'A BREEDER OR TWO FOR EACH LEADER': ON MOTHERS IN JUDGES 4 AND 5

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In opening one of her many perceptive contributions on Judges, Cheryl Exum notes that it 'exhibits an enigmatic complexity; so much transpires on different levels that multiple interpretations are inevitable, as the plurality of views in current scholarship illustrates'.[1] Elsewhere, Cheryl had discussed the theme of motherhood (in its comforting as well as sinister facets) in Judges 4–5, where are crowded Deborah, Jael, and Sisera's mother. In offering this study with affection and respect to Cheryl, I want to develop some of her insights and add one more interpretation for her to consider.[2]

A Mother in America

Not long ago, as the election for a new American president was heating up, internet sites with Christian evangelical perspectives were proclaiming the renewal of God's plan. In their reading of history, the biblical Deborah had morphed into Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska, then the Vice-Presidential candidate for the Republican Party.[3] For these evangelicals, Sarah Palin was,

1. 'The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1989), pp. 410-31 (410).

2. 'Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?', in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (ed. Gale Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 65-90 (71-75).

3. 'Sometimes it takes a true mother to rally the troops. I hope that Palin, a woman who believes in prayer and is filled with the Holy Ghost, will take her hockey stick and smash the glass ceiling in American politics once and for all' (J. Lee Grady, 'Sarah Palin and the Deborah Anointing', n.p. [cited 11 January 2010] Online: http://juliapalermo.wordpress.com/2008/09/12/sarah-palin-and-the-deborah-anointing-by-j-lee-grady/). See Brian Abshire, 'Is Sarah Palin the New Deborah?', n.p. [cited 11 January 2010] Online: http://christian-civilization.org/articles/is-sarah-palin-the-new-deborah/).

In the war for independence from England, the Song of Deborah (and especially the curse of Meroz) was cited more than any other scriptural passage as sermonizers thundered against perfidious England. (Information courtesy of my colleague James Byrd, who is writing a book on biblical citations in late eighteenth-century North America.)

like Deborah, a true mother in God's latest Zion. Like her, she did not shy from calling on the God of Israel. She would rally America against the latest Canaanites: homosexuals, abortionists, humanists, liberals, and, most pernicious, Francophiles. Like Barak (read Barack Obama?), Republicans had lost their moral bearings, and like Deborah, Sarah would put steel into their spine. Alas, as we all know, unlike Deborah, Sarah fell short on her mission; but I cannot say that the evangelizing vision crafting the equation has strayed too far from roles modern scholarship has assigned Deborah and Barak.

I focus on chaps. 4 and 5, chapters that cover a somewhat similar subject: a battle that pitted Hebrews against Canaanites sometime after Israel conquered the land its God had promised and before it matured into a monarchy. For convenience I shall call the account in chap. 4 'Prose' and the second one either 'Poem' or 'Song'. The antagonists in both are the same, although, they are not as fully deployed in the Poem. On Israel's side is Barak, inspired by the prophet Deborah. Representing Canaan is Jabin of Hazor, whose forces are managed by his commander Sisera. In both versions, the Canaanites, though superior in armament, are defeated and in both Sisera is murdered by a woman, Jael.

The two accounts, however, differ on details, among them the participation of tribes, the staging of the battle, and the elaboration of Sisera's death. Above all, they differ in their language: chap. 4 delivers a narrative in prose that, albeit somewhat choppy, nevertheless follows a trajectory well rehearsed in earlier chapters of Judges. The language, indeed the grammar, for the event changes in chap. 5. There we find a poetic reflection on the same events, but with radically different idioms and a structure that is fragmented, kaleidoscopic, and cubist. The confrontation moves from the human to cosmic and the tension is no longer between Hebrews and Canaanites but among the Hebrew tribes. There is little apparent continuity from one verse to another, except in two scenes that focus simultaneously on Sisera: as he is being killed by Jael, his mother anxiously awaits his triumphant return home. The Hebrew itself is not always intelligible and we have difficulty following one sentiment to the next. The problem is compounded by the text's manipulation over time and by the fact that the inherited Hebrew consonants received their vowels much later, guided by Mishnaic rather than Classical Hebrew grammar. The vocabulary is esoteric, with hardly any extrabiblical equivalents. Even in antiquity, comprehension was difficult and this is reflected in ancient translations, such as Greek and Aramaic.

Historicity and Primacy

These observations lead me to briefly review two recurring issues raised about Judges 4 and 5. The first has to do with how much history there is in either

or both versions. The second is about the primacy of one version of events over the other. The two matters are inter-related and they plunge us into a series of hotly debated issues about Israel and its origins. I need not note here that, as yet, we have no victory stela at Tabor or Taanach, no bas-relief honoring the deeds of Barak or of Jael, no shrine dedicated to Deborah, and no tombstone for Sisera. We do have Mari documents with a Hazor king named Ibni-Addu and since the elements *ibnu* and *yābîn* could be related, it may confirm that the name Jabin was a traditional element in Hazor royal names. If so, it might explain why Joshua can kill Jabin (Josh. 11.10-11) and then Barak could do the same presumably to a succeeding king.[4] Still, it is not easy to explain how he could hold in the Prose the otherwise unknown title, 'King of Canaan', how neither Jabin nor Hazor is mentioned in the Poem, and how Jabin could have ruled Hazor which, according to archeology, was not viable from the days of Seti I to the Monarchic period. But that is where the study of biblical poetry sought to affect the discussion.

The Date of the Poem

From the early days of biblical scholarship, there were opposite perspectives on the Poem. Maurice Vernes was not the first to judge it '…une œuvre éminemment artificielle, dont quelques tirades éloquentes ou brillantes ne peuvent pas dissimuler le vide'.[5] In view of the alleged Aramaisms, the Poem was set a half century after the Prose, so late in the fifth century. More commonly, however, the Poem was granted an immediacy of inspiration that was born from the heat of the moment. The reasons for this accord was not because scholars found biblical memory to be reliable or were blind to the artificial nature of biblical chronology;[6] rather, since the days of German Romanticism it was accepted that the poetry crafted by the people was spontaneous, primitive, and naïve; but it was also truer to what was being observed and likely to be relayed unchanged for generations.[7] The recovery

4. Père Roland de Vaux thought this idea 'not worthy of consideration'. He gravitated toward the theory that Jabin was first defeated by Barak and then by Joshua, reversing tradition (*The Early History of Israel* [trans. David Smith; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), pp. 657-58 (= *Histoire ancienne d'Israël* (2 vols.; Paris: Lecoffre, 1971, 1973), I, p. 601).

