

DOUBLE DELIVERANCE: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF JUDGES 3: 12-30 ELISHA KWABENA MARFO¹

ABSTRACT

The study analyses the narrative of Judges 3:12-30 with special emphasis on the double deliverance of God. The narrative analysis shows that God acts by delivering Israel twice; to the hands of the Moabites and out of the hands of the Moabites. The story tells that God watches carefully and works through people the deliverance of His people. Through a quite overt reader elevating storytelling, the narrator of Judges 3:12-30 gives clues to the reader that there may be surprises. The reader who forgets this even handed approach will likely be caught by the surprise and humour, not unlike the surprise of the servants of Eglon when they discovered that their lord and king is dead.

INTRODUCTION

While scholarly interest in the Old Testaments has long centered on diachronic source criticism as well as the more recent synchronic criticism,² narrative analysis of the various narrative portions of the Old Testament, particularly the Book of Judges, has largely been relegated to the background. Research works on the book of Judges is widespread and thorough mostly directed toward exegetical studies. A general review of the biblical book does not focus specifically on narrative analysis in the literature which is our main focus. Therefore, this study is selective in nature, briefly focusing on the narrative analysis of Judges 3:12-30. This will bring out the significance of narrative analysis in the Old Testament and the book of Judges in particular.

James L. Resseguie argues that narrative criticism considers as literature how the biblical text works.³ To him, the content, rhetorical and structure of the literature must be analyzed as a complete whole. The main concern in narrative analysis is with the literariness of the biblical narratives. He further highlights three usefulness of narrative analysis that give the methodology its strength. They include “(1) Narrative criticism view the text as a whole, (2) narrative criticism examines the complexities and nuances of a text through close readings, (3) narrative criticism emphasizes the effects of a story on the reader.”⁴

The Hebrew bible contains several narratives. The stories are commonly seen as just accounts but Old Testament narratives are not just stories with reference to individuals who lived in Old Testament period. They are first and foremost stories concerning what God did to and through those peoples and individuals. The narratives are classified into two complexes which are the five books of the Torah; often referred to as the Law, the historical writing from the beginning of the world to the moment when God choose the people of Israel and the people of Israel about to enter into the promise land.⁵ The other complex is the Early Prophets in the Jewish canon which is a composition of three pairs of books: the books of

¹ ELISHA KWABENA MARFO is affiliated to the School of Theology and Missions Valley View University, Accra, Ghana. Elisha holds a Master of Arts in Old Testament from Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines, where he is currently a PhD candidate specializing in Old Testament languages and exegesis.

² W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, Rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); George F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1895); Daniel Kwame Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3: A Textlinguistic Analysis* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM, 2010), 2-6.

³ James L. Resseguie, *Narrative criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 18-20. See also Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic, 1981), 3-10.

⁴ Resseguie, *Narrative criticism*, 38-40

⁵ J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading the Biblical Narrative: A Practical Guide* (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, Deo, 1999), 1-2.

Joshua and Judges, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, and the books of 1 and 2 kings.⁶ The book of Judges describes the arrival and settling down of the tribal community.⁷ In the narratives of the book of Judges, “the alteration of word and deed and the division into scenes . . . the difference between the sentences of the narrator himself in which he reports or describes, and direct speech which is particularly dominant in certain section”⁸ of the book makes it worth analysing.

The purpose of this study is to determine the import of the story in Judge 3:12-30 in the context through narrative analysis and to consider its meaning to the reader. The study will help a better reading and understanding of the passage to unleash the power of biblical stories for personal and social transformation. The methodology employed in this study is basically narrative analysis. The text of Judges 3:12-30 stands as the primary source for this research.

BACKGROUND OF JUDGES

Historical Setting of Judges

The Book of Judges addresses itself with the period from the death of Joshua (cf. Judges 1:1) until just before the rise of Samuel, to the beginning of the monarchy with Saul, a period of about three hundred years. A working date would be around 1380–1045 BC. It therefore covers a period of about 300-350 years.⁹ Howard suggest that “in Canaan this was a time during which there was a radical drop in the population of major centers and an increase in one-period sites in outlying areas—in the hill country and desert fringe areas.”¹⁰ Two technological advances of the period were the development of iron tools and weapons and of plastered cisterns for water storage.¹¹ The Philistines appear as a major group along the Mediterranean coast of Canaan. This period would correspond to the Late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age in archaeological dating.¹² The Book of Joshua had ended on a fairly optimistic note. The Promised Land was predominantly in the control of Israel (cf. Joshua 21:45; 22:4, 6; 23:14; 24:13, 28). However, Joshua also indicates that the conquest was incomplete (cf. Joshua 9:14-15; 16:10; 17:12-18; 19:47; 23:7, 12-13; 24:23). Judges is not the story of the completion of the conquest, but rather, Israel’s failure to live according to the covenant within the land.¹³

The internal disintegration of Israel is not her only threat. Both Canaanites within (e.g., Jabin and Philistines) and nations outside the land (e.g., Moab, Midian, and Ammon) threatened Israel. The major powers in the region (i.e., Egypt and the Hittites) apparently played a minor role in relation to Israel during this period. The Egyptians and Hittites were locked in a power struggle and appear to be further concerned with the important coastal trade routes which were not controlled by Israel, but rather the Philistines. Politically it is imperative to note that Judges does not point out a crisis with the larger nations oppressing Israel.¹⁴ It was the minor nations/states closely surrounding Israel that God used for disciplinary situations, predominantly the Philistines. The Lord had fortunately organized the international prospect for the safe passage of His people into the Promised Land. Religiously, there was an intricate and urbanized system

⁶ Fokkelman, *Reading the Biblical Narrative*, 1-2.

⁷ James D. Martin, *The Book of Judges*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 50.

⁸ Fokkelman, *Reading the Biblical Narrative*, 8.

⁹ David M. Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1993), 77-78.

¹⁰ Howard, *An Introduction*, 104.

¹¹ Howard, *An Introduction*, 104.

¹² Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 23.

¹³ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 23.

¹⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987, 1996), 151. See also Leon J. Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 71-116.

circling around fertility rites, sensuality, and materialism. There is a great deal confirmation of the effect of this arrangement on Israelite religion.¹⁵

Genre in the Book of Judges

It must be noted that though scholars have variously understood the genre of the book of Judges, some of these views are simply stated or assumed with no supporting evidence from the text. Where supporting evidence is given, the parameters for genre classification do not seem to be clearly provided. Of the many views relating to the genre of Judges 3:12-30, two seem to be pivotal: poetry and prose/narrative. However, upon a critical examination of the biblical text one will come to the realization and conclusion that the genre of the book of Judges is a biblical narrative. Leland Rylen affirms that “the literary genre of the book of Judges is (Biblical) narrative.”¹⁶ It can be attested that the book of judges is a narrative piece and the book is having all the feature of a narrative which includes a narrator, a scene, a plot, major and minor character.

