

Voices of Outrage against Rape: Textual Evidence in Judges 19

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Rape is a timeless and worldwide¹ epidemic that violates the divine image and personhood of a human being and renders its victims voiceless, powerless,² and fragmented from self, others, and God. Rape causes a desolate and disordered reality psychologically, relationally, and spiritually, often resulting in theological and “existential crisis.”³ Although this crisis impacts millions each year,⁴ rape has a history of silence, denial, and serious misperceptions.⁵ These misperceptions include blaming the victim and minimizing the multidimensional impact and trauma of rape. Healing requires breaking the silence, which many voices are doing today, including one particular community more than two thousand years old. Rather than silencing, denying, or minimizing rape, this community speaks relevantly and powerfully by voicing outrage against rape.

The voices of this community are represented by the writers and narrators of the Hebrew Bible, otherwise known as the Old Testament (OT). The OT has often been misinterpreted and misperceived as oppressive toward women and silent about abuse. However, evidence within the OT reveals that the biblical writers and narrators highly value women and speak adamantly against rape, including the rape of a woman from Bethlehem recorded in Judges 19. By demonstrating how the biblical writers view women and rape, and how the narrator of Judges 19 speaks outrage against rape, I hope to prove how these voices within the OT, which represent the divine perspective,⁶ speak relevantly and redemptively today. We will begin by establishing how the biblical writers view women and rape.

Background and Terminology

Examples of how the biblical writers view women are found in the creation account and the wisdom and prophetic literature. As one who is able to conceive, bear, and sustain life, the first woman is named “Life”⁷ and is called “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).⁸ According to the creation account, woman is created in God’s image (Gen 1:27)⁹ and shares the same substance and nature as man (Gen 2:23). She is “corresponding to” man (Gen 2:18), his equal and yet distinct from him. The wisdom literature describes women as valiant, strong, intelligent, and wise,¹⁰ and also personifies wisdom as a woman who speaks truth and brings life.¹¹

The prophetic literature metaphorically¹² portrays Jerusalem as a woman¹³ who defends, nurtures, and sustains those within her walls.¹⁴ This evidence from the creation account and the wisdom and prophetic literature reveals that the biblical writers highly viewed women¹⁵ as representatives of life, wisdom, sustenance, and strength.

Examples of how the biblical writers view rape are found in the legal, prophetic, and narrative texts of the OT. The legal texts¹⁶ reveal that rape was viewed as equivalent to murder (Deut 22:26) and as

According to the narrative texts, rape is viewed as an “outrage” (*nebalah*), which also means godlessness and abomination. “Outrage” occurs only thirteen times in the OT and is reserved for extreme acts of violation against God and human beings.

pressuring a woman physically (Deut 22:25–27) or psychologically (Deut 22:28–29)¹⁷ into sexual intercourse. The legal texts value the consent and voice of the woman (Deut 22:27) and assume her innocence (Deut 22:27, 28). They also perceive rape as a threat to the social and economic survival of the woman (Deut 22:29; Exod 22:16–17) and as a serious violation not only against the woman, but also against her family (Deut 22:29; Exod 22:16–17).¹⁸ The prophetic texts reveal that rape was understood as physically and psychologically traumatic. The book of Ezekiel employs rape as a metaphor in order to convey the horror, trauma, and desolation of foreign invasion and warfare (Ezek 16; 23).¹⁹

According to the narrative texts, rape is viewed as an “outrage”²⁰ (*nebalah*), which also means godlessness²¹ and abomination.²² “Outrage” occurs only thirteen times in the OT²³ and is reserved for extreme acts of violation against God and human beings,²⁴ including the rapes of Dinah, Tamar, and the woman of Bethlehem.²⁵ Based on its usage, an “outrage” was considered a serious threat to the life and wellbeing of an individual, community,²⁶ and nation²⁷ that resulted in a dangerous breakdown²⁸ of social, communal, and cosmic norms.²⁹ The biblical writers record Tamar’s outcry and grief (2 Sam 13:19) which testifies that rape was understood as physically, socially, and psychologically devastating, resulting in desolation (2 Sam 13:20).³⁰

