DISMEMBERING THE WHOLE

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Composition and Purpose of Judges 19–21

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Contents

Preface

My work on the bizarre story of the Outrage at Gibeah began long ago and produced its firstfruits in the form of the doctoral dissertation I submitted to the University of Tel Aviv in the spring of 2003. That seminal study provided the springboard for my understanding of the central role the scroll played as the scribal medium and its impact upon book composition and the forms of revisions that were available to biblical scribes. The present book is more than an updated, translated, and edited version of my Hebrew dissertation. I have incorporated my understanding of the growth of the Judges scroll, its place in the Deuteronomistic History, and the role of the Outrage of Gibeah as an overriding revision of the Deuteronomistic account of the role Benjamin and Gibeah played in the early history of the monarchy. Parts of this study have informed papers that I published before this book came to fruition, particularly my work on intertextuality and the nature of Deuteronomism and what is *not* Deuteronomistic. Readers who are adept at redaction criticism undoubtedly will uncover telltale signs of the lengthy textual history of this book, despite my efforts to impart uniformity while revising and updating the discussion.

I owe much to my teachers and mentors. Professor Yairah Amit and Professor Sara Japhet provided me with role models to emulate as uncompromising scholars who are equally devoted to family and to their careers. The late Professor Moshe Greenberg taught me how to read a biblical text and, possibly more importantly, that no text cannot be improved by shortening. Professor Nadav Na'aman raised my standards of reasoning in ways that are transparent in my methods and conclusions and led me to realize that all our work, theses, and conclusions are provisional and subject to change. Professor Ehud Ben Zvi, Professor Marc Brettler, and Professor Thomas Römer have played a significant role in encouraging me to persist in my research despite the crisis in biblical studies at Israeli academic institutions. I am also indebted to the Open University research authority for support that facilitated the preparation of this book. Special thanks are

due to Ms. Anat Shapiro and Mr. Matan Norani for their diligent work in proofing the myriad biblical references throughout the work. Any errors that remain are solely my responsibility.

The initial research for this book was carried out during the childhood and adolescence of Asaf, Daphna, and Avishai, who grew up with a mother who always had a sheaf of papers to edit while waiting to meet with the teachers at parents' night. More valuable than all is the support I have received from my beloved husband, Shlomo, who has encouraged me to achieve all my aspirations.

Abbreviations

ה'	YHWH
AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
AbrNSup	Abr-Nahrain Supplements
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ADPV	Abhandlungen des deutschen Palästinavereins
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
Ant.	*Jewish Antiquities*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
B. Meṣ.	Baba Meṣi'a
B. Qam.	Baba Qamma
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAIAS	*Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.

BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BH	Biblical Hebrew
BHS	*Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*
Bib	*Biblica*
Bib. Ant.	*Biblical Antiquities*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BibSem	Biblical Seminar
Bek.	Bekhorot
Bik.	Bikkurim
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZABR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.* Edited by I. J. Gelb et al. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–.
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CC	Continental Commentaries
CH	Code of Hammurabi
CurBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.* Edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
ErIsr	*Eretz-Israel*
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible

FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
Glassner	Glassner, Jean-Jacques. *Mesopotamian Chronicles*. WAW 19. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004.
HALOT	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. Study edition. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBHS	Waltke, B. K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
Jastrow	Jastrow, M. A. *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. 2nd ed. New York: Putnam, 1903.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
Joüon	Joüon, P. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Subsidia biblica 14.1–2. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991.
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal of the Study of Judaism
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAI	Donner, H., and W. Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
Ketub.	Ketubbot
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-commentar zum Alten Testament
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. AOAT 24.1. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neurkirchener Verlag, 1976.
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishnah
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
Meg.	Megillah
Mek.	Mekhilta
MGWJ	*Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
MH	Mishnaic Hebrew
MT	Masoretic Text
N^1	primary narrative
NAC	The New American Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
ÖBS	Österreichische biblische Studien
Onom.	*Onomasticon*
OrAnt	*Oriens antiquus*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studien*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*