The Structure in the Book of Judges

Several structures for the book of Judges have been proposed by scholars.¹⁷ Most of these structures generally recognizes that Judges can be divided into three major sections: (1) a prologue (1:1–3:6), (2) a central body containing stories of individual judges (3:7–16:31), and (3) an epilogue (17:1–21:25).¹⁸ Dale Sumner DeWitt in his dissertation suggests a chiasmic structure of the book of Judges, as follows:¹⁹

- A Introduction, Part 1 (1:1-2:5)
- B Introduction, Part 11 (2:6-3:6)
- C Othniel Narrative (3:7-11)
- D Ehud Narrative (3:12-31)
- E Deborah-Barak Narrative (4:1-5:31)
- F Gideon Narrative (6:1-8:32)
- E' Abimelech Narrative (8:33-10:5)
- D' Jephthah Narrative (10:6-12:15)
- C' Samson Narrative (13:1-16:31)
- B' Epilogue, Part 1(17:1-18:31)
- A' Epilogue, Part 11(19:1-21:25)

Literary Context of the Book of Judges

¹⁵ Howard, *An Introduction*, 106-107.

¹⁶ Leland Ryken. *How to Read the Bible as Literature: and Get More Out of It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 84. See also Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2008), 1-18; Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 105–43.

¹⁷ Marc Brettler, “The Book of Judges: Literature of Politics,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 395-418; Michael L. Barre, “The Meaning of PRSDN in Judges 3: 22,” *VT* 41 (1991): 1-11.

¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 99; A. D H. Mayes, *Judges: Old Testament Guide* (Sheffield, U.K: JSOT Press, 1985), 13-21.

¹⁹ Dale Sumner DeWitt, "The Jephthah Traditions: A Rhetorical and Literary Study in the Deuteronomistic History" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987), 222-28. See also J. Paul Tanner, “The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (594) (1992): 146-161; David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible I*, 2d ed., JSOT Supplement Series 7 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1986), 98-101.

The book of Judges is placed within twenty-one chapters. Many scholars place the book of Judges as part of the “Deuteronomistic History”²⁰ that begins in the last book of the Torah and ending with the second book of Kings. Judges is Israel’s failure to live according to the covenant within the land. The book also presents the reign of the people of Israel on the land of Canaan—the Promised Land. Judges describes in excruciating detail the moral and spiritual disintegration of Israel and its inevitable consequences.²¹ The book is focused on the reward for good and divine things and punishment to those who rebel against God. The beginning of the book is a report of the conquest of Canaan (1:1-2:5) and a characterization of the epoch of the judges (2:6-3:6). The central portion of the book consists of narratives about the judges. The book ends with the story about the migration of the tribe of Dan to the north (Chaps 17-18) and about the sins of the Benjaminites (chaps 19-21).

Immediate Literary Context

Israel had come out of captivity Cushan-rishanaim king of Aram for doing evil in the sight of the Lord. They worshiped Baal and Asherahs, and rejected God (Judges 3: 7-8) indicating their intensity of the immorality of the people of Israel. After repenting and crying upon God for help (Judges 3: 9), God raised up Othniel through whom He delivered Israel from the captivity under Aram (Judges 3: 9-10). After the death of Othniel, the people of Israel again did evil in the sight of God. And the narrative under consideration commences. This is the story of Ehud and Eglon. Although some scholars view the Ehud story as satirical,²² all the features of the text indicates that the “Ehud’s story is rhythmical in large parts. But it is neither poetry nor simple prose. It is narrative art.”²³

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Narrative Setting

The narrative setting of Judges 3:12-30 are numerous and diverse, and many are symbolic. The striking features of the spatial, temporal, and sphere background in this story is their specificity. The locale and times in the story are clearly pinpointed. The events occurred in a specific geographical region with much emphasis on the palace of Eglon, the king of Moab. These setting contribute to the appreciation of the character traits of the characters and the development of the plot. The following are especially important for understanding the story:

1. Spatial (Moab, The city of Palms Israel, Gilgal, Seirah, The hill country of Ephraim, Upper room, Porch, The fords, Jordan, Moab, The land of Moab)
2. Temporal (Again, After, 18 years, 80 years, Until v. 25, Until v. , That day v. 30)
3. Sphere (Ammonites, Amalekites, Benjaminite, Moabites, Israel, Tribute, King, Warriors, The cool chamber, Embarrassment, Idols/caved images)

²⁰ Y. Hoffman, “The Deuteronomist and Exile,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature*, ed. J. Milgrom, D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 105-182. See also J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1981), 10-33.

²¹ Victor Matthews observes that, “Every nation has its ‘wild’ period, a time that some would like to forget, but that was very important in the development of the people into a nation.” Victor Harold Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, ed. Bill T. Arnold, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

²² C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1986), 447, define satire as “A literary manner that blends a critical attitude with humour for the purpose of improving human institutions or humanity.”

²³ Robert G. Boling, *Judges An Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: NY, Doubleday, 1975), 85

Spatial

The narrator begins the narrative as “again Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” and God giving power to Eglon, the king of Moab. Eglon then convinced Ammonites and Amalekites to join him in fighting Israel. This progression places the story in a geographical or spatial locale of Moab, Ammon, and Amelak which highlights the social-ethnic nature of this territory. Geographically these nations are the surrounding territories with Israel, and socially and ethnically it is a foreign region to Israel.

The city of Palms is apparently Jericho²⁴ although some assert that it would be a place at Tammam southwest of the Dead Sea.²⁵ In the narrative this place is an area where the Israelites occupied until their defeat by Eglon. Eglon then took control over this land. The city of palms has been referred to in the Old Testament severally and in all it refers to Jericho (cf. Deuteronomy 34:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:15).

In the narrative Israel as a nation is place in a situation of been an enemy not to only one nation but to a coalition formed by Eglon using a military force. Ammonites are the northern neighbours of Moab while Amalekites are a nomadic group based in Edom but wandering in various places.²⁶

Gilgal is a spatial setting which contributes to the understanding of the narrative. Ehud made a return to the king’s palace upon reaching here. He also dismissed the people with whom they presented the tribute of the people of Israel to Eglon. It can be seen as a place of repentance, a place where Ehad had a change of mind to assassinate Eglon.