5. Cited from George Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), pp. 130-31.

6. Biblical chronology too often relied on multiples of forties. 480 years were fixed from the Exodus to the First Temple and an equal amount from the First to the Second Temple. The judges were set midway between the first of these intervals.

7. Gillis Gerleman writes ('The Song of Deborah in the Light of Stylistics', *VT* 1 [1951], pp. 168-80 [189]): 'The impressionism of the Deborah Song is of a primitive, unconscious type, a naive, spontaneous art. The prose narrative might rather be called an elaborate, carefully worked out literary product just because of its syntactically dis-

of Ugaritic literature from Ras Shamra in the mid-twentieth century provided fresh ammunition with which to confirm the antiquity of the poem. Clusters of linguistic forms occurring in alphabetic Ugaritic were detected in a few Hebrew poems, such as the Song at the Sea (in Exodus 15) and the Song of Deborah. The insight gave William Albright and his school cause to treat the Song of Deborah as archaeological artifact and when the theories of Milman Parry and Albert Lord on the persistence of oral composition reached biblical studies, the combined effect turned Deborah's Song into a repository of historical data that continues to be exploited deep into our own days. The approach relies on reciprocal verisimilitude, with history and poetry buttressing each other. One scholar can date the conflict to precisely 30 September, 1131 BCE.[8] Another can plot troop movements on topographical maps.[9] Theories abound within this camp on causes for a conflict, with many suggestions why the Canaanites needed to be defeated or why the tribes splintered in their support of Israel.[10] The search for pre-Hebrew Hebrews continues apace, using Amarna and Ramesside documents, with archaeological and anthropological evidence accommodatingly supporting the arguments.[11]

ciplined, logical form. The great puzzle of the history of literature is not poetic form, but smooth prose. It is in the prose that we have the more advanced, or artificial, production, whereas the poetry stands for the spontaneous, unconscious and natural mode of expression. In the poetry the very speech is music, formed according to laws which the poet, as well as his listeners, knew by instinct, without recourse to theories.'

8. John F.A. Sawyer, '"From heaven fought the stars" (Judges v 20)', *VT* 31 (1981), pp. 87-89.

9. Anson Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), pp. 136-37.

10. See Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 80, and Yairah Amit, 'Judges', in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 508-57 (520-21). Gregory Wong offers a sustained (if philologically uninvolved) argument for the Poem's polemics against tribes reluctant to join the cause of Yahweh ('Song of Deborah as Polemic', *Biblica* 88 [2007], pp. 1-22). Lawrence Stager gives an economic reason for their reluctance ('The Song of Deborah: Why Some Tribes Answered the Call and Others Did Not', *BAR* 15.1 [1989], pp. 50-64). Weaving a full story out of the troubles in the days of Shamgar (v. 6), J. David Schloen has them rising against profiteers because of tolls on caravans ('Caravans, Kenites, and Casus Belli: Enmity and Alliance in the Song of Deborah', *CBQ* 55 [1993], pp. 18-38).

11. Anson Rainey is the latest to adapt this opinion in 'Shasu or Habiru: Who Were the Early Israelites?', *BAR* 34.6 (2008), pp. 51-55. Cited 14 January 2010. Online: http://www.bib-arch.org/bar/article.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=34&Issue=06&ArticleID=09&Page=0&UserID=0&.

Still, despite the century of impressive discoveries and recoveries, the above reasoning has not shifted appreciably; neither have the stakes, which always had to do with how far into the past can a verifiable history of Israel be driven. On the one hand, the linguistic edifice Albrightians deployed in identifying early Hebrew poetry has not gone unchallenged, and with it came other strategies to confirm an early context for the Poem. On the other, differentiating between Iron Age Aramaic and Hebrew in recently recovered inscriptions has proven tricky, and with it came hesitation about dating the Poem late on this merit.[12] Likewise unconvincing are the many suggestions that diverse episodes in the poem were inspired by incidents in the later historical books, some as late as the Hellenistic period.[13] As a result of this steadfast attachment to unbridgeable opinions, a standoff as solid as any generated by religious conviction, the historical value of Deborah's Song remains undeciphered.

An Issue of Precedence

Predictably, those who treat the Poem as a Victory Song, hence a witness to the event, argue that the prose is a version of its (imperfectly understood) verses.[14] This is largely an American posture; but even Caquot could

12. The issue is debated between Michael Waltisberg, 'Zum Alter der Sprache des Deboraliedes Ri 5', *ZAH* 12 (1999), pp. 218-32, and Gary A. Rendsburg, 'Hurvitz Redux: On the Continued Scholarly Inattention to a Simple Principle of Hebrew Philology', in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup, 369; London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), pp. 104-28.

13. The scholars who prefer a first-millennium composition for both chapters draw their comparison from biblical incidents, prompting them to date our composition, often linking it to the Ark narrative of 1 Samuel 4 when there was an alliance between Philistines and Canaanites. Philippe Guillaume ('Deborah and the Seven Tribes', *Biblische Notizen* 101 [2000], pp. 18-21) and Hermann Michael Niemann ('Taanach und Megiddo: Überlegungen zur strukturell-historischen Situation zwischen Saul und Salomo', *VT* 52 [2002], pp. 93-102) would rather see a link with the story of Saul and Ishbaal. Giovanni Garbini finds in the Poem an echo of an early monarchic theomachy between Yhwh and Sisera ('Il Cantico di Debora', *La parola del passato* 33 [1978], pp. 5-31).