Pesaḥ.	Pesaḥim
PHSC	Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts
PLT	*PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature*
PN	personal name
Qidd.	Qiddushin
R^2	expanded narrative
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
Rab.	Rabbah
RB	*Revue biblique*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Studies
Roš Haš.	Roš Haššanah
RS	Ras Shamra
Šabb.	Šabbat
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SBH	Standard Biblical Hebrew
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
ScrHier	Scripta Hierosolymitana
Šebu.	Šebuʿot
Shnaton	*Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SSN	Studia semitica neerlandica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SymS	Symposium Series
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TAD	*Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*. Copied and translated by B. Porten and A. Yardeni. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1986–99
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry. Translated by J. T. Willis et al. 16 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–
Tem.	Temurah
TN	toponym (place name)
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*

UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UMI	University Microfilms
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
Yebam.	Yevamot
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte*
ZAH	*Zeitschrift für Althebraistik*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlische Wissenschaft*
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*
ZWT	*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

Introduction

The story known as "the Outrage at Gibeah" (Judg 19–21) provokes widely differing responses from its readers, ranging between shock, bewilderment, and comic reaction. The graphic violence that runs throughout the narrative produces a visceral effect in readers who find that it tells a tale of terror. Others point to the many incongruities in the story and the ludicrous behavior of its characters and find it a tale of the absurd.[1] Regardless of the differences in response to the story, critical readers do agree that many elements in the story do not adhere to a consistent narrative logic.

Thus it is surprising that the concubine's husband should wait four months before undertaking to retrieve his recalcitrant wife and then bother to journey as far as Bethlehem to win her back, only to precipitously dispose of her when faced with danger. We might also wonder why he thought that his concubine's body could provide the means to divert the hostile crowd at Gibeah from their original intention to sexually assault him, when they already had refused his host's offer to provide them with women.

Surprising developments also abound when the tribes decide to attack Gibeah in order to avenge the brutal death of the concubine. Although the Israelites' force is fifteen times greater than the Benjaminites', they suffer two disastrous defeats with casualties greater than the entire size of the Benjaminite troops. It is true that this is not inconceivable in terms of biblical thought, since YHWH was thought to be capable of delivering the mighty into the hands of the few (e.g., Judg 7:2; 1 Sam 14:6). However, defeat was generally understood as a sign of divine anger, but in this case the Israelites go to war in order to serve justice and enforce the divine stricture to expunge evil from Israel (Judg 20:13). Furthermore, the Israelites diligently consult the oracle prior to each battle, and each time YHWH

1. Feminist interpretation tends to view the story as a tale of terror; see, e.g., Trible 1984; Bal 1988; and Bach 1999; though Lasine 1984 views it as a tale of the absurd.

instructs them to take to the field. Notwithstanding, YHWH delivers the Israelites twice into the hands of the Benjaminites, even though they—the Benjaminites—defend the offenders at Gibeah, who are to be eradicated from the community. Ancient interpreters who attempted to make sense of this perplexing state of affairs concluded that YHWH deliberately misled the Israelites by means of the oracle so they would take to the field and there suffer disastrous setbacks.[2]

The conclusion to the story is no less bewildering. In their zealousness to eradicate the evil exemplified by the Benjaminites' behavior, the Israelites wipe out all Benjaminite men, women, and children with the exception of six hundred fighting men who fled from the battle. Only afterward do the Israelites realize that the near extermination of Benjamin ruptures the integrity of the pantribal structure. However, the restoration of Benjamin is hampered by a precipitous oath that the Israelites swore before the battle to refrain from connubium with the Benjaminites. In the end, the future procreation of the Benjaminites is ensured only through an additional cycle of warfare, abduction, and rape. Thus, ironically, the very actions that provided the justification for the war against Benjamin are now condoned in the name of ensuring the future integrity of the pantribal ideal.

These examples of narrative dissonance in the story of the Outrage at Gibeah create the general impression of a defect in the chain of causality regulating the movement of the plot.[3] We may well wonder whether such discrepancies and convoluted logic are inherent to the plot and figure in the story's message or are an accidental result of composite composition or incomplete editing.