Seirah is a town mentioned in Ugaritic materials that geographers are yet to locate. Anson F. Rainey argues that it is not a town but a geographical feature, “the woody hills.”²⁷ However, the narrative shows that this is a town or place where Ehad gathered the troops to fight the Moabites. This assertion favours a town and it play significant role in the geographical setting of the narrative.

The hill country of Ephraim is a generic geographical term for the entire block of the hills that included the territory of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.²⁸ Hills are literally the earth reaching to the heavens and are good place for divine and human encounter.²⁹ It can be a place of prayer where God’s people commune with Him. It can also be a place of refuge where God provides a sanctuary in times of distress.³⁰ Therefore Ehad calling the people of Israel at the hill country of Ephraim was a sign that they have commune with God through prayers and seeking refuge in the Lord in their oppression over Eglon.

Another spatial setting in the narrative is seen in a palace setting where “cool upper room” of the king of Moab, Eglon, is referred to severally. Also Ehad makes his escape from the palace after his murder of Eglon through the “porch.” There are clear markers in the narrative that the spatial background or settings here is the palace of Eglon. This is also the place where Eglon receives tributes from his subjects including Israel.

The fords of the Jordan are seen as a stronghold of the Moabites. The People of Israel seized upon Ehad’s murder of Eglon. The fords are spatial settings in the narrative. It is also seen as the centre of the two nations, that is, Israel and Moab or a place of escape for the Moabites. In the narrative, when the people of Israel captured the fords, no Moabite was able to escape without been killed.

²⁴ Frank E. Gaebelain, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 398-399.

²⁵ Trent Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 70.

²⁶ Butler, *Judges*, 69.

²⁷ Anson F. Rainey and Steven R. Notley, *Sacred Bridges: Carta’s Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem, Israel: Carta, 2005), 137.

²⁸ Butler, *Judges*, 72

²⁹ Resseguie, *Narrative criticism*, 98.

³⁰ Resseguie, *Narrative criticism*, 99.

Temporal

The primary setting of Judges 3:12-30 is temporal, “again,”³¹ that marks the beginning of the periscope. It serves as a connection between a previous activity or behaviour of the people of Israel to this narrative, that is, the evil that Israel did in the sight of the Lord. In verse 13 another temporal setting “after” is used by the narrator. Its usage is to show that Eglon did not attack the people of Israel until God had delivered the people of Israel to him. It was “after” God’s deliverance of the people of Israel to him that Eglon convinced the Ammonites and Amalekites to join forces with him to attack and defeat the people of Israel.

Temporal settings with respect to duration (18 years and 80 years) are employed in the narrative to indicate the particular time frame that Israel served Eglon and the Moabites after their defeat by Eglon. The narrator pinpoint that it was 18 years, and for 80 years the land of Israel rested without war after the murder of Eglon and the defeat of the Moabites.

Sphere

Ammonites and Amalekites are used by the narrator as sphere setting in the narrative. The Ammonites are the descendants of Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot’s other daughter (cf. Genesis 19:36-38). The Amalekites, on the other hand, are descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin brother, the brother who sold his birth-right and was rejected by the Lord (cf. Genesis 25:19-34). These two groups of people or nations are considered as brothers to the people of Israel yet they joined forces with Eglon to defeat the people of Israel.

Benjaminite is a sphere setting we find in the narrative. They are members from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe and of the tribe from which king Saul will come.³² In the allotment of the lands to the various tribe of Israel Jericho was part of the allotment to the tribe of Benjamin. With reference to the city of palms and Jericho in the narrative shows that Moab was closer to the allotment of the Benjaminites (cf. Joshua 18:21). Ehud is described as a Benjaminite in the narrative. Benjamin means “son of the right hand.” So the narrator in a humorous way is describing Ehud as a “left-handed man” from the tribe of the “son of the right hand.”

Tribute is the present or gift that Israel sends to Eglon. Butler argues that the tribute “become a technical term in at least two spheres – politics and worship, where it represents a food offering.”³³ This sphere setting shows that Israel was doing two things to Eglon. First, it shows political allegiance to Eglon and the Moabites who have defeated them in a battle. Secondly, it shows that Israel was worshipping and paying homage to Eglon as their overlord. An irony can be drawn in the text with respect to the tribute Eglon is receiving. Eglon is pictured as a fatted calf, a fatted calf receiving a sacrifice from God’s people. He is growing fat and sleek not because the Moabites are feeding him well but rather because he is robbing God’s people of their presents or money.³⁴

Props

Several props are used by the narrator in the narrative which includes, a double-edged sword/sword/blade (vv. 16, 22-2x), cloths (v. 16), left hand (vv. 15, 21), throne (v. 20), right thigh (v. 16, 21), belly (v. 21, 22), doors to the upper room/doors (vv. 23, 24, 25-2x), carved images (vv. 19, 26), ram’s horn (v. 27), key (v. 25), and floor (v. 25).

³¹ Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 45–46, argues that the phrase means “continued to do” and not “again did,” since עוד would be used for “again.” This would imply that the former judge, in this case Othniel, had little or no impact on the people’s adherence to the covenant even though they had been freed from oppression.

³² Butler, *Judges*, 69.

³³ Butler, *Judges*, 70.

³⁴ Leon Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1975), 135.

A relationship can be drawn between the props and the characters which makes the narrative interesting. The throne, belly, doors to the upper room, and floor are associated with Eglon. The double edged sword, cloths, right thigh, left hand, and ram's horn are also associated with Ehud. And the key is associated with the servants of Eglon. These props help in the understanding of the narrative. The double-edged sword is shown to be 18 inches long. The sword had no crosspiece, for it sank completely into Eglon. Ehud bound it on his right thigh, so that it would be available to his left hand. It is also seen from the narrative that the double edged sword fits the belly perfectly. "The sword is specifically noted as two-edged, calling to mind Christ's two-edged sword, the Word of God (Ps. 45:3; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15)."³⁵

The ram's horn plays an important role in the narrative. In the life of the people of Israel sounding the ram's horn denotes several activities according to the situation of the time. In the book of Judges, it was used to gather the people together for battle, to celebrate the heroism of someone or to scare enemies. Gideon sounds the ram's horn to gather the troops for battle (Judges 6:34), and scare the Midianites into fleeing by having the people sound their ram's horns (Judges 7: 18-22). Ehud's usage of the ram's horn was in threefold: sending a signal, gathering of troops, and warning and warning up for battle.