14. K. Lawson Younger, Jr, 'Heads! Tails! Or the Whole Coin?! Contextual Method and Intertextual Analysis—Judges 4 and 5', in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective: Scripture in Context*, IV (ed. K. Lawson Younger, Jr, William W. Hallo and Bernard F. Batto; ANETS, 11; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991), pp. 109-46; Graham S. Ogden, 'Poetry, Prose, and their Relationship: Some Reflections Based on Judges 4 and 5', in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures* (ed. Ernest R. Wendland; New York: United Bible Societies, 2004), pp. 111-30; Walter J. Houston, 'Misunderstanding or Midrash: The Prose Appropriation of Poetic Material in the Hebrew Bible (Part II)', *ZAW* 109 (1997), pp. 534-48; Heinz-Dieter Neef, 'Deboraerzählung und Deboralied: Beobachtungen zum Verhältnis von Jdc. iv und v', *VT* 44 (1994), pp. 47-59.

be disdainful of it without fully rejecting it.[15] However, those who do not consider the Poem a Victory Song, so likely a later pastiche, maintain that it has no sense or context without the prose.[16] With better knowledge of ancient Near Eastern literature, we might recognize that neither biblical poetry nor prose cultivates *verismo* attachment to events; at least not to the extent that one would find it useful to seek inspiration from the other. This is generally true for Near Eastern royal panegyrics as well. Thus, when we have both historical documentation as well as a royal epic from the reign of a single monarch, say Zimri-Lim of Mari or Tukulti-Ninurta of Assyria, it would be tough, if not also risky, to match what they have to say.[17] Moreover, I am not sure that applying a date to the creation of either the prose or poetic version is a particularly useful enterprise as far as biblical studies are concerned. Normally, to set a composition within a specific interval is to promote reciprocal functions: the composition illumines the times and the contexts in which it was crafted while the milieu in which it originated explains the composition's allusions and concerns. In Mesopotamian literature, for example, it will matter a lot whether a composition comes from the Old Babylonian or Neo-Babylonian period, because we can integrate the knowledge we extract from it into distinct cultures. With biblical works, at best we can assign it before or after the Exile. All other subdivisions or allocations and the glimpses they offer of their cultural contexts are hardly undisputed.

Still, there are other interesting side issues as well, among them these:

1. Because prose and poetry have different goals, could the versions have followed parallel but independent paths? In the literature, the answers are *Yes* and *No*; but hardly ever simply that, as in the oft-cited opinion that the Prose version is 'Male', for its accent on militarism, while the Poem's is 'Female', for its stress on gender and sexuality.[18]

15. André Caquot, 'Les tribus d'Israël dans le Cantique de Débora (Juges 5, 13-17)', *Semitica* 36 (1986), pp. 47-70.

16. See Wolfgang Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (BBB, 18; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1963); de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d'Israël*, pp. 789-90.

17. Good comments on the issues in Michael H. Floyd, 'Oral Tradition as a Problematic Factor in the Historical Interpretation of Poems in the Law and the Prophets' (PhD dissertation; Claremont Graduate School, 1980), pp. 233-35, 263-66. Not surprisingly an Arabist (Morris S. Seale, 'Deborah's Ode and the Ancient Arabian *Qasida*', *JBL* 81 [1962], pp. 343-47) thinks that the comparison is best made with the *qasida*, both displaying the 'manly virtue of the desert' (what desert?). Seale, however, says that in contrast to the Prose our Poem is 'shot through with genuine religious fervor' ('Deborah's Ode', p. 343).

18. Mieke Bal, 'Tricky Thematics', *Semeia* 42 (1988), pp. 133-55, followed by A. van

2. Were the two versions independently crafted? Were they penned by the same author? Or did they both depend on a common source?[19] The answer for all three is a resounding *Maybe*.
3. Once juxtaposed, were they meant to complement or supplement each other?[20] The answer is *Probably*.
4. Were the differences between them as obvious to us as they were to the Hebrew editors of Judges? The answer is *Not Very Likely*.
5. Were the two versions kept side by side to enhance the gravity of narrated events or simply to avoid making choices between them?[21] The answer to each is *Possibly*.

What is interesting about all this give and take, and what also makes biblical scholarship occasionally exasperating, are the many side issues that are raised, debated, and promoted in the literature; for, as it is generally true about this discipline—as it is not as much in other studies of antiquity—each generation of researchers invests into the interpretation of Sacred Scripture concerns that are vital to its own time. These particular chapters, more so than any others in Judges, raise issues that have contemporary applications, among them appeals for freedom, territorial squabble, political exploitation, gender empowerment, and sexual politics. We must therefore not be surprised about the breadth and depth of passion that has surrounded their discussion, especially so in recent years with its increased focus on personalities rather than history and on literary strategies rather than identification of source.

To illustrate this observation, let me select two subjects for brief presentations. The first deals with the contrast in structuring the material; the second in the contrast of composing the shared episode about the death of Sisera. To give these matters focus, here is a table that provides comparison between the information in the Prose and Poem:

der Kooij, 'On Male and Female Views in Judges 4–5', in *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender-Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes* (ed. Bob Becking and Meindert Dijkstra; BibInterp, 18; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 135-52.

19. Same author: P.D. Guest, 'Can Judges Survive without Sources? Challenging the Consensus', *JSOT* 78 (1998), pp. 43-61; Pamela Tamarkin Reis, 'Uncovering Jael and Sisera: A New Reading', *SJOT* 19 (2005), pp. 24-47; common source: A. Malamat, 'The Period of the Judges', in *Judges* (ed. Benjamin Mazar; The World History of the Jewish People, 3; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), pp. 129-63 (137-40).

20. Younger, 'Heads! Tails!'; Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999).

21. Nadav Na'aman, 'The "Conquest of Canaan" in the Book of Joshua and in History', in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994), pp. 218-81.