In addition, the story of the Outrage at Gibeah stands out from the rest of the book of Judges. The main body of the book is cast in a cyclical pattern in which the Israelites worship other gods and YHWH counters by relinquishing them to foreign oppressors; only after the Israelites return to YHWH does he deliver them from foreign servitude by means of a savior (מושיע) or inspired leader (Judg 2:6–16:31). The cycle of savior stories is supplied with a chronological framework that details the periods of servitude and alternating years of peace under the leadership of the savior. All these characteristics are absent from the story of the Outrage at Gibeah (Judg 19–21), as well as from the preceding story of Micah's cult image

2. See Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 46.1–47.8; b. Sanh. 103b; see also 1 Kgs 22:20 and b. Šebu. 35b; see also Hentschel and Niessen 2008, 23–25.

3. See Gunn 2005, 243–75.

(Judg 17–18). Neither of the stories mentions foreign threats or military leaders who deliver the people from servitude, and both stand outside the chronological scheme of the saviors. Indeed, there is no indication that the events in these two narratives occur after those in the preceding savior stories. On the contrary, both stories mention priests belonging to the third generation of descendants of Moses and Aaron (18:30; 20:28), which should place the events after the notice of Joshua's death at the beginning of the book of Judges.[4]

The stories of the Outrage at Gibeah and Micah's image also share some motifs and formulations, the most notable of which is the recurring phrase, "In those days there was no king in Israel; each man did what he deemed right" (17:6; 21:25; and only the first clause in 18:1 and 19:1). Both also have similar openings, "There was a man from (who lived in) Mount Ephraim" (17:1; 19:1b), and both tell about wayfarers on the road between Bethlehem and Mount Ephraim who stop at the house of an Ephraimite (17:7–10; 19:1, 3, 17–21). In light of these similarities, many scholars thought that the two stories derive either from a common source or from the hand of the same editor. Their placement at the end of the book of Judges helped explain their divergence from the structure, themes, and chronology uniting the savior stories, for they were widely viewed as an intrusive appendix, stemming from a different compositional or editorial layer than the body of the Deuteronomistic book of Judges.[5]

However, the similarities between the two stories may be more apparent than real. The story of Micah's image shares several themes with the Deuteronomistic edition of the savior stories, such as the concern with cultic wrongdoing (17:3–5; 18:14–20, 30–31) and the inefficiency of the supposed premonarchic pantribal organization that fails to secure its aims (17:8–9; 18:1, 19–26). But on these points the story of the Outrage at Gibeah differs from the rest of the book of Judges. Throughout the Gibeah

4. Thus in *Ant*. 5.2.1.–5.3.2 §§120–181, Josephus placed the two narratives prior to the savior stories. See also the comment by Isaiah di Trani at 20:28: "This occurred before the judges, but the arranger first set the judges in order, and then wrote these two narratives." Some of the moderns also thought that the original context of these narratives was at the beginning of the book; see Auberlen 1860, 539; Budde 1897, xv; Talmon 1986, 42–47.

5. See Auberlen 1860; Budde 1888; Moore 1895, xxiv–xxxi; Burney 1970, xxxvii, 443–58; Noth 1966, 168; 1991, 77 n. 2; Gray 1967, 242; O'Brien 1989, 98; Becker 1990, 295–96; Römer and de Pury 2000, 122–23.

story, there is no indication of cultic wrongdoing, and only in this story do we find the pantribal organization efficiently convoking and operating "as one man, from Dan to Beer-sheba and the Gilead" (20:1–2; cf., e.g., 19:29; 20:8–11; 21:5–8). Moreover, the other intertribal conflicts in the book of Judges (8:1–3; 12:6–7) relate to local power struggles between neighboring tribes and thus emphasize the disintegration of pantribal unity, while the story of the battle at Gibeah presents an attempt to uphold the ideal of pantribal unity. The story's conclusion also revolves around this ideal, by relating efforts to mend the rift in the pantribal superstructure (21:3, 6–7, 15–17). These aspects set the story of the Outrage at Gibeah apart from the themes and interests of both the savior stories and the story of Micah's image, thus presenting a serious challenge to claims of editorial unity for Judg 17–21 and all the more so for the book of Judges as a whole.[6]