This evidence from the legal, prophetic, and narrative texts reveals that the biblical writers understood the multidimensional trauma and devastation of rape and viewed rape as life-threatening and a serious violation of God-ordained, life-sustaining order.³¹

A Closer Look at the Woman from Bethlehem

We now proceed to Judges 19 in order to determine how the narrator of this text voices outrage against the rape of the woman from Bethlehem. The narrator’s voice is conveyed through his portrayal of the characters and his choice of words and themes throughout the narrative.³² Before approaching Judges 19,³³ let us begin by situating this narrative within its cultural context and by getting to know the woman from Bethlehem. The narrator does not name her or the characters within this narrative in order to signify a nation

that had dehumanized those within its community. So, for the sake of simplicity and in order to restore personhood and identity to the woman of Bethlehem, I will refer to her as Beth.

Beth was a woman from the tribe of Judah.³⁴ As a woman, she represents life, wisdom, sustenance, and strength. She was born in Bethlehem soon after the death of Joshua (Judg 1:1), and shortly after the exodus account, the wilderness wanderings, and the fall of Jericho. Her family was one of the first to settle the promised land, and the men in her family led the Israelites in battles against their Canaanite enemies (Josh 15:14–18; Judg 1:1–20). Beth's family included Caleb³⁵ and Caleb's daughter Acsah, who is the first woman mentioned in the book of Judges—a woman with name, voice, land, and power (Judg 1:14–15).

Beth grew up in an agrarian, pre-industrial society under the harsh conditions of pioneer settlement. Her family had to cultivate and farm a dry and difficult land in order to survive. She lived in a group-oriented culture in which the survival of the society depended on the family, the resources of the land, and the equal contribution of both men and women.³⁶

Beth eventually married a Levite from the hill country of Ephraim and became part of the tribe of Moses and Aaron (Exod 6:13–27). Rather than having the status of a wife, she is described as a young concubine (*pilegesh*) and was therefore expected to provide progeny for her husband.³⁷ As a Levite, her husband had been set apart to “stand and serve in the name of the Lord” (Deut 18:5; Judg 17:13).³⁸

Beth and the Levite lived in the hill country of Ephraim (Judg 19:1).³⁹ “The hill country of Ephraim” are the last words of the book of Joshua (Josh 24:33) and therefore connect the concluding events in Joshua with the events recorded in Judges 19. The book of Joshua ends after the Israelites recount the Passover and exodus (Josh 24:5–13, 16–18). The Israelites profess their loyalty to God by renewing their covenant with him and denouncing other gods (Josh 24:14–27). In contrast, the events recorded in Judges 19 reveal a generation that did not know God or what he had done for Israel (Judg 2:10), a generation that had broken covenant with him and had turned to other gods. This is the period in which Beth lived, a period of political and spiritual chaos, which was reflected through the idolatry of the nation⁴⁰ and through corrupt political and spiritual leaders.⁴¹ This was a time when there was no king in Israel⁴² and when all of them did what was good in their eyes (Judg 17:6; 21:25), but evil in God's eyes.⁴³ This is where Beth's story begins and where we tune in to the narrator's voice, which is conveyed through his portrayal of the characters, choice of words, and integration of themes from the creation, exodus, and Sodom and Gomorrah accounts.

The Narrative of Judges 19 Unfolds

The narrator begins by portraying Beth as a young woman⁴⁴ who boldly left her husband and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. According to the narrator, Beth left the Levite because she was angry, described by a word that comes from the Hebrew root *zanah*. *Zanah* is a verb that can mean to prostitute,⁴⁵ to be unfaithful,⁴⁶ or to be angry.⁴⁷ Based on the fact that Beth was welcomed back into her father's household and that her husband eventually pursued her to reconcile with him, it seems most probable that Beth left the Levite because she was angry with him.⁴⁸

The narrator initially portrays the Levite as questionable. Although the Levite pursues Beth in order to speak to her heart (Judg 19:3), he never speaks to Beth or to her heart. Instead, he spends five days sustaining his own heart (Judg 19:5, 6, 8, 9) through the generous, life-giving hospitality of Beth's father.⁴⁹ While it seems as though the Levite has forgotten Beth, the narrator remembers her by purposefully and redundantly mentioning her nine times in the first nine verses of Judges 19.⁵⁰

The Levite's decision to leave Bethlehem and return home to Ephraim becomes the turning point of the narrative. The Levite, who decides to begin his journey when darkness was approaching (Judg 19:9, 11, 15, 16), appears unwise. By leaving Bethlehem at the end of the day and by choosing to lodge in the city of Gibeah rather than Jerusalem, the Levite unknowingly places himself and Beth in grave danger.