Table A: Information in the Prose and the Poem

	PROSE (Judges 4)	POEM (Judges 5)
Deborah	—prophet: wielder of flames; judge (4.4) —'She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim' (4.5)	—a 'Mother in Israel' (5.7).
Barak	—from Naphtali (4.6) —hesitant and argumentative —loses glory when Jael kills Sisera	—From Issachar[7] (5.15) —no hesitation reported —activities hardly mentioned
Jabin	—rules Canaan from Hazor (4.2) —Elohim humbles Jabin (4.23)	
Jael	—wife of Heber the Kenite (4.17)	—wife of Heber the Kenite (5.24)
Sisera	—commander for Jabin of Hazor (4.2) —killed in his sleep (4.21), a mallet driving a peg into his temple (4.20-21)	—no attribution (5.26; head of the Canaanite coalition, 5.19) —killed in standing[7] position (5.25-27)
Sisera's mother		—anxiously waiting (5.28-30)
Circumstances	—terror via Sisera's chariotry (4.2-3)	—deteriorating security (5.6-7)
Antagonists	—Jabin, 'king of Canaan, ruling from Hazor' (4.2) —Sisera, his army commander (4.2)	—'kings of Canaan' (5.19) —mention of Sisera (5.20)
Tribes	—two: Naphtali and Zebulon (4.6) —10,000 strong (4.10)	—at least 10, some without fervor —numbers presumably high
War	—local —army mustered at Kedesh, attacks from Mt Tabor (4.9ff.)	—national (Israel vs. Canaan) —battle by the Kishon, its waters swollen by storms (5.21)
Victory	—Yhwh flusters the enemy (4.15)	—stars of Heaven battle Sisera (5.20) —the torrent Kishon carries them (5.21)

The Prose and Poetic Accounts

The Deuteronomistic formula for shaping narratives in Judges follows a cycle: God is angry with Israel because it had forgotten its vows. In the Prose, God sends Jabin and his henchman Sisera as punishment. With their vast array of chariots, they lord over the Hebrews who beg God for mercy. As usual, God relents, selecting Deborah, a judge, prophet, and mantic, to put backbone into Barak from the Naphtali tribe. After hesitation, he

accepts the charge. War breaks out near Mt Tabor; but God panics the Canaanites who are destroyed to a man. Sisera escapes on foot and finds shelter with Jael, wife of an ally of Jabin. She murders Sisera. Israel subdues Jabin and is in control for 40 years.

Here, all the elements of effective Hebrew story-telling are in display. The plot is centered on a conflict that is pre-charted and its resolution seeds future episodes. Characters are shaped through dialogue rather than description, so that nothing at all is said about age or their physical attributes. It is a mystery to me how some colleagues know that Deborah is past menstruation while Jael is in full sexual bloom.[22] The settings themselves are vague, encouraging speculation on where and how the confrontation developed, and the vocabulary has multiple edges. As always in Hebrew prose, a major player is the Hebrew God who, in fact, personally battles for Israel against the Canaanites, as he had done against the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Also as usual, there is a narrator who, albeit omniscient, does not always share God's point of view.

The structure of the prose account is transparent, moving through a number of self-contained episodes with the necessary connectives. Unity for the whole is achieved through a framing that opens and closes on references to Jabin as well as to his title 'king of Canaan'. As noted above, the title 'king of Canaan' is scarcely 'historical'–that is, we do not find it in ancient sources.[23] Yet, unlike the concocted name of Cushan-rishatayim of Aram-naharayim (Judg. 3.8, 10), Jabin's name does not trigger doubt about his historicity, even if his role is minimal in the prose story and totally absent from the Poem. For a Hebrew audience, there cannot be a more paradigmatic confrontation than between Israel and Canaan, more or less reprising the conflict in Joshua's days. The narrator ends on a nice pun, with God subduing (*kāna'*) Jabin of *kĕna'an*.

Sisera is Jabin's enforcer and the possessor of an awesome *force de frappe*; but in the Prose he is a pawn for God. Sisera has defeated historicizing scholars, not just because his name is a stumbling block to linguists, but because he is also designed to evade history, for his power-base, Haroshet-haggoyim, is as mysterious as its master.[24]

22. Victor Harold Matthews, *Judges and Ruth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 64, for the first opinion; many others for the second.

23. The Amarna texts and just once in the Bible (Judges 5:19) can speak of many 'kings of Canaan', *šarrāni ša kinaḫḫi* (EA 30 and 109).

24. There is a tendency to explain Sisera's name via hardly controlled languages (once Hurrian, now mostly Luwian, Lycian, Illyrian), with the aim of vaguely attaching him to one of the Philistine tribes that had settled in the region; see J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), p. 63. For a Cretan (Linear A no less!) derivation, see Garbini, 'Il Cantico di Debora', pp. 20-21. For a Sardinian link, see Adam Zertal, 'Philistine Kin Found in Early Israel', *BAR* 28.3 (2002), pp. 18-31, 60-

Deborah controls the pulse of the Prose. She is a *šōfĕṭâ*, 'judge' before we ever learn how she earned the title. She is prophet, *nĕbî'â*; but perhaps more important, an *'ēšet lappîdôt*, a 'wielder of torches', so a pyromancer, expert at interpreting the flickers of flames. This cluster of titles tells us not to doubt her authority. Still, although as a prophet she might motivate Barak, she probably impressed him even more as a diviner; for unlike prophets who must wait for inspiration, diviners can force destiny to be revealed. In Mesopotamia this is done though inspection of a sheep's innards or the movements of celestial orbs, but in Israel by casting the lots, the Urim and Thummim.

Here the plot thickens. There will hardly be any battle for Barak to win, for God will do it all and there is no captive enemy commander to seal the triumph for, as Deborah predicts, Sisera will be dispatched by a woman. The narrator may expect us to assume Deborah as that woman; but with all the attention Jael will soon have, no one will be kept in the dark for long, for the riddle is solved long before Jael invites Barak to view Sisera's corpse. The narrator had, at any rate, given God credit for shattering Sisera's power, and although Barak will soon join Deborah in singing the Poem, it is Deborah's voice and Jael's deed that will dominate it.

Sisera and his Mothers

We do not know much about Jael. We are told that she was *'ēšet hever*, the wife of Heber the Kenite. In the Prose, Heber is connected with Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (4.11); but even that point is disputed, with some scholars pronouncing Jael as tradeswoman or a priestess by erroneously equating Heber with a Mari kinship term *ḫibrum* that, in any case, should be read *ḫiprum*. Since antiquity, however, Jael has endured several transfigurations, among them as a seducer or a sexual object. For first-century Pseudo-Philo (Book 31) Jael pre-figures Judith to Sisera's Holofernes, an association that continues to be exploited today.[25] Sisera thinks beautiful Jael is worthy

61. It is telling that those who make such proposals are not always specialists in those languages. There are some fictional histories that ply similar routes, for example Joanne Williamson's *Hittite Warrior* (Warsaw, ND: Bethlehem Books, 1999). Whether Haroshet-haggoyim is a specific place or a garrison area is widely discussed in the literature.