Another prop used in the narrative is throne. Eglon stood up from the throne in his quest to know the secret message Ehud had for him. Throne signifies kingship, power, and authority. Eglon is shown as king of Moab who has power and authority even over Israel. Standing up from the throne probably can be said as the relinquishing of his authority and power.

Carved images serve as a prop in the narrative. They are monuments or landmarks. The reference to the carved image twice in the narrative (vv. 19, 26) indicates a point where Ehud could consider himself safe and for this reason can be conjectured that they were images that served as boundary between Moab and Israel.

The key is what the servants used to open the door to the cool upper room. The key probably is a flat piece of wood with pins on them that corresponded to the pins in a hollow bolt which is located inside the door. When key is inserted into the hollow bolt, the pins in the bolt were raised and the bolt could be removed.³⁶ In the narrative it is seen that using the key turns to open doors to surprises.

Characters

The narrative presents the following characters: God, Eglon, Ammonites, Amalekites, Ehud, People, Servants, Moabites and Israelites. It is generally accepted that in the biblical texts the narrator is reliable and omniscient, accurately reporting events and dialogue, and developing character.³⁷ The characters in the story have variously attributes that make the narrative come to life. The narrative opens with the narrator showing that Israel did evil in the sight of God and Him strengthening Eglon king of Moab to punish Israel (v. 12). We see God as a main character right from the beginning of the narrative. God is shown as punishing. He punishes Israel for doing evil against Him (v. 12). He is a God who does not want His people to mingle themselves with evil and therefore punishes anyone who goes contrary to His commandments. He punishes Israel by giving Eglon power over Israel (v. 12). Thus He delivered Israel to Eglon as punishment of their evil doing. God is also shown as comforting and forgiving. When Israel cried to Him for forgiveness He listens and forgives them. A. D. H. Mayes states perfectly that the "act of mercy in which Yahweh delivers Israel from the results of its own sin."³⁸ In His caring nature we are told God raise up Ehud as a deliverer for the people of Israel (v. 15).

³⁵ James B. Jordan, "Judges: God's War Against Humanism," *Geneva Ministries*, June 1985, 61.

³⁶ Frank E. Gaebel, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 400-401.

³⁷ Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship. New Testament Series (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 23-24.

³⁸ A. D. H. Mayes, *Judges: Old Testament Guides*, ed. R. N. Whybray (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1985), 21-22.

Eglon, king of Moab, is shown as a good negotiator and he has the ability to convince as well as power hungry. He convinces Ammonites and Amalekites to join forces with him to defeat Israel. He is also shown as a powerful person because he receives tributes from Israel (v. 13). This means that the people of Israel are his subjects and were obliged to return their tributes to him. He is also shown as a receptive and trustworthy person. He gives audience to Ehud when Ehud informed him of a secret message meant for him (v. 19). Eglon is deceived or lured into a trap by Ehud. And Eglon is shown falling into the trap of Ehud which landed him in his murder (vv. 20-22). He was interested in the secret message meant for him without knowing that it was the way to his end. And we are told of his death with him lying on the floor (v. 25).

The name Eglon means “young bull” or “fat calf.” We are told in the narrative that Eglon is “an extremely fat man.” The fatness of Eglon has received several scholarly discussions that are worth looking at. According to Jack M. Sasson, “Eglon is not exceedingly obese, as some would have it, but imposing (Josephus has him as handsome) stout and prominent man.”³⁹ However the narrative do not assert to these claims.

The Unique Use of the Cool Upper Room

The unique reference to the cool upper room of Eglon’s palace suggests that “Eglon’s palace had been at or near Jericho, where most of the year the only ‘cool place’ is on the roof.”⁴⁰ From the narrative, Ehud returns back to Eglon from Gilgal to deliver a secret message to him. Eglon is sitting in the “cool upper room” (v. 20). The cool upper room is used severally in the narrative (v. 23, 24, and 25) and a number of times in the Bible. References to the “cool upper room” always relates to “architectural feature - the upper chamber of a wall, a gate or a corner.”⁴¹ In this narrative it is referred to as “cool upper room” of the palace of Eglon where he receives tributes from his subjects. Halpern gives a layout plan and a three-dimensional schematic of the palace of Eglon showing the “cool upper room.”⁴² The palace plan aids us in understanding how Ehud exited the palace without any notice from the servant. But the question that is left to be answered and serves as a gap the narrative is why/how did Ehud know the palace so well?

Moabites are shown from the narrative that their existences depend on the existence of the king of Moab. We are told that about 10000 of them are killed by the people of Israel after Ehud murdered Eglon their king. They are Israel’s perpetual enemy.

Ammonites are told through the narrative to be team players. They are convinced by Eglon to join him in fighting to defeat the people of Israel (v. 13). Amalekites, through the narrative, we are told are also team players. They join forces with Eglon after they have been convinced by Eglon to fight against the people of Israel (v. 12).

Israel is shown to be wicked. The people of Israel “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (v. 12). This was a rebellion on the part of the people of Israel against God. They show repentance by crying out to the Lord. They show remorse for the wicked action and ask for forgiveness from the Lord (v. 15). Israel also show respect and pay homage to Eglon by sending their tribute through Ehud to him (vv. 15, 17). Israel is also shown to be powerful by the way they fought and killed about 10000 Moabites. We are told by the narrator that Moab became subjects to Israel and the land of Israel became peaceful for 80 years (v. 30). The Israelites are significant in the narrative because they cause the problem of doing evil in the sight of the Lord and they also help in the resolution of the problem by fight with Ehud to deliver Israel from the

³⁹ Jack M. Sasson, “Ethical Cultured Interpretation Judges,” in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershen Galil, Mark Geller and Allan Millards, *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 130 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 575.

⁴⁰ Boling, *Judges*, 86.

⁴¹ Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 105.

⁴² For a detail and comprehensive discussion on the palace of Eglon see Halpern, *The First Historians*, 108.

oppression of the Moab. Israel can be seen as wicked because “they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” It is seen that God expected them to be loyal and righteous by living a holy life to the Lord. Their repentance is shown when they “cried to the Lord.” Crying to the Lord may include confessing from their sins and refraining from sinning again. Although this is not told or shown by the narrator, it can be deducing from the phrase “they cried to the Lord.”

The People - the reader is blatantly told that they carried the tributes with Ehud, which indicates that they are serviceable. Ehud dismissed them after presenting the tribute which also indicates that they follow orders and they can be seen as the representative of the people of Israel who present the tribute to Eglon. Little is said about them in the narrative. After their dismissal by Ehud no reference is made to them again.