The narrator next introduces a second hospitality scene as Beth and the Levite are confronted with unexpected neglect in the city square of Gibeah. Such neglect contrasts with the generous welcome and hospitality previously portrayed in Bethlehem. Suddenly, a fellow sojourner from the hill country of Ephraim approaches Beth and the Levite and generously offers to care for their needs. While in the home of the Ephraimite host, the Levite again sustains his heart. The narrator's continued repetition of *heart* highlights the Levite's neglect of Beth's heart.

While the Levite sustains his heart, men of Gibeah surround the house. The men of Gibeah are “sons of Israel” (Judg 19:12) from the tribe of Benjamin. However, the narrator explicitly calls these men “sons of Belial” (Judg 19:22), which means sons of worthlessness, wickedness, destruction,⁵¹ and death (2 Sam 22:5–6).⁵² At this point in the narrative, the narrator begins to make deliberate parallels between Judges 19 and the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19).

Like the men of Sodom, the men of Gibeah beat violently⁵³ on the door of the house (cf. Gen 19:9) and demand to *know* the Levite sexually (cf. Gen 19:5). Knowing another sexually refers to the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28), just as Adam knew Eve (Gen 4:1). However, the men of Gibeah seek to reverse the creation mandate into fruitlessness and death. The narrator highlights the Ephraimite host's condemnation of their intention to rape as “evil”⁵⁴ and an “outrage.”⁵⁵ These words reveal the narrator's view of rape as an abominable, godless, and life-threatening act that violates God-ordained, life-sustaining order.

The text compares the Ephraimite host to Lot when the host gives the men of Gibeah permission to “rape” Beth and his daughter and to do “what is good in their eyes.”⁵⁶ By equating “rape” with doing the “good in their eyes,” the text makes a powerful rhetorical statement by connecting a key theme throughout Judges with the rape of Beth: Everyone was doing what was good in their eyes, but evil in God's eyes.

The Levite, who had initially pursued Beth in order to speak to her heart, seizes (*chazaq*)⁵⁷ her and forces her through the doorway of the house to be brutally raped by men of death and destruction. By forcing her outside, the Levite sacrifices her in order to save himself and to prevent death from entering the house.⁵⁸ The Levite remains safe inside the house while Beth is violently and repeatedly⁵⁹ *known* all night long, and then ruthlessly discarded (Judg 19:25).

The combination of the words “violent abuse” and “know” conveys rape (Judg 20:5) and the exact opposite of the life, goodness, and fruitfulness of the creation account.

At this point in the narrative, the parallels cease between Judges 19 and the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative, which enables the narrator to depict the rape of Beth as exceeding the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁶⁰

By presenting the Levite’s neglect and betrayal,⁶¹ the horror of the gang-rape by men of death and destruction, and the intensity of Beth’s pain and suffering, the narrator evokes revulsion for the Levite and the men of Gibeah, and deep compassion for Beth. The narrator is the one person in the narrative who does not abandon Beth and who is ardently attentive to her critical condition. She is bleeding, dying, and desperate. With nowhere else to go, she returns to the Levite and collapses at the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold.

The narrator’s earnest awareness to the placement of Beth’s hands (Judg 19:27) is paradoxical to the Levite’s oblivious indifference to her. Surely, now the Levite will speak to Beth’s heart as she hangs onto the threshold between life and death. However, the Levite’s first and only words to her are, “Get up, let’s go.”⁶² Such callousness evokes even more compassion for Beth and revulsion for the Levite.