25. A woman bringing death to an important man is by no means unique to Hebraic lore. Beyond the biblical examples of Jael and Sisera, Delilah and Samson, Judith and Holofernes, and less directly Esther and Haman, we meet with the motif in a number of literatures, among them Hittite and Ugaritic (see Cristiano Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets: Monarchic Power, Inspired Leadership, and Sacred Text in Biblical Narrative* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], pp. 78-84).

Often brought into comparison is the Ugaritic poem Aqhat, in which the title character is murdered for insulting (among other offences) the goddess Anat. The deed is done by Yatpan, a henchman, and we are told about his potential murder (the text

of him, but she has only revenge and the glory of God in her heart. In the Talmud, Jael's seductive voice sharpens Sisera's desire (*b. Meg.* 15a). Their encounter is brief, but he drinks the milk of her breasts (*b. Nid.* 55b) and rises to the occasion seven times. Jael, however, derives no pleasure from any of them (*Yev.* 103a; *Naz.* 23b), which might explain her resolve to murder him. This accent on physical attraction is veiled in the texts themselves, but is nevertheless heavily featured in modern treatment of the narratives, sometimes edging on the pornographic.[26] Until we get the movie version, however, I suggest hearing the delicious opera by Ildebrando Pizzetti, *Dèbora e Jaéle* of 1922. Jael and Sisera become lovers. She adores his elevated soul but must kill him during deep intimacy to prevent his capture by a fanatic Deborah and her Hebrew mob.[27]

Luckily, the biblical account is more interesting. In a handful of verses, Sisera moves from being a frightened, albeit proud, commander to a child seeking his mother's shelter. From the outset, Jael has him figured out. Terrified when he reaches her tent, he accepts wordlessly the cover for concealment. When his voice is heard for the first time, it is to beg for water. She gives him milk, in ancient times a drink hardly for adults, as it induces slumber and intensifies halitosis. She tucks him in once more and his last words to her (and to us all) are to ask for more protection. At this point, Sisera gives up the *qui vive* that is drilled into the soldier and leaves it to Jael

breaks here) by Pughat, Aqhat's sister. Margalit goes the farthest in connecting the whole with Judges 4–5, finding such parallels as (alleged) setting by the Sea of Galilee, shared characteristics between Heber and Yatpan as well as murder by trickery ('Observations on the Jael–Sisera Story [Judges 4–5]', in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* [ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995], pp. 629-41). Peter C. Craigie links Deborah and Anat by depending on their shared attributes: both are warriors, lead warriors, have an assistant, dominate battlefields, command the stars, and the like ('Deborah and Anat: A Study of Poetic Imagery [Judges 5]', *ZAW* 90 [1978], pp. 374-81). J. Gleu Taylor shifts the connection to Jael and Athtart: they are warlike; crush skulls; are paired with another woman; hunt or are hunted, and the like ('The Song of Deborah and Two Canaanite Goddesses', *JSOT* 23 [1982], pp. 99-108). Aside from connections that are impressionistic (they are gathered hither and yon with little interest in how they function in their respective narratives), elastic (Deborah and Jael are paired only by contexts), and too easily accommodating (Jael is associated with hunting because 'wild goats' are hunted), these comparisons hardly address what is at stake when Canaanite tales migrate into Hebrew contexts.

26. Reis is by far the least restrained ('Jael and Sisera').

27. See 'Debora e Jaele', Accessed 14 January 2010. Online: http://delteatro.it/dizionario_dell_opera/d/debora_e_jaele.php. See now Helen Leneman, 'Re-visioning a Biblical Story through Libretto and Music: *Debora e Jaele* by Ildebrando Pizzetti', *BibInt* 15 (2007), pp. 428-63.

to mother him. He falls asleep, never to awaken again. The scene is remarkable for its dense exposure of human senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, touching—and for its fair display of emotions, from pride to contempt, from fear to hope, from anxiety to confidence.

The motif of a woman mothering an adult who is not her own son is also featured in the Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh Epic, from the first half of the second millennium. Enkidu, a Tarzan character, mates with Šamkatu, a harlot, who is charged with changing him. Afterwards, holding Enkidu by the hand, the woman leads him, child-like, to other human beings where he learns to eat, drink, groom, and dress. By acting as an adult human being, Enkidu becomes one and is now ready to meet Gilgamesh. In this version, Enkidu's transfiguration is, more than anything else, anthropological, accompanied by the humor that one finds in watching awkward behavior.

This focus on Enkidu's move into the human world is the earliest of four we have. While two others from later in the second millennium have equivalent emphasis on the pedagogy of a woman (*ḫarimtu*), one from the first millennium (SB), has a sharply different texture.[28] On seeing the woman, Enkidu, mates with her; 'for six days and seven nights', the text says. There are no cigarette breaks or small chats; in fact hardly any human interaction beyond the sexual. Imagining himself unchanged, Enkidu wants to resume his frolics; but sensing him different, his animals dart away. Enkidu tries to join them but his body betrays him. Their rejection tells him what he is no longer. Silently, he sits at the woman's feet and waits to learn what he has become. His journey is solitary, private, intuitive, and psychologically astute.

Likewise, the Poem gives us different insights into Sisera and his fate. The scene is abruptly set, as if plucked from the ether. There is no direct dialogue, inviting us to exploit the psychology of the moment. The poet concentrates on just two crystallizing moments: Jael's hospitality and her murderous act. Here, Sisera's fate is not at all disgraceful. Yes; he had lost his battle; not to mortals but to stars in heaven and floods on earth.[29] There is no flight, whether on chariot or on foot, and certainly nothing about panic. Rather, we find him accepting Jael's offer of curds in a princely bowl, as befit his dignity. He does not cower; he does not hide; he does not lie down and

28. Well discussed in Andrew George, 'The Civilizing of Ea-Enkidu: An Unusual Tablet of the Babylonian Gilgameš Epic', *RA* 101 (2007), pp. 59-80.