The story of the Outrage at Gibeah is also at odds with the representations of Benjamin, Gibeah, and Jabesh-gilead in the account of the establishment of the monarchy in 1 Sam 8–12. According to Judg 19–21, the towns of Gibeah and Jabesh-gilead were wiped out and the tribe of Benjamin was nearly annihilated in a premonarchic civil war, but shortly afterward these towns play a central role in the account of the establishment of the monarchy, and there Benjamin's standing is strong enough to produce the first king.

Despite these divergences in theme, outlook, chronology, and detail from the main body of the Deuteronomistic History, several scholars hold that the story of the Outrage at Gibeah was composed and set into its context by one or more Deuteronomistic scribes.[7] Although stylistic and structural markers provide the surest means for identifying Deuteronomistic composition, several recent scholars have questioned whether the scribes of the Deuteronomistic school necessarily adhered to a particular idiom and style. As a result, criteria for identifying Deuteronomistic composition have become more relaxed, with a greater emphasis placed on themes and ideologies attributed to different groups of Deuteronomistic scribes.[8]

6. Contra Wong 2006, who argues for the compositional unity of the entire book of Judges, which he thinks derives from the hand of a single author. Wong seems to confuse possible synchronic reading with literary-historical analysis.

7. See, e.g., Schunck 1963, 60–68; Veijola 1977, 15–29; 1982, 186–200; Boling 1975, 36–37; Peckham 1985, 35–38; Mayes 2001, 256–58.

8. For discussion of these issues, see Wilson 1999; Lohfink 1999.

For the most part, this approach has produced limited agreement regarding the extent of Deuteronomistic composition and editing in the story of the Outrage at Gibeah. This debate has focused on the judgment refrain, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did as he saw fit" (17:6; 21:25; cf. 18:1; 19:1). This refrain is presumed to state the purpose of the story, namely, to illustrate the deplorable state of anarchy that held sway in premonarchic Israel, thereby justifying the establishment of central rule through the agency of a king.[9] According to this approach, the story derives from the early preexilic and promonarchic edition of the Deuteronomistic History. However, while this refrain employs the familiar Deuteronomistic idiom "to do as *x* saw fit" (עשה הישר בעיניו), it needs yet to be demonstrated that this refrain also bears affinities with Deuteronomic thought and usage. In addition, the relation between the refrain and the story is questionable. If it can be shown that the refrain is a secondary accretion rather than an integral part of the composition, then its contribution to the purpose of the narrative may be negligible. In this case, the refrain would be irrelevant to the question of Deuteronomistic editing in Judg 19–21.

The approach represented by scholars such as K.-D. Schunck, Timo Veijola, Brian Peckham, and others also raises a methodological issue: Can we classify a composition as Deuteronomistic solely on the basis of theme and ideology? Where does this lead us when we find Deuteronomistic themes and ideologies in patently late works? Would this not indicate that Deuteronomism continued to influence Judean literary production, long after the composition of the Deuteronomistic History?[10] In short, the marked shift in consensus regarding the place of the story of the Outrage at Gibeah in relation to the Deuteronomistic History requires reevaluation. This matter is of crucial importance, since it influences how we define the structure and purpose of the Deuteronomistic History and how we

9. See, e.g., Buber 1967, 77–84; Veijola 1977, 15–16; Crüsemann 1978, 162.

10. The long-lasting influence of Deuteronomism is indeed evident in the library of Qumran, as can be seen in works such as Dibrei Moshe (1Q22) and the Temple Scroll (11Q19), as well as in the remains of twenty-seven different copies of Deuteronomy, which is surpassed only by the number of Psalms manuscripts. However, one of the hallmarks of such late works is the juxtaposition of Dtr themes and expressions alongside Priestly idiom and ideology; this tendency is already apparent in biblical books such as Ezekiel and Chronicles.

characterize the compositional techniques of the Deuteronomistic circle of scribes.