Beth, who had initially left Ephraim to return to her father, now returns to Ephraim lifeless.⁶³ Once again, the Levite seizes (*chazaq*)⁶⁴ her in order to sacrifice her. According to the narrator, the Levite gruesomely cuts (*natach*) Beth apart limb by limb⁶⁵ into twelve pieces in order to send her to the twelve tribes of Israel.⁶⁶ As the narrator describes the dismemberment, he uses sacrificial language⁶⁷ that appears elsewhere only in reference to sacrificial animals⁶⁸ and burnt offerings.⁶⁹ By dismembering Beth, the Levite offers an anti-sacrifice. Her broken and divided body is the antithesis of the creation mandate to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). She is multiplied in order to bring about war and divided in order to unite the Israelites as “one man” (Judg 20:1, 4–8, 11). However, the Israelites unite in order to dismember the nation by nearly annihilating the tribe of Benjamin, reflecting a society in chaos and disorder (Judg 20–21).

The narrator concludes by stating, “Nothing like this had happened since the days the Israelites came out of Egypt.” Nothing like this had happened since the eve of the exodus, when a lamb was sacrificed and its blood smeared on the doorway of a house in order to prevent death from entering the house (Exod 12:21–23). By referring to the exodus from Egypt and by highlighting Beth, fallen at the doorway with her hands on the threshold, the narrator portrays the rape, death, and dismemberment of Beth as an antithesis of the Passover sacrifice.⁷⁰ The narrator concludes Judges 19 with the exhortation to set your heart⁷¹ upon Beth, counsel wisely on her behalf,⁷² and speak out (Judg 19:30; cf. 20:7).⁷³

Through his compassion toward Beth, negative portrayal of the Levite, condemnation of the rapists, indictment of rape as an outrage, depiction of Beth’s rape as exceeding the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah, and portrayal of Beth’s rape as an antithesis of the creation mandate and the Passover sacrifice, the narrator of Judges 19 voices outrage against rape.

Conclusion

My hope has been to demonstrate that the voices of the biblical writers and narrators within the OT speak outrage against rape in ways that are relevant and redemptive for us today. Evidence throughout the OT shows that the biblical writers highly value women and view rape as physically, socially, and psychologically devastating and as a serious violation of God-ordained, life-sustaining order. The evidence within Judges 19 reveals that the narrator voices outrage against the rape of Beth by sharing her suffering, siding with her compassionately, and conveying the evil and horror of rape and its ravaging effects.

The biblical writers and narrators validate the pain and trauma of rape and its multidimensional impact and devastation at individual, communal, and national levels. Through their voices, which represent the divine perspective, we hear God’s own voice of outrage against rape.

These voices have ensured that Beth’s story is not silenced or forgotten. They have set their hearts upon her and have spoken out on her behalf. She has been remembered in light of God’s historical act of redemption (Judg 19:30; cf. Exod 13:17–14:31) and God’s redemptive work through desolation (Ruth 1–4). The tragedy of Beth’s rape and death is followed by hope through the story of another desolate woman of Bethlehem, who has a name and a voice, and a daughter-in-law named Ruth.⁷⁴ From a desolate woman of Bethlehem comes the messianic line of David (Ruth 4:9–22). Out of Bethlehem emerge the greatest atrocity and the greatest hope (Mic 5:2).

Notes

1. According to Steven Tracy’s research, “South Africa has the highest documented sexual assault rates in the world,” tens of thousands of women were raped in Bosnia during the 1990s, 75 percent of the women in Liberia were raped during its civil war, and tens of thousands of women and children have been raped in the Congo. Steven R. Tracy, “Definitions and Prevalence Rates of Sexual Abuse: Quantifying, Explaining, and Facing a Dark Reality,” in *The Long Journey Home*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 8–9.
2. Diane Mandt Langberg, *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2003), 59.
3. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997), 51.
4. Tracy, “Definitions and Prevalence Rates of Sexual Abuse,” 4–5, 8. According to Tracy’s research, one out of six women in the United States is a victim of rape. Tracy also notes that sexual abuse is one of the most underreported crimes in the United States due to conflicting data based on diverse definitions of “sexual abuse” as well as the humiliating and traumatic nature of sexual abuse.
5. See Joy Schroeder, *Dinah’s Lament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007); and John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
6. See Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989; repr., New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 13; and Miriam J. Bier, “Colliding Contexts: Reading Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–22) as a Twenty-First Century Woman,” in *Tamar’s Tears*, ed. Andrew Sloane (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 175.
7. “Eve” (*hawah*), F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A*

- Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), (hereafter BDB), 295.
8. Eve is also called “helper,” which refers to a military ally and to God. See Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Josh 1:14; 10:4, 6, 33; 1 Sam 7:12; 2 Sam 8:5; 18:3; 21:17; 1 Kgs 1:7; 20:16; 2 Kgs 14:26; Ps 20:2; 28:7; 33:20; 37:40; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9–11; 121:1–2; 124:8; 146:5; Isa 41:6; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9.
 9. God is described in female terms such as midwife (Isa 66:7–9) and mother (Isa 42:14; 66:13).
 10. Prov 31:10, 17, 25, 29; Song 4:4; 6:4; 7:4. Cf. Ruth 3:11; 1 Sam 14:48, 52; 2 Sam 17:10; 22:40.
 11. Prov 3:18; 8:7, 10, 14, 15, 20, 35; 16:22.
 12. Christl Maier stresses the importance of acknowledging the use of metaphor in the prophetic texts. See Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 136, 139.
 13. Isa 54; Ezek 16:1–46; 23:1–34; Lam 1:1–11.
 14. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992), 172. See Ps 51:18; 122:5–7; Isa 62:6; 66:10–13. Both Jerusalem and women are also vulnerable to foreign invasion. See Lam 1:8; Ezek 16:37; 23:10, 29; Hos 2:3; Nah 3:5.
 15. Carol Meyers and Richard Davidson argue for the high valuation of women in ancient Israel. See Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 224–25; and Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).
 16. It is important to discern that these laws were most likely descriptive of the reality of the culture rather than prescribed by God.
 17. Cf. Exod 22:16–17. See Richard M. Davidson, “Sexual Abuse in the Old Testament: An Overview of Laws, Narratives, and Oracles,” in *The Long Journey Home*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 136–37.
 18. See Davidson, “Sexual Abuse in the Old Testament,” 136–38; Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 267; and Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 531.
 19. Ezek 16:6–7, 39–40; 23:28–29. See Maier, *Daughter Zion*, 123; and Hilary B. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 223. According to Lipka and Kamionkowski, sexual abuse was a form of psychological warfare in the ancient Near East in order to shame and dehumanize the enemy, to undermine the enemy’s sense of self, and to render the enemy powerless. See S. Tamar Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 61–65; and Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 238.
 20. “Nebalah,” David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), (hereafter DCH), 5:595.
 21. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999), (hereafter HALOT), 1:663. See Isa 32:6; cf. Josh 7:15; Ps 14:1; Isa 9:16; Jer 29:23. Chou-Wee Pan notes that the “disorderly views” of Job’s friends (Job 42:8) have “prevented any constructive theological discussion of the suffering of the righteous.” Chou-Wee Pan, “nbl,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:12. See also Phillips, who claims that Job’s friends are accused of *nebalah* because they “failed to enter into the reality of Job’s experience” (Anthony Phillips, “Nebalah—A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 [1975]: 240).
 22. M. Soebø, “nabal,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:713.
 23. Eight of the thirteen times that the noun *nebalah* appears are within the context of sexual violation (Gen 34:7; Deut 22:21; Judg 19:23, 24; 20:6, 10; 2 Sam 13:12; Jer 29:23).
 24. Marböck, “nabal,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 9:171. See also Soebø, “nabal,” 713.
 25. Gen 34:7; Judg 19:23, 24; 20:6, 10; 2 Sam 13:12, 13.
 26. Alice A. Keefe, “Rapes of Women/Wars of Men,” *Semeia* 61 (1993): 82.
 27. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 208; P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *2 Samuel* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1984), 328.
 28. Phillips, “Nebalah,” 237–38.
 29. See Frank M. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analysis of Three Rape Narratives* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008), 7; and Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 208. According to the *Myth of Enlil and Ninlil*, Enlil is banished by those “who uphold the world and its fundamental order” as a consequence of taking Ninlil by force and violating the order of society. Thorkild Jacobsen et al., “Mesopotamia,” in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1946), 156.
 30. *Shmm* (“desolate”) is found 91 times in the OT, predominantly in prophetic texts (62 times) and “occurs most frequently (55 times) with the sense to suffer destruction.” Tyler F. Williams, “*shmm*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 4:168. *Shmm* appears only eight times in reference to people (2 Sam 13:20; Isa 54:1; 62:4; Lam 1:13, 16; 3:11; 4:5; Job 16:7). See also Isa 49:19; 64:10; Jer 4:23–27; Lam 1:4; 5:18; Ezek 36:34–36.
 31. The root of *nebalah* (*nbl*) also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 7:9) in reference to offenses against the community. *Nebalah* also appears in 1 QS 10:21f and is connected with “Belial.” See Marböck, “nabal,” 171, and Judg 19:22.
 32. The narrator’s voice reveals his perspective, which is often equated with the divine perspective. See Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 13; and Bier, “Colliding Contexts,” in *Tamar’s Tears*, 175.
 33. My approach to Judges 19 is with a hermeneutic of trust rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion. See Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women’s Stories in the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 18; Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 3; and Andrew Sloane, ed., *Tamar’s Tears* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), xi–xii. For an approach that incorporates a hermeneutic of suspicion, see Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 3, 86.
 34. See Judg 1:1–20; Ruth 1:22; 4:11; 1 Sam 17:12; Matt 1:5; Luke 2:4–7.
 35. Num 13:6, 30; 14:6, 24, 30, 38; 26:65; 32:12; Deut 1:36; Josh 14:13–14; Judg 3:9.
 36. Carol Meyers argues that premonarchic women would have experienced a higher degree of equality with men because of the absence of political and economic hierarchies and the lack of division between public and private realms. See Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 145, 182. Cf. Gen 16:1–6; 27:5–17; 38:13–26; Exod 15:20–21; Josh 2; Judg 1:14–15; 4:4–14; 13:3–23; Ruth 1:16–18; 2:2; 3:7–9.
 37. Cf. Gen 16:2; 30:3.
 38. Cf. Num 8:5–11. Aaron’s grandson Phineas possibly served as high priest during this time (Judg 20:26–28; cf. Exod 6:25; Num