29. Perhaps this is why the rabbis rewarded him by making him an ancestor of the great Rabbi Akiva: 'The Rabbis taught in a Baraita: Naaman was a resident convert. Nebuzaradan was a righteous convert. Descendants of Sisera learned Torah in Jerusalem [i.e., R. Akiva]. Descendants of Sancheriv taught Torah to the masses. And who were they? Shemaya and Avtalyon. Descendants of Haman studied Torah in B'nei B'rak, and there were even descendants of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar whom the Holy One, blessed be He, tried to bring under the wings of the Shechinah…' (*b. Sanh.* 96b).

he does not sleep. And when the mortal blow strikes, he takes it standing up. The language used here is reminiscent not of human combat, but of the savage battles at the end of time, when Leviathan is dispatched. Sisera is struck, apparently frontally, and falls. His collapse is conveyed cinematographically, with paired verbs of motion (*kāra'*, 'to break at the knee' and *nāfal*, 'to fall') that repeat as if from diverse perspectives. His body lands between Jael's legs, *bên raglêhā*. In recent writing, this notice is exploited sensationally: Sisera dies as Jael is servicing him sexually, either professionally or as a victim of rape. This is far-fetched. With Sisera standing and Jael in a position to crush his skull, their coupling must have been gymnastically ambitious.[30] It could be a scene of triumph, with victim at the foot of the victor; but it could also be a portrayal or parody of birthing.[31] If so, it might offer an interesting transition to the abrupt change of scene, taking us from the tent of Jael to the palace of Sisera, with his mother on the balcony awaiting the return of her son.

A Mother's Anxiety

In the Prose, Sisera is hardly given a biography. We meet him first as a redoubtable warrior with, unfortunately for him, God as his opponent. His end is ignominious: bloodied and swathed, his body is delivered to his enemies. In the Poem, however, he acquires a nameless mother who can display infinite tenderness toward her son. And there are harem ladies as well, who can recall Sisera's capacity to win wars and gain booty. We zoom to them through a *ḥallôn*, a cut in the wall, and then through an *'ešnāb*, perhaps a grill or a shutter, inviting much incongruous comparison with artifacts showing full-faced women as if framed by a window.[32] These women are said

30. 'Terms such as "kneel" and "lie", and the phrase, "between her legs", found in Judg. 5.27, create the double-entendre in a traditional Israelite medium' (Susan Niditch, 'The Challenge of Israelite Epic', in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* [ed. John Miles Foley; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005], pp. 277-87 [284]). There is hardly enough speculation on whether or not a soldier in retreat (as opposed to one in triumph) would have sex on the mind when negotiating an escape. Nor is there plausible discussion on the capacity of women in missionary (or any other) position to effectively wield weapons in both her hands.

31. Don Seeman, 'The Watcher at the Window: Cultural Poetics of a Biblical Motif', *Prooftexts* 24 (2004), pp. 1-50 (19).

32. A fairly comprehensive study is Claudia Suter, 'Die Frau am Fenster in der orientalischen Elfenbeinschnitzkunst des frühen 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.', *Jahrbuch der staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 29 (1992), pp. 7-28; but see also Ellen Rehm, 'Abschied von der heiligen Hure: Zum Bildmotiv der "Frau am Fenster" in der phönizisch-nordsyrischen Elfenbeinschnitzkunst', *UF* 35 (2004), pp. 487-519. Similar interpretations are assigned to Chinese tomb arts scenes with women in doorways; see Paul R. Goldin, 'The Motif of the Woman in the Doorway and Related Imagery in Traditional Chinese Funerary Art', *JAOS* 121 (2001), pp. 539-48.

to be prostitutes, which is hardly the case of Sisera's mother. The entire tableau covers two verses only and reads as if from a dirge; yet nothing in the women's behavior permits us to credit them with critiquing war 'which creates heroes but eliminates sons'.[33]

In striking contrast with the Poem's murder scene, these verses are suffused with conversations that Sisera's mother has with herself, bouncing her anxiety off her ladies-in-waiting. Pathos is increased if we imagine that events overtaking mother and son were synchronous. Nor must we confuse the anxiety of Sisera's mother with that of Ninsun, Gilgamesh's mother, who berates Shamash for giving her a restless son (GE III:ii [NA version]) or with that of Hecuba, who begs Hector not to face Achilles (*Iliad* 22.79-89).[34] Rather, it comes closest to the vision Aeschylus gives us of Atossa, mother of Xerxes.[35] Both mothers have sons who provoked God, and pay for it dearly.

The Structure of the Poem

Motherhood and matriarchy, therefore, seem to form a connective between crucial episodes in both Prose and Poetic versions. I would not venture to say whether we can credit the editing process for their presence or to speculate in which direction any harmonization occurred; except that there is one more observation to make, and it has to do with the structure of the poem.

As befits its bewilderingly differing voices, shifts of focus, embedded reflections, and torrents of words and images, the Poem is amenable to diverse structural analyses, leading to diverse evocations of contexts. It opens on an invocation and a theophany (vv. 1-5) before moving to the confrontation. An impotent Israel rallies behind Deborah (vv. 6-13). The tribes assemble, the intense or dedicated among them are followed by the indifferent, or perhaps, cowardly (vv. 14-21). The battle is fleeting, with the constellations above and the waters below united against the enemy. Cursed is Meroz, so effectively that the place is lost to memory (vv. 22-23). The curse resolves into a blessing for Jael, recapturing his murder and the fretfulness of his mother (vv. 24-30). Throughout, the Poem is punctuated by the poet's metaphorical glee, the last invoking divine support, as everlasting and constant as the sun rising daily.

In modern literature the surprising consensus is that the Poem forms a single unit, emotionally if not stylistically. The reasons are many and depend

33. Niditch, 'Israelite Epic', p. 284; see Exum, 'Feminist Criticism', pp. 73-75.

34. For an excellent review of women facing wars in classical myths and epics, see Foley (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, especially pp. 109-11.