The servants are shown to be obedient to their king Eglon. When Eglon sends them out in order to have a private time with Ehud, they oblige and leave the presence of the king (v. 19). The servants are also shown to be concerned and sympathize with their king. They became worried about Eglon, their master, keeping so long in the cool upper room (v. 25). They feel they have neglected their king.

From the narrative Ehud is portrayed through telling that he is left-handed man, Benjaminite, and son of Gera (v. 15). After Israel’s crying to the lord Ehud is raised by God and he is declared a deliverer (v. 15). Ehud is shown as serviceable and a messenger. Israel sends tribute to Eglon through him (v. 15, 17). We are told he made a double-edged sword of 18 inches, a weapon he used in murdering Eglon (v. 16). Ehud is also shown to be cunning and crafty. The strategy or the plan he used in murdering Eglon depicts or reveals his craftiness and cunning nature (vv. 21-22). After the murdering of Eglon, we are told Ehud closed and locked the doors to the cool upper room chamber. His escape from the palace of Eglon back to Israel shows that Ehud is clever (v. 23, 26). The narrator tells us that Ehud is became the leader of Israel when sounded the ram’s horn to rally forces to fight the Moabites after the murder of Eglon (v. 27). Ehud can be seen as prepared to take every opportunity that comes his way to bring freedom to the people of Israel. The way he hides the double-edged sword he made under his cloths on his right thigh (v. 16). Ehud is viewed both positively as a “potent and unified heroic symbol, and negatively as sneaky, deceitful, and violent.”⁴³ Sasson quotes Josephus by arguing that “Ehud [is] a model of Jewish heroic opposition to tyranny. He is a trusted courtier who had real cause to turn against Eglon and when he strikes at his heart never at his belly, the confrontation lacks any touches that might cheapen Ehud’s act...Ehud is a ‘great scholar.’”⁴⁴ With Ehud’s acquaintance with Eglon and how he received audience with Eglon, Sasson argues that “Ehud became familiar with Eglon, and that by means of presents, with which he obtained his favour, and insinuated himself into his good opinion; whereby he was also beloved of those that were about the king.”⁴⁵ C. J. Goslinga summarizes the character of Ehud this way:

Ehud came forward to uphold the rights of God and to take vengeance on His behalf against the Moabites and their king, and it is in this light that his actions have to be judged. Even though the Moabites were the Lord’s instrument for punishing Israel, they still remained His enemies and had no right to occupy His sacred land and oppress His sacred people.⁴⁶

Ehud’s left-handedness brings life to the story and makes it interesting as well. The reference to it makes it to be considered as peculiar and unnatural. It can be seen that it might be that apparently it is Ehud’s left-handedness that made him to be allowed or gain access into the cool upper room of Eglon with having his hided double edged sword discovered. However, several theories on left-handedness of Ehud have been posited by scholars. In his address on the issue, Susan Niditch posits that Ehud “was crippled in

⁴³ Eric S. Christianson, “A Fistful of Shekels: Scrutinizing Ehud’s Entertaining Violence (Judges 3:12–30),” *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 1 (2003): 64, 73.

⁴⁴ Sasson, *Ethical Cultured Interpretation Judges*, 572.

⁴⁵ Sasson, *Ethical Cultured Interpretation Judges*, 573.

⁴⁶ C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, The Bible Students’ Commentary, trans. Ray Togtman (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968), 284.

his right hand.”⁴⁷ This means that Ehud could not use his right hand for any activity. Niditch sees the left-handedness of Ehud as an excellent warrior’s weapon against the right-handed majority. The left-handed were also seen as symbolic dark side in the traditional culture of Israel.⁴⁸ “Ehud’s ‘left-handedness’ identifies him as a killer, who can smuggle a dagger under his garment into the presence of the Moabite king.”⁴⁹ Geoffery P. Miller in his interpretation on the left-handedness states:

Ehud . . . portrayed as suffering from the physical defect of being left-handed, [a] dysfunctional right hand in those days was almost certainly taken as a token of improper hygiene and of sexual deviance. . . . By sending on the men carrying the tributes, Ehud is telling Eglon that he wants to see him in private, i.e. he is offering a homosexual liason.⁵⁰

The narrative does not espouse such idea of sexual deviance. Any attempt to impose this on the narrative will rather the narrative’s theme and purpose insignificant. It can therefore be stated that the servants of Eglon would frisk Ehud on the left, expecting him to draw his sword with the right hand. So Ehud’s left-handed allowed for his deception and tricking.

From the narrative we can see that Ehud’s left-handedness was not a defect or a sexual deviance. It served as an advantage for him in murdering Eglon. The servant probably searched Ehud from his left thigh since that is the normal place every soldier/warrior place his/her weapon/sword and upon finding nothing allow him entry to the king’s palace to present the tributes of Israel. From the Old Testament perspective, God would not raise up a homosexual to lead His people. A sin He hates and punishes people who indulge in as is seen in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Genesis 19: 1-21). Also in His commandments to the Israelites He employed them to shun it and those who went contrary to the commands were put to death (cf. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

Character Traits of Ehud and Eglon

There is a dramatized irony existing between the actions of Ehud and Eglon, the two most predominantly mentioned characters who contrast one with another. From the narrative, it is seen that Ehud is venerated and Eglon is embarrassed. Mayes in his description of Ehud and Eglon states that “Ehud [is] the brave and cunning warrior [and] Eglon, the fat and stupid king of Moab.”⁵¹ Also in his description of the two characters, Matthew Henry refer to Eglon as “a fat unwieldy man” who “fell like a fatted calf, by the knife, as acceptable sacrifice to divine justice.”⁵²

An initial characterization of Ehud suggests that he is of uncertain normality and is eventually subverted to disclose him as a preferred tool of God who is smart, skilled, and performing suitably. The initial impression of Eglon as an influential, powerful and esteemed king is diluted to expose him as not smart, feeble and frail tool of God.⁵³

God acts by delivering Israel twice, first delivering Israel to Moab and delivering Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. The story tells that God watches carefully and works through people the deliverance of His people. Therefore, God is particular about His people.

Actions

⁴⁷ Niditch, *Judges*, 57.

⁴⁸ Niditch, *Judges*, 57

⁴⁹ Halpen, *The First Historians*, 124-125.

⁵⁰ Geoffery P. Miller, “Verbal Feud in the Hebrew Bible: Judges 3: 12-30 and 19-21.” *JNES* (1996): 114-115.