- 25:7; Josh 24:33).
39. Ephraim means “doubly fruitful” (Gen 41:52). This is where Joshua was buried (Josh 24:29–30), Deborah led the tribes of Israel (Judg 4:5), and Samuel was born (1 Sam 1:1). Ephraim later becomes associated with the northern tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 12:25).
 40. Judg 2:11–13; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.
 41. Judg 8:24–27; 9:5, 56; 11:30–40; 16:1–21; 17:7–12; 18:19–31; 19:1–29.
 42. Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25; cf. Deut 17:18–19; Ps 72.
 43. Judg 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.
 44. The narrator refers to Beth as a *young woman* in relation to her father (Judg 19:4, 5, 6, 8, 9), but as a *concubine* in relation to the Levite (Judg 19:1, 9). The narrator refers to the Levite as her husband (Judg 19:3; 20:4) and master (Judg 19:26–27).
 45. BDB, 275. JPS, KJV, NAS, and NKJ.
 46. ESV and NIV.
 47. HALOT, 1:275; DCH 3:121, 123. NET, NJB, and NRS. LXX^A also translates “she was angry” (ὀργισθῆ, *ōrgisthē*). Ansell argues that this recension of the LXX “represents a textual tradition that is superior to the MT.” See Ansell, “This Is Her Body . . . Judges 19 as Call to Discernment” in *Tamar’s Tears*, ed. Andrew Sloane (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 148. According to Susan Niditch, many scholars follow LXX^A. See Susan Niditch, “The ‘Sodomite’ Theme in Judges 19–20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1982): 366.
 48. Many scholars believe that a woman who prostituted herself would not return to her father; otherwise, she would be stoned (Deut 22:13–21). See Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 274; Ken Stone, “Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object-Shame?” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 67 (1995): 90; and Victor H. Matthews, “Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (Spring 1992): 7. Exum adds that a Levite would not pursue an adulterous wife. J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 179.
 49. I favor Block’s and Niditch’s view that the father is the model of hospitality. See Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 527; and Niditch, “The ‘Sodomite’ Theme,” 366–67. However, some scholars interpret this scene as male bonding (Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 68) or excessive hospitality (Stuart Lasine, “Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot’s Hospitality in an Inverted World,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 [1984]: 56–57; Yamada, *Configurations of Rape*, 72–77). According to Ansell and Lapsley, the father is subtly reminding the Levite to speak to the woman’s heart (Ansell, “This Is Her Body,” 153; Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 41).
 50. Judg 19:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9.
 51. BDB, 116.
 52. According to Boling, Belial is “one of the most maleficent characters of the mythic underworld.” Boling, *Judges*, 276.
 53. Hithpael of *dpq* (BDB, 200).
 54. Cf. Judg 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.
 55. Judg 19:23–24; 20:6, 10. Cf. Gen 34:7; Deut 22:21; 2 Sam 13:12–13.