35. Cited by R.J. Tournay, 'Le Cantique de Débora et ses relectures', in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (ed. Michael V. Fox *et al.*; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 195-207 (205); see http://www.ucalgary.ca/~vandersp/Courses/texts/aescpers.html (lines 159-214). Death, it turns out, overtakes only the dreams of Xerxes.

on cues taken from apportioning the Poem. The opening theophany has inspired a cultic setting; the move from misery to triumph has suggested a ceremonial occasion; the focus on Sisera has stimulated comparison with Ugaritic myths, and the roster of tribes has prompted sociological reconstructions. Many of the proposals have merits; but for me the sequencing of tribes is a useful clue. We have already observed how the Poem early on invoked a triumphant Deborah—not as a judge, prophetess, or augur—, but as a 'Mother in Israel' (5.7). We have also noticed how it ended on the moaning of Sisera's mother (5.28-30). I suggest that maternity also plays a role in the invocation and arrangement of tribes in one of Israel's masterpieces.

The Matriarchs as Scheme

Ten tribes are listed, in an order that is not matched elsewhere in Scripture: Ephraim, Benjamin, *Machir*, Zebulun, Issachar, Reuben, Gilead, Dan, Asher, [Zebulun again], and Naphtali.[36] Machir and Gilead are cited here as if full-fledged tribes.[37] Naturally, some scholars emend the text to reach the traditional twelve and others trim the number into the preferred seven.[38] Opinions on the sequence differ sharply. Europeans tend to think it is aimless or devoid of useful historical information.[39] Americans, with higher stakes in the Poem's historicity, distribute them either by allegiance to Deborah (hence Israel) or geographically.[40] There is virtue in most proposals; but here I examine the tribe's alleged ancestry.

36. For those lists, see Jack M. Sasson, 'A Genealogical "Convention" in Biblical Chronography', *ZAW* 90 (1978), pp. 171-85. Johannes de Moor emends Judg. 5:13-14 disconcertingly and interprets other verses recklessly to arrive at twelve tribes ('The Twelve Tribes in the Song of Deborah', *VT* 43 [1993], pp. 483-94). Manipulating the poetry in 5:13-18 he arranges the resulting tribes into four triads that correlate with what is found in Genesis 49, and Numbers 2 and 10. For David Noel Freedman, the Song 'reflects the actual state of affairs at the time [twelfth century]: namely, that there was a ten-tribe league which bore the name of Israel' since a twelve-tribe federation did not materialize until a century later (*Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Collected Essays on Hebrew Poetry*; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980), p. 153. Freedman's argument 'frôle le cercle' in Caquot's opinion ('Les tribus d'Israël', p. 50).

37. Zebulun occurs twice, perhaps imperfectly spliced from the prose where are cited just Naphtali and Zebulun.

38. Respectively de Moor, 'The Twelve Tribes', pp. 483-94, and Philippe Guillaume, 'Deborah and the Seven Tribes', *BN* 101 (2000), pp. 18-21.

39. Caquot, 'Les tribus d'Israël', p. 68.

40. See above, note 10. For Geoffrey Miller, the Song, with its listing of tribes, is a 'ledger in an oral culture for the recordation of inter-tribal obligations' ('The Song of Deborah: A Legal-Economic Analysis', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 144 [1996], pp. 2293-320 [2295]). It was kept alive beyond the years of tribal confederacy as an argument for the superiority of the monarchy.

Table B: Tribal Lists

Order	(a) Gen. 29–30	(b) Gen. 35	(c) Gen. 46	(d) Gen. 49	(e) Exod. 1	(f) Num. 1.5-16	(g) Num. 1.20-43	(i) Num. 26	(h) Num. 13	(j) Deut. 33	(k) I Chr. 2	(l) I Chr. 12	(m) Judg. 5
1st	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_R	L_Y	$R_{E\ (J)}$
2nd	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_S	L_Y	L_S	L_S	R_B
3rd	L_L	L_L	L_L	L_L	L_L	L_Y	Z_G	Z_G	L_Y	L_L	L_L	L_L	$R_{mach(J)}$
4th	L_Y	L_Y	L_Y	L_Y	L_Y	L_I	L_Y	L_Y	L_I	R_B	L_Y	R_B	L_Z
5th	B_D	L_I	L_I	L_Z	L_I	L_Z	L_I	L_I	$R_{E(J)}$	$R_{J(E)}$	L_I	$R_{J(E)}$	L_I
6th	B_N	L_Z	L_Z	L_I	L_Z	$R_{J(E)}$	L_Z	L_Z	R_B	$R_{J(M)}$	L_Z	$R_{J(M1)}$	L_R
7th	Z_G	R_J	Z_G	B_D	R_B	$R_{J(M)}$	$R_{J(E)}$	$R_{M(J)}$	L_Z	L_Z	B_D	L_I	$Z_{Gil(G?)}$
8th	Z_A	R_B	Z_A	Z_G	B_D	R_B	$R_{J(M)}$	$R_{E(J)}$	$R_{J(M)}$	L_I	R_J	L_Z	B_D
9th	L_I	B_D	R_J	Z_A	B_N	B_D	R_B	R_B	B_D	Z_G	R_B	B_N	Z_A
10th	L_Z	B_N	R_B	B_N	Z_G	Z_A	B_D	B_D	Z_A	B_D	B_N	B_D	$[L_Z]\ B_N$
11th	R_J	Z_G	B_D	R_J	Z_A	Z_G	Z_A	Z_A	B_N	B_N	Z_G	Z_A	
12th		Z_A	B_N	R_B		B_N	B_N	B_N	Z_G	Z_A	Z_A	$L_R\ Z_G$ R_{M2}	

LEAH: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah [Y], Issachar, Zebulun
RACHEL: Joseph [Ephraim/Manasseh], Benjamin
ZILPAH: Gad, Asher
BILHAH: Dan, Naphtali

In our list, first are mentioned Ephraim, Benjamin, and Machir, descendents of Rachel, Jacob's adored wife. Ephraim is Joseph's son and Machir his grandson, via Manasseh. Next are mentioned Zebulun, Issachar, and Reuben. They are sons of Leah, although not in the birth order they have in Genesis. There, their names and sequence are cue to the ferocious struggle taking place between the daughters of Laban.