⁵¹ Mayes, *Judges*, 22.

⁵² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Hendrickson, 1991), 136.

⁵³ Mary L. Conway, “The ‘New Perspective’ on Appraisal: Evaluation in the Book of Judges as Revealed by the Narrative Appraisal Model” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2013), 33.

The narrative begins with a temporal setting that “again” Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. The use of “again” indicate that Israel had earlier did evil in the sight of the Lord, which is seen in Judges 3:7, where Israel worshipped Baal and Asherah. However, the narrative did not reveal if in this instance Israel worshipped Baal and Asherah or not. The narrator leaves a blank on that. The narrator’s use of repetition at the beginning of this narrative is to emphasize a point by adding a force and clarifying the statement. The phrase “Israel did evil in the sight of the God” is repeated twice (cf. v. 12). This is another way in which the narrator stresses the idea of rebellion of Israel against God and how grievous the sins of Israel were. Israel’s connection with God is broken, and He selects Moab, a nation on the other side of the Jordan, together with its king Eglon, to punish Israel. Eglon who is strengthen by God forms allies with Ammonites and Amalekites who “attack and defeat Israel and took possession of the city of palms” (v. 13), the land of Israel. Israel is then subjected to slavery under Eglon for “18 years.” Israel shows remorse of their actions by crying out to the Lord for repentance from Him and deliverance from the oppressions of Eglon. All these actions are presented in a summary form.

Ehud enters the stage, with no reference to him previously. A man from the tribe of Benjamin, son of Gera, and a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent their tributes to Eglon through him. Ehud makes a short double edged sword about 18 inches and hides it under his cloths on his right thigh. The narrative then moves to a pause, where everything is slowed down to describe Eglon as “an extremely fat man” (v. 17). This is a description of his physical structure or appearance. Ehud then delivers Israel’s tribute to Eglon, dismisses the people with whom the presented the tribute, but upon reaching Gilgal Ehud comes back to the king in the palace. Here the narrator assumes the reader will understand that Ehud turned away from his people at Gilgal and return to where the king was. On the pretext of having a “secret massage” for the king, Ehud then secures a private audience with Eglon where Eglon dismisses his entire servant by “calling for silence.” Here the story moves to a tableau. This enables Ehud to pull off his deception by suddenly “returning after having left because he had received a secret message for you.”⁵⁴ The temporal clause “as he finished giving the tribute,” slows down the narrative, preparing the reader for the central, unexpected moment.⁵⁵ The narrative here brings the reader to suspense, what will happen next? It is true that Ehud is having a secret message for the king?

The narrative then moves to the cool upper room of Eglon’s palace. Ehud approaches Eglon and says “I have a message from God for you.” Butler states that

The Moabites would see the place of idols as an appropriate and likely place to receive such a divine secret. Eglon pays attention to the secret. . . . Eglon has to go to the root of the matter and determine what secret is, ‘word of God’ or ‘prophetic oracle.’ He knows secrets can only be shared on a one-on-one basis. Thus he calls for quiet from his servants and send them out of his royal presence.⁵⁶

The king in his quest to know the secret message from God stood up from his throne, and at that particular moment Ehud reaches out to his double edged sword from his right thigh, and trust it into Eglon’s belly. The narrator further shows that the handle of the sword went after the blade, and Eglon’s fat closed in over the sword that Ehud cannot withdraw the sword from Eglon’s belly. These actions are presented in a pause which slows down the narrative. The actions then switch to summary where the narrator wants us to know the dramatic nature of these actions. The suspense of the reader has landed him/her to a surprise. Ehud has killed Eglon king of Moab. Ehud then makes his escape from the cool upper room by way of the porch after closing the doors and locking them. P. J. King and L. E. Stager argue that an audience hall separated the King’s cool upper room from an outer room where the king’s servants were waiting. That helped Ehud to have locked the doors of the king’s cool upper room without the servants seeing him.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Butler, *Judges*, 70.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Judges*, 70.

⁵⁶ Butler, *Judges*, 71.

⁵⁷ P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2001), 31-33.

The servants of Eglon after waiting for too long and finding that the doors are locked, thought that Eglon “was relieving himself in the cool upper room” (v. 24). After waiting until they became worried, they take hold of the key and open the door. To their dismay and surprise “there was their lord lying dead on the floor” (v. 25). Ehud, then, makes it back to Israel by crossing over to the Jordan. Here the narrator uses a disjunctive sentence to change course and switch scenes, back to the escaping Ehud. After his arrival in Israel he sounds a ram’s horn throughout the hill country of Ephraim. He gathers Israel to himself and together with the Israelites seizes the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab. The Israelites then descend on the Moabites killing about 10000 Moabites and not allowing even one Moabite to escape. “A battle fought under God’s leadership ends the way it is supposed to: no one escapes.”⁵⁸ Victory comes to the Israelites and their liberation from the oppression from the Eglon and the Moabites are achieved. Israel experience peace for 80 years.

Gaps and Blanks

In the narrative several gaps and blanks are presented. There are gap to action linkages existing in the story. Within the narrative the gap opened in verses 19-26. The narrator did not tell or show Why Ehud knew the palace of Eglon so well? Ehud made his escape after murdering Eglon from the palace via the porch when he had closed and locked the door to the cool upper room of Eglon’s palace. The route Ehud took in his escape from the palace suggest that he had had earlier acquaintances with the palace or might have been briefed by one of the servants of Eglon who knew the palace so well.

We see another gap in verse 25. After the servants of Eglon took the key to the cool upper room and opened the door, they found their lord and king lying on the floor dead. The narrator did not tell or show what was the reaction of the servants and the Moabites when they saw that Eglon was dead? Either they call for an alarm or alert for the people of Moab to know the situation at hand or the servants themselves took an action, the narrative did not indicate.

A blank to action linkage occurs in the narrative. At least two blanks are opened by the narrative. In verse 14, what happened between the 18 years that Israel served under Eglon’s captivity? The narrator indicated with a temporal setting in verse 14 that Israel served Eglon for 18 years and then moved to Israel repentance and crying to the Lord. Was there peace in the land of Israel during these 18 years? Or were there fighting and acrimony in the land of Israel? The narrative leaves this blank to the conjecture of the reader.

