Strategy*, 249.

⁵⁸ Note “Beth Rehob” (לביית רחוב) (Judg 18:28) and “spacious land” (והארץ רחבת) and the implicit presence of ‘Rahab’s house’ in Joshua 2:1; 6:25 (“Rahab’s House” is not explicit in the text, but the similarities between the stories presently offered would be enough for an ideal reader to draw such a parallel).

Through intertextual markers, the author denounces the Danite's conquest. Ezekiel 38:11 makes note that it is an "evil scheme" to attack "quiet people who dwell securely" (השקטים ישבי לבטח). The text uses the same descriptors for Laish: "unsuspecting" (בטח, Judg 18:7, 10, 27) and "quiet" (שקט, Judg 18:7, 27).⁵⁹ Also, Laish is "far from the Sidonians" (ורחוקים המה מצדונים, Judg 18:7). Deuteronomy 20:10–15, describing a proper הָרֵם, indicates that all those "distant" (הרחקת) are to be given an offer of peace, which is absent in the conquest of Laish.⁶⁰

The "five lords of the Philistines" mentioned briefly in Judges 3:13 are not integral characters within the book until the Samson cycle (see above), save their run-in with Shamgar.⁶¹ This brief and proleptic reference to a Philistine threat is related to the 600 Danite spies and illuminates a narrative logic nearly spanning the entire book.⁶² Whereas on first blush the reference to the 600 Philistines killed by Shamgar may seem gratuitous, the event

⁵⁹ These two nouns are found together in five places within the Hebrew Bible: Judg 18:7, 27; Isa 30:15, 32:17; and Ezek 38:11. The passages in Isa are positive in nature. The first is an oracle concerning Israel who instead of receiving God's promise of "quietness and trust," flee to Egypt for refuge. The second concerns the arrival of a king who will rule in righteousness in which Israel will be given "secure and quiet" dwellings.

⁶⁰ Lastly, the rebuilding of Laish is juxtaposed with Jericho. Upon the destruction of Jericho, Joshua pronounces a curse upon whoever "rebuilds" Jericho, at the cost of their firstborn (Josh 6:26). Contrastively, Laish, after being destroyed is immediately rebuilt, after the threat of death by those "bitter men" (Judg 18:25) against Micah. Moreover, the epilogue and prologue share a rebuilding motif as the man at Luz, portrayed as another Rahab, leads the spies of Joseph into the city. After the destruction of the city, the singular man who was permitted to live rebuilds Luz in a different location. Harkening back to Wong's contention that the prologue and epilogue are intimately structured, a dichotomy is created between Hormah and Laish. While Hormah, a Canaanite city is obediently subjected to the "ban" (חרם, Judg 1:17) at the beginning of Judg, Laish, filled with "unsuspecting" people (Judg 18:7, 10, 27 לבטח) is disobediently subjected to the ban (לפי הרב הכה . . . , Judg 18:27). Wong argues for a conceptual overlap between הרם and לפי הרב הכה (Wong, *Compositional Strategy*, 35).

⁶¹ Scherer recognizes the obvious impetus of the difference in placement: "In einem Teil der Septuagintaüberlieferung wurde aus editorischen Gründen die Schamgarnotiz aus Jdc 3,31 ans Ende von Jdc 16,31 verlagert. Man hielt diesen Eingriff wegen der Ähnlichkeit der Taten Schamgars und Simsons...und weil in beiden Fällen die Philister als Gegner erscheinen für angebracht" (Andreas Scherer, "Simson und Schamgar: Zur Frage nach der ursprünglichen Position der Schamgarnotiz im Richterbuch," *ZAW* 114 [2002]: 106–109).

⁶² This appears to fit within Sternberg's compositional logic argument, in which a proleptic reference comes to its crescendo later in the narrative. With such a brief mention of Shamgar, his Philistine enemy, and the gradual moral impoverishment of Israel an ideal reader would be aware of such logic. See Sternberg, *Poetics*, 132. For discussion regarding book-spanning gaps see Sternberg, *Poetics*, 245.

proleptically signals the looming Philistine threat present in Judges and Samuel. The Danites total 600 because the Canaanization of Israel is nearly complete as they slowly transform into the very people they were called to destroy.

CONCLUSION

Judg 17–18 is properly interpreted when analyzed alongside Josh 2–7 and the context of Judg. Furthermore, the explanatory power of Block’s “Canaanization” and Wong’s “progressive deterioration” allow the numbers of Judges to act as interpretive signposts. The 1100 shekels, an easily accessible test case, demonstrates the possibility of numerical significance. When applied to Judg 17–18, Achan’s silver is juxtaposed with Micah and his mother’s silver and demands the reader’s disapproval of the latter’s idolatrous cult. The five Danite spies find their analog in the five leaders (סרן) of the Philistines explained by Israel’s gradual Canaanization, and the importance of the number of spies in both Num 13 and Josh 2. Ten shekels as salary for the wayward Levite multiplied by each year of Joshua’s successful and obedient life of 110 years represents the symbolic completion of Israel’s sin and the reversal of Joshua’s victorious conquest portrayed in the book of Joshua, while also hearkening back to the 1100 shekels of silver beginning the pericope. Lastly, the unassuming 600 Danites represent an inversion of Shamgar and his 600 Philistines. The tribeless Shamgar kills 600 Philistines and the 600 Danites threaten Israelites and slaughter innocents.

While few deny various accurate historical details within the former prophets, it is implausible that biblical narratives were crafted to relate historical events using modern historiographical methods and goals.⁶³ This fact, combined with the ubiquity of analogy and the various rhetorical goals posited for Judg (and the Hebrew Bible, generally) show just how imaginative

⁶³ Marc Zvi Brettler, “The Hebrew Bible and History,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, ed. Stephen B. Chapman and Marvin Sweeney (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), 108–125.

the book of Judges is.⁶⁴ Though this article's argumentation has not precluded historicity, if this article has done its job, the symbolic function of the numbers in these stories has become obvious. One is left wondering where history ends, and symbolism, broadly construed, begins. For instance, when the probability that exactly 600 Philistines died at the hands of Shamgar and 600 Danites attacked Laish is considered, it becomes obvious that Judg contains innumerable details that are historically unlikely. But, if the goal of biblical narrative is not to engage in modern historiography, one is free to seek out other impetuses for the creation of this literature. While positing historicity as the sole goal of biblical narrative is left wanting, what can be corroborated as a valid form of interpretation is the enduring, rhetorical, symbolic significance of these stories.⁶⁵ An enhanced awareness of these symbolic elements, partially served by analogies crafted using dense networks of intertextual resources, increases one's sensitivity to the rich complexity of these narratives irrespective of their historical veracity.

⁶⁴ See Deryn Guest, "Judging YHWH in the Book of Judges" in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), 180–184.

⁶⁵ Berman, "But is it 'History?'," 1–27. "Symbolic" here is broadly defined. Consider various sub-genres of narrative which naturally contain *symbolic* elements: etiologies, entertainment, polemic, memory consolidation, didactic stories, etc.