The final group of tribes is born to Zilpah and to Bilhah, surrogates respectively to Rachel and Leah. If we leave out the repeat mention of Zebulun, we have Gilead, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. It is generally assumed that Gilead, which is a place rather than a tribe, is a substitute for Gad. A good link is that Gilead occupies the 7th slot in this roster, equivalent to the value of the consonants in the name Gad: *gimel* = 3 and *dalet* = 4.[41] So the names in this last group play leapfrog with ancestry: Zilpah, Bilhah, Zilpah, Bilhah.[42]

As an organizing device, listing tribes by descent from matriarchs is always deliberate. In fact, of about fourteen such lists, all but a handful follow this pattern, even if within these lists the inventory of eponyms does not always follow the birth order as classically laid out in Genesis 29–30. However, none of the other rosters begins with Rachel.

This particular investment in motherhood raises issues that are not easily solvable. What does it tell us intellectually and culturally about Israel that such an effort is set within a grandly martial context? The combination is certainly unusual; yet it cannot be proof, as is claimed, of gendered authorship. If so, we might assign vast portions of Biblical narratives to women authors, since the men in crises are rarely presented without women to save them from predicaments. It would be convenient—even attractive—to join a chorus of scholarly voices that attributes to women the creation of victory odes; except that I am not sure anyone knows how to control the criteria for such an attribution.[43] It is also not enough to claim that women likely composed odes because biblical lore says that they chanted them and danced to them. Nor is it necessarily logical, in my opinion, that the mocking and taunting that are characteristic of the genre should be an exclusive domain

41. Gad takes up the 7th slot in lists a (Gen. 29–30) and c (Gen. 46). In the latter, Gad is allotted 7 sons and forms part of a community of 70 individuals that went down to Egypt.

42. (1) *Ephraim* (via Joseph, #11/*11*), *Benjamin* (#12/12), and *Machir* (via Joseph, #11/*11*, and Manasseh). These are Rachel tribes. (2) *Zebulun* (#10/5), *Issachar* (#9/6), and *Reuben* (#1/*1*). These are Leah tribes. (3) *Gilead* (if = Gad; *Leah*'s Zilpah[2], #7/8), *Dan* (*Rachel*'s Bilhah, #5/*7*), *Asher* (*Leah*'s Zilpah, #8/9), [*Zebulun* again], *Naphtali* (*Rachel*'s Bilhah, #6/*10*). These are Concubine tribes.

43. The issues are reviewed, with bibliography, in Steve Cook, 'Habakkuk 3, Gender, and War', *Lectio difficilior* (2009/1), n.p. [cited 14 January 2010]. Online: http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/09_1/steve_cook_habakkuk_3.html.

of women.[44] Homer and Vergil are full of taunts and mockery, some of which are assigned to women (Hellene), but most are allotted to men.[45] And if we stay with Classical testimony, we might notice that similar categories of panegyrics were composed by men (Pindar, Simonides).

While I doubt that men alone crafted biblical lore, as far as the remarkable role maternity has played in organizing the Poem my conclusions are now rather modest. To begin with, the listing underscores the role of Northern tribes, not at all a surprise, given the context. The grouping by matriarchs warns us not to interpret their presence historically, geographically, or economically, as has been done. What is implied is that traditions about Jacob, his wives, and the personal tribulations that they experienced were available when the Poem was constructed, and their knowledge proved fundamental. Additionally, the arrangement may have been crafted *before* editing had made it conventional to open such series on tribes, perhaps also before traditions on the order of eponymous birth had become fixed. At the least, therefore, these observations might give us a useful angle from which to speculate on the composition, or perhaps better, on the redaction of the poem, if not from the historical or chronological perspectives, certainly from those that are cultural or intellectual.

A Mother for Israel

Pseudo-Philo, the highly nationalistic and inventive author of *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* who is presumed to be a near contemporary of Josephus, has the most extensive and effusive portrayal of Deborah, assigning to her some of the most moving language invented for biblical characters.[46] In it, Israel is said to lose its sense of ancestry, consorting with Amorite women. God decides to have a woman enlighten them (30.2). On taking charge, Deborah

44. A.L. Keith, 'The Taunt in Homer and Vergil', *CJ* 19 (1924), pp. 554-60.

45. David Sider, 'The New Simonides and the Question of Historical Elegy', *AJP* 127 (2006), pp. 327-46. See Deborah Boedeker and David Sider (eds.), *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), with lots of relevant articles.

46. Useful studies on Pseudo-Philo are Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and the massive commentary of Jacobson (*A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English*, 2 vols. [Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, 31; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996]). Mary Therese DesCamp, 'Why Are These Women Here? An Examination of the Sociological Setting of Pseudo-Philo through Comparative Reading', *JSP* 16 (1997), pp. 53-80 (68-70), has a nice table comparatively displaying HB and *LAB* on Deborah. Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch, 'At the Hands of a Woman: Rewriting Jael in Pseudo-Philo', *JSP* 17 (1998), pp. 53-64, studies the Sisera episode in Pseudo-Philo. A serviceable online translation is at 'The Biblical Antiquities of Philo', http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/index.htm.

rehearses God's plan for Israel. Sisera dies at the hand of a proselyte (Jael) because he planned to enslave Israelite women (31.1). As his life ebbs away, Sisera recognizes that death has turned the tables on him (31.7). Pseudo-Philo finds a way to assign the Song to Deborah alone (32.19), shifting its contents towards another rehearsal of the past and adding poignant sentiments on matriarchs and the pain they have had in raising their children (32.1-6).

After forty years of judging Israel, Deborah tells the people, 'I admonish you as a woman of God, and give you light as one of the race of women; obey me now as your mother, and obey my words as mortals who must die' (33.1) Her advice does not differ much from the usual exhortation for leading a god-fearing life; but when people beg their mother to intercede for them from the beyond (33.4), Deborah insists that they must earn their own salvation here on Earth. These are tough parting shots, worthy of a mother raising children before Dr Spock's *Baby and Childcare*.

I opened this modest bouquet to Cheryl by referring to her insights into the theme of motherhood in Judges 4–5. I am glad to end it by citing Pseudo-Philo, likely a Jewish woman, who almost two millennia ago offered clues to nudge us closer to Cheryl's perspective.[47]

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47. On the possibility that Pseudo-Philo was a woman, see DesCamp, 'Why Are These Women Here?', pp. 76-80.

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