Another blank that the narrative leaves are in verse 18. Where were the people, who carried the tribute, whom Ehud dismissed after presenting the tribute? These people brought the tribute to the palace of Eglon and were with Ehud during the presentation of the tribute on behalf of the people of Israel. After the presentation of the tribute, Ehud dismissed them near the carved image at Gilgal. Were they preview to the plans of Ehud? Did they return to the land of Israel? Or were they waiting around the land of Moab to figure out what will happen? The narrator leaves these blanks. These blanks bring out the beauty of the narrative where the reader has to make his or her conjecture as to what will happen or might have happened.

Plot

The plot of the narrative is sequentially outlined to bring out the artistry of the narrative. The narrative presents a U-shaped plot that takes the form of a journey and involves recognition or discovery of someone of great importance who was previously rebelled against or unrecognized by the characters in the narrative.

In the plot of the narrative a problem or a dilemma arises when Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 12). This is a trouble that needs to be solved. Due to the actions of the people of Israel against God, God deliver them into captivity under Eglon and the Moabites (vv. 13-14). Israel’s captivity is the development of the plot which progresses forward in deepening the problem that the people of Israel found

⁵⁸ Butler, *Judges*, 73.

themselves and as a consequence of their action against God. The plot reaches a crisis which is seen as the crucial epochal event or central conversation about the problem in verse 15. The people of Israel cried to the Lord. They repented of their evil actions against God and they cried for forgiveness from the Lord. The crying of the people of Israel to the Lord is seen as the central and most memorable part of the narrative. A complication then opens another problem in the narrative in verses 21-22. Ehud murders Eglon on the pretext that he has a secret message from the Lord for him. The murder of Eglon brings a complication in the plot of the narrative. In the narrative the plot comes to a resolution when the people of Israel are liberated from the oppression and captivity under Eglon and the Moabites (v. 30). The people of Israel get their independences and the land rest peacefully for 80 years (v. 30). The problem and the resolution are central in the passage and it is mainly about Israel going into captivity under Moab and Israel's liberation from the oppressions of the Moabites. God's action of double deliverance is emphasized.

Order of Narration

The arrangement of the events in the narrative portrays an artistic effect. The narrative of activities is presented in a circular form or way. In the circular form, the people of Israel are with the Lord, the people of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, the people of Israel are delivered by God to other nation to be punished for doing evil, the People of Israel cries to the Lord, the Lord raises up a deliverer for the people of Israel, the people of Israel are delivered from the oppression of the nation, and the people of Israel return back to the Lord. Magyarosi argues that this "follows an editorial pattern" of the people of Israel doing evil and as a result God giving them out to their enemies to oppress them.⁵⁹

Time – Story World Chronological Order

In time order the most striking feature of the narrative is that the narrative has three anachrony. The story's anachrony occurs in Judges 3:12, 15, and 24. In the story anachrony in Judges 3: 12, Israel did evil in the sight of God. It is a mixed homodiegetic repeating analepsis. The temporal setting "again" introduces the first analepsis "Israel did evil in the sight of the God." This explains Israel's rebellion against the Lord and subsequently why God strengthens Eglon over Israel. The purpose of this anachrony is for story-telling drama, to place in the giving of Eglon's power over Israel right next to the long oppression subjected to Israel and their defeat by Eglon and to reiterate the consequences of doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

Another analepsis is evident in the narrative, a mixed homodiegetic completing anachrony where the servants thought that their lord (Eglon) was relieving himself in the cool upper room. Probably the purpose of this anachrony is for the story telling drama, to place the thought of the servants next to the surprise and dismay discovery of the death of their lord, Eglon. So, all these analepsis have the characteristics of uniting the story in dramatized way.

Prolepsis occurs in Judges 3:15 where the narrator says that God raises up a deliverer in the person of Ehud without any reference in the past of Ehud's activities warranting him the title of a deliverer. This is a mixed homodiegetic completing prolepsis. It serves to interpret Ehud actions in the narrative which point in advance that he is a deliverer.

According to Fokkelman, "the narrator is not obliged to provide indications of narrated time, but he is quite capable of it."⁶⁰ The narrator of the story tells us explicitly that Israel served Eglon for 18 years, and the land of Israel was peaceful for 80 years after the defeat of the Moabites which serves as an important point of reference.

⁵⁹ Barna Magyarosi, *Holy War and Cosmic Conflict in the Old Testament from the Exodus to the Exile*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 9 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 2010), 190.

⁶⁰ Fokkelman, *Reading the Biblical Narrative*, 36.

The primacy effect the reader initially get here is that Israel is evil and the violate commandments of God. The reader is lured into making a deep emotional commitment and into forming an opinion that affect his understanding of the character of the people of Israel. The narrator then shifts to inform the reader that after the people Israel given up to Eglon and Israel serving Eglon cried to the Lord. An act of repentance on the part of the people of Israel, which presents a recency effect modifying the behaviour of the people of Israel and revise the primacy effect of rebellion.

NARRATOR

Knowledge

The narrator is omniscient, he sees and knows all. He is able to see behind doors, inside the upper room, the actions of God and all the characters in the narration. He shifts from one location to another and reports events in the different locales. He allows us to see what happens in the upper room which the servants of Eglon cannot see and we are completely amazed to see how Ehud trust the belly of Eglon with a sense of humour. He also tells the time of events in verses 14, 30.

In the narrative, the narrator appears more covert, giving detail references; the double-edged sword in verse 16 is stated exactly as 18 inches. Ehud is said to be a left-handed man while Eglon is portrayed as an extremely fat king. According to Conway “the implied author is not presenting a confusing portrait of Ehud and Eglon that cannot be interpreted with any certainty, but is deliberately undercutting the way these leaders would initially appear to the implied reader of that day and then carefully constructing a clear alternative view of their characters: Ehud is esteemed and Eglon is shamed.”⁶¹

Intrusion

In the story, the narrator is somewhat intrusive giving a logical clue in verse 22 and presenting every action in the verse in a pause which slows the actions and activities in the verse. Another intrusion is presented in verse 25. The servant to their dismay and surprise after opening the door to the cool upper room see their lord lying dead on the floor. The narrator appears more covert, giving a temporal setting “until” the servants became worried to impress upon the reader the actions of the servants and the reaction of the servants after opening the door.

Distance

Concerning distance, the narrator reports only the actions of the characters. The internal thoughts of the characters, particularly Ehud and Eglon, are not reported on. We are only presented with Ehud trusting the belly of Eglon without prior intention neither internal reasoning is declared nor the rehearsal of the action not shown by the narrator.