Additional issues that need to be examined include the historical context of the narrative, its relation to the literature of the priestly circles, and its ultimate purpose. Throughout most of the twentieth century, scholars thought it possible to isolate a historical kernel in the narrative, which could be of value relating to the history of the premonarchic period. For the most part, such reconstructions built upon the idea of a premonarchic tribal league. Today most hold that such a view of prestate society is untenable, and the question of historical background is ignored or addressed with severe reservations. However, it is possible that later historical events or circumstances may have been retrojected into a fictional or idealized narrative about the distant past. This line of investigation might uncover traces of an event that engendered the kernel of the narrative and may shed light on the historical circumstances in which the text was composed and edited. In a similar vein, questions arise regarding the historical context of the tendentious representation of Benjamin in the story, particularly since this region ultimately became a province of the kingdom of Judah.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most scholars held that the bulk of the composition in Judg 19–21 is of preexilic origin. To be sure, some Priestly idioms are found in limited passages of the story, but these passages were considered to reflect light reworking at the latest editorial stage.[11] This view was challenged by Uwe Becker, who proposes that the postexilic Priestly editor did not just revise the story but was responsible for the composition of the present narrative.[12] Thus, before we can consider the purpose of this unusual composition, it is necessary to determine whether the Priestly scribe did in fact compose the story or whether he only added easily identifiable material that reflects his particular style and interests.

Much of the recent discussion of the purpose of the story of the Outrage at Gibeah has been dependent upon a priori assumptions regarding its place and role in the final form of the Former Prophets. In other cases, the purpose of the narrative is postulated and its relevance to a particular historical context is used to date the composition. This frequently results

11. For example, see Budde 1897, 126–27; Burney 1970, 453–58; Gray 1986, 227. The argument for an early date is most recently revived by Stipp 2006, who proposes that composition stems from the time of the united monarchy.

12. Becker 1990, 298–303.

in circular reasoning in which purpose helps to date the composition, while at the same time the author's historical circumstances help to clarify the composition's purpose. However, purpose is a very tenuous indication of date, since a particular message or *Tendenz* may be relevant to different audiences in different times.

In the following chapters I shall examine indications in the narrative that are independent of purpose and that point to the period of composition. In chapter 1 I undertake an analysis of the structure and compositional history of Judg 19–21, since these provide a necessary basis for the subsequent discussion of the narrative's date and purpose. In chapter 2 I examine the geographical background of the story in order to determine its relation to known historical reality as well as to biblical tradition. By considering the material evidence uncovered from archaeological excavations and surveys, one can evaluate the historical setting of the story's geographical background and how it might reflect the times of the its author. The biblical tradition history of the story's various locales can also shed light on the concerns that shaped the narrative's setting. Chapter 3 examines the language of Judg 19–21 in order to see whether there is sufficient evidence of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) to warrant a postexilic date of composition. Even though scholars are divided on the question whether Classical or Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) necessarily indicates preexilic composition, all agree that the usage characteristic of LBH provides significant evidence for late dating. In chapter 4 I discuss the intertextual relations between Judg 19–21 and other biblical texts. The story of the Outrage at Gibeah engages a number of other biblical texts, and the nature of such literary echoes and their purpose need to be understood. Do these echoes result from free association between texts and common motifs, or do they derive from literary borrowing? If the last possibility should prove true, then the intertexts might give an indication of the extent of the body of literature that attained authoritative standing by the author's time. Furthermore, the ways the author employed the intertexts could shed light on his purpose and concerns. Chapter 5 presents my conclusions regarding the composition and purpose of the story of the Outrage at Gibeah and investigates implications of this study for understanding the growth of the book of Judges and its place within a Deuteronomistic History. Finally, although the story of the Outrage at Gibeah is patently a literary composition dealing with a distant, fictive past, I propose that it reflects geopolitical concerns that were current during the times of its authors.