 56. Judg 19:24; cf. Judg 17:6; 21:25; Gen 3:6; 16:6; 19:8.
 57. Cf. Deut 22:25; 2 Sam 13:11.
 58. See Exod 12:21–23. Ansell makes a connection between the death of the Bethlehemite woman and the Passover ritual. See Ansell, “This Is Her Body,” 158.
 59. Hithpael of *ʾll*. Cf. 1 Sam 31:4; Jer. 38:19. The LXX translates *ʾll* as ἐμπαίω [*empaizō*] (cf. Luke 22:63; 23:11, 36). *ʾll* refers to gleaning a vineyard (Lev 19:10; Deut 24:21), but, when referring to human beings, it expresses the intention to annihilate. Eugene Carpenter, “*ʾll*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:423.
 60. Deut 29:23; Isa 1:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; Amos 4:11. Cf. Hos 9:9; 10:9.
 61. Both Yamada and Lasine believe that the narrator condemns the Levite through subtle use of irony and absurd behavior. See Yamada, *Configurations of Rape*, 91; and Lasine, “Guest and Host in Judges 19,” 38.
 62. Cf. 2 Sam 13:15.
 63. While the MT is ambiguous regarding when the Bethlehemite woman died, the LXX inserts that she was already dead. The narrator later refers to her as “the murdered woman” (Judg 20:4).
 64. Cf. Judg 19:25.
 65. Cf. Ezek 16:40.
 66. Sending a message in such a grisly way is without parallel in biblical and ANE sources. One Mari text (ARM II, 48) attests to sending the head of an executed criminal throughout the land in order to convince the Haneans to prepare for war. See J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1981), 289. However, the closest comparison is found in 1 Sam 11:6–8, when Saul dismembered an ox and sent the pieces throughout Israel as a summons to war. Cf. 1 Kgs 11:30; 18:30–33.
 67. The sacrificial language is *nth* (“cut”) and *hamma’akeleth* (“the knife”). *Nth* appears this one time in reference to cutting apart a human being. See Milton C. Fisher “*nth*,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 2:607–08. “*The knife*” only appears elsewhere in Gen 22:10, when Abraham “took the knife” in order to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. This particular knife also appears in Prov 30:14, which describes a generation whose teeth are like knives in order to devour the afflicted.
 68. Exod 29:17; Lev 1:6, 8, 12; 8:20; 9:13; 1 Sam 11:7; 1 Kgs 18:23, 33; Ezek 24:4, 6.
 69. Eugene Carpenter, “*nth*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:201. See Lev 1:1–17; 6:8–13; 8:18–21; 16:24.
 70. Butler notes, “The narrator simply wants to place this event in sharp contrast to the exodus event as its polar opposite.” Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 416.
 71. According to the BHS critical apparatus, a few manuscripts, including the Targum, say, “Set your *heart* upon her” (BHS, 437).
 72. Ansell notes that *ʾetsah* (Judg 19:30) is a cognate of *tsuts* (“counsel”) and “one of the most important terms in wisdom discourse” (Ansell, “This Is Her Body,” 154). Cf. Judg 20:7; Prov 1:25, 30; 8:14.
 73. According to the LXX, these are the words of the Levite. According to the MT, these are the words of the Israelite tribes.
 74. The book of Ruth follows the book of Judges in the LXX, while 1 Samuel follows the book of Judges in the MT.

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