Ideology

The ideology of the narrator is not presented overtly in the story. However, it is not difficult to determine. The story seems to turn things upside down. It focalizes with short introduction about Moab, Eglon, and Ehud then moves inward toward tableau statements and then outward as the story defocalizes. Eglon seems to be receptive and trustworthy king, willing and curious to know a secret message meant for him. Ehud on the other hand seems to be crafty planned to murder Eglon and succeeds by praying on the intelligence of Eglon. Ehud is presented as an instrument God used in bringing deliverance to the People of Israel. God is presented as the hero. There is good and there is evil and there is a clear portrayal that God

⁶¹ Mary L. Conway, “The ‘New Perspective’ on Appraisal: Evaluation in the Book of Judges as Revealed by the Narrative Appraisal Model” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2013), 77-78.

do not condone evil. He punishes those who do evil. He also forgives if we repent and cry to Him for forgiveness.

Implied Reader's Knowledge

The knowledge of the implied reader centers on geography of the area comprising the land of Moab and the land of Israel. The distance between Moab and Israel as well as the surrounding nations like the Ammonites and Amalekites should be known by the implied reader. The implied reader should know some names like the city of Palms since reference is made to it. The reader knowledge centers on Jewish political tradition, concept of deliverer, and the importance of left-handed person. The narrative is mostly placed in a palace or court setting so the implied reader is also expected to know the setting of a palace or court.

The reading strategy of the narrative is evenhanded. We do not know what Ehud will be doing to Eglon when he told Eglon of the secret message he had for him. We are rather presented with suspense. Ehud's murder of Eglon becomes a surprise to us. On the other hand, we seem to know the reaction of the servants of Eglon when Ehud had escaped after murdering Eglon.

Style

Although single word and sentence, and multiple word and paragraph, stylistic features do occur in this narrative, repetition (Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord) connected with a temporal setting "again" sets the important tone for the narrative. This develops the motif of denial on the part of the people of Israel against God. And the resultant effect is the deliverance of the people of Israel by God to Eglon and the Moabites hands.

Story Telling Method

The story telling in the narrative is Reader Elevating. By the way the narrative goes with the narration, the reader seems to know much than the characters. When Ehud made his escape from the palace, the reader was made aware while the servants of Eglon were still waiting at the door. It was until they became worried that they took the key to open the door to the cool upper room. When Ehud rallied forces to fight the Moabites, the reader gets to know the activities of the people of Israel while the Moabites wait to their surprise to be defeated. We sense a quite overt reader elevating since the narrative give clues to the reader that there may be surprises. The reader who forgets this even handed approach will likely be caught by the surprise and humour, not unlike the surprise of the servants of Eglon when they discovered that their lord and king is dead.

CONCLUSION

What is the overall picture of the narrative which this analysis demonstrates? At the heart of the narrative is the role of that God play in the life of His people. The narrator informs us from the beginning who God is, a God that Israel did evil in His sight. God's actions to the people of Israel and to Eglon emphasize His power and supremacy. God gave power to Eglon and delivered the people of Israel to the hands of Eglon. His double deliverance is emphasized in the narrative.

In summary we may say that the narrative focuses on the role and work of God with the people of Israel. God's deliverance of the people of Israel to the enemy's hand, and God deliverance of the people of Israel from the hands of the enemy. The narrative is a double deliverance story. God acts by delivering Israel twice; to the hands of the Moabites and out of the hands of the Moabites. The story tells that God watches carefully and works through people the deliverance of His people.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alter, R. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York, NY: Basic, 1981.

- Bal, M. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Barre, M. L. "The Meaning of PRSDN in Judges 3: 22." *VT* 41 (1991).
- Bediako, D. K. *Genesis 1:1-2:3: A Textlinguistic Analysis*. Saarbrucken, Germany: VDM, 2010.
- Block, D. I. *Judges, Ruth*. New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999.
- Boling, R. G. *Judges An Introduction and Commentary*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.
- Brettler, M. "The Book of Judges: Literature of Politics." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989).
- Butler, T. *Judges*. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 8. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009.
- Christianson, E. S. "A Fistful of Shekels: Scrutinizing Ehud's Entertaining Violence (Judges 3:12–30)." *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 1 (2003).
- Conway, M. L. "The 'New Perspective' on Appraisal: Evaluation in the Book of Judges as Revealed by the Narrative Appraisal Model." Ph.D. diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2013.
- DeWitt, D. S. "The Jephthah Traditions: A Rhetorical and Literary Study in the Deuteronomistic History." PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987.
- Fokkelman, J. P. *Reading the Biblical Narrative: A Practical Guide*. Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer: Deo, 1999.
- Gaebelein, F. E. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.
- Goslinga, C. J. *Joshua, Judges and Ruth. The Bible Students' Commentary*. Translated by Ray Togtman. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968.
- Halpen, B. *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Hamilton, V. P. *Handbook on the Historical Books*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.
- Hoffman, Y. "The Deuteronomist and Exile." In *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature*. Edited by J. Milgrom, D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995.
- Holman, C. H and Harmon, William. *A Handbook to Literature*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1986.
- Howard, D. M. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1993.
- Jobling, D. *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible I*. 2d ed. JSOT Supplement Series 7. Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1986.
- Jordan, J. B. *Judges: God's War Against Humanism*. Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1985.
- King, P. J., and L. E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2001.
- Magyarosi, B. *Holy War and Cosmic Conflict in the Old Testament from the Exodus to the Exile*. Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 9. Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 2010.
- Martin, J. D. *The Book of Judges*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Matthews, V. H. *Judges and Ruth*. Edited by Bill T. Arnold, New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Mayes, A. D. H. *Judges: Old Testament Guide*. Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1985.
- Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987, 1996.
- Miller, G. P. "Verbal Feud in the Hebrew Bible: Judges 3: 12-30 and 19-21." *JNES* (1996).
- Moore, G. F. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1895.
- Niditch, S. *Judges: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2008.
- Powell, M. A. *What Is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship. New Testament Series. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990.
- Rainey, A. F. and Steven R. Notley. *Sacred Bridges: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*. Jerusalem, Israel: Carta, 2005.

- Resseguie, J. L. *Narrative criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.
- Ryken, L. *How to Read the Bible as Literature: and Get More Out of It*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- Sasson, J. M. "Ethical Cultured Interpretation Judges." In *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded Gershen*, edited by Mark Geller Galil, and Allan Millards. *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 130. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2009.
- Schneider, T. J. *Judges*. Berit Olam. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000.
- Tanner, J. P. "The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (594) (1992): 146-161.
- Tate, W. R. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Rev. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
- Wood, L. *Distressing Days of the Judges*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975