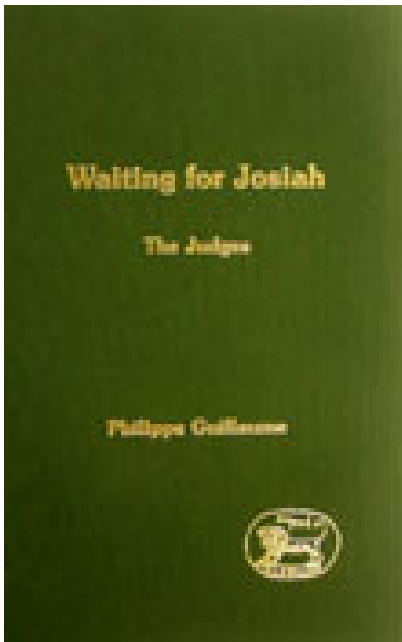


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Waiting for Josiah: The Judges

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The volume is a published doctoral thesis directed by A. de Pury and submitted to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Geneva. The author seeks to understand the creation of the book of Judges using an alternative model to the proposal by M. Noth that it formed an integral part of the Deuteronomistic History and was written within a larger vision of periodizing Israel's past that was conceived and executed in the exile. He favors instead the understanding that the Hexateuch was the original core corpus of writings, with Judges–2 Kings and Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther only becoming fixed into their current “chronological” ordering around 200 B.C.E., with deliberate editorial links being added to tie them together. The dating is proposed by observing that lack of knowledge of any kings as part of a larger history by Hecateus of Abdera, who wrote during the reign of Ptolemy I (306–283 B.C.E.), and the failure of the clear, discrete periods of the judges, the united monarchy, and the divided monarchy to appear in Neh 9. The earliest datable attestation of Judges as a discrete period between the occupation and the united monarchy is found in Sir 46:11, roughly 200 B.C.E. This study is situated within the current debate concerning the formation of the Decateuch (Genesis–2 Kings, Ezra–Nehemiah) and is a serious attempt to come to terms with the process by which these books were eventually

assembled in their present order. Guillaume is part of a growing group of scholars who are rejecting Noth's hypothesis.

The topic grew out of the discussion of papers by T. Römer, A. de Pury, and E. A. Knauf at a seminar on Deuteronomistic History in 1995 in which faculty and graduate students from the Universities of Fribourg, Geneva, and Lausanne participated. Guillaume specifically wanted to explore more fully the proposal of Knauf that a Book of Saviors was composed at Bethel after 720 B.C.E. Using commonly identified passages that seem to represent competing or conflicting ideologies, Guillaume seeks to delineate the stages of growth from the Book of Saviors to the book of Judges in its present form. He proposes that there were seven stages and attempts to place each within the politico-historical setting that would have given rise to the issues and solutions that are being addressed within each stage of augmentation and modification. His approach seems to be informed by ideological criticism, even though he does not explicitly acknowledge his use of this method.

Stage 1, the Book of Saviors, consisted of Judg 3-9, although it is uncertain if 3:7-11 was original or part of the second stage. Its composition is situated in the aftermath of Israel's conversion into the Assyrian province of Samerina. Its purpose was to assert that Israel remained the people of Yahweh in spite of its kings having broken their vassal *berit* overseen by Yahweh with their Assyrian overlords, thereby also rebelling against their God. God's direct intervention on behalf of his people through saviors had worked in the distant past and would again, in spite of provincial status and the loss of kingship.

Stage 2 saw the addition of 1:4-18, 27-34; 3:9-11 in the aftermath of the loss of the Shephelah in 701 B.C.E. Under Manasseh, the Book of Saviors was taken to Jerusalem and expanded to provide a religious justification for the king's scrupulous vassalage to his Assyrian overlord. The new introduction centered on the immediate accomplishment of Judah, representing the Jerusalemite elite, in defeating ten thousand Canaanites and Perizzites at Bezek and taking Hebron, Debir, Hormah, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, in distinction to the slow progress of Israel to gain control over the plain. At the same time, it contrasted Judah with the sons of Judah, portrayed as a horde of raiders from the Negeb, who never captured a city; they set fire to Jerusalem and killed people there and waged war against the Judean countryside in the Negeb.

In stage 3, Josiah's scribes added 2:1-5, 11-19; 6:7-10; 10:1-3; 12:9-15; 17-18 to make it consistent with this king's program of territorial expansion. Judges 2:1-5 now made Israel guilty for their incomplete conquest in order to legitimize Josiah's imperialistic designs on this territory. The schema in 2:11-19 and the notice of the anonymous prophet in 6:7-10 eliminated the immediate and unconditional salvation of Yahweh in stage 1: he

now would only deliver those who suffered and groaned (but did not cry out as before) without Assyrian religious lore. Gideon's cycle was modified to depict Israel as idolatrous and cowardly, and the five "judges" were introduced in chapters 10 and 12 in order to present the Assyrian period as an interim, waiting for Josiah. Lastly, the migration of the Danites was added to accomplish two goals: while illustrating the dangers faced by a kingless people, it also highlighted the opportunities for expansion open to Judah contemporaneously under waning Assyrian power.

In the aftermath of Judah's being made a Babylonian province in 586 B.C.E., the book, now back again at Bethel, the central sanctuary of the new province, underwent a fourth expansion. The story of two "losers," Jephthah (10:6–11:11) and Samson (11:29–16:31), were added to address the new situation. They were intended to eliminate the idea of Israel's early heroes, both saviors and judges, while simultaneously disavowing Mesopotamian mythology in an effort to disparage their previous Assyrian connections, since Assyria had not been able to withstand conquest by the Babylonians.

The return of the some Judeans from Babylonian to Yehud to restore Jerusalem to its former status as regional capital prompted stage 5: the addition of Bethel's conquest after Jerusalem's in 1:22–26 and the story of the Levite's concubine in 19–21 at some point between 515 and 450 B.C.E. The latter was designed to depict how chaotic rule under a leaderless Benjamin as well as under the Benjaminite king Saul had been and would be again as a means of legitimizing the elimination of the tribe (Judg 20) and setting up a permanent division between Jerusalem and the remaining Benjaminites. At this point, the book's form was more or less set, with only two subsequent minor editorial phases.

Around 200 B.C.E., in order to integrate the book into its current sequence between Joshua and Samuel to create a historiography of the Jewish nation for the Greek-speaking world, the figure of Joshua was inserted at three points (1:1–3; 2:6–10; 2:20–3:6), 1:19–21 was added to smooth out the most blatant contradictions between Joshua and Judges while 1:36 was cut off for the same purpose, a parallel was drawn between the judging activities of Deborah and Samuel (4:4–5), and 21:25 was added either to provide a frame for Judg 19–21 or to be the original conclusion to the book. Sometime around 150 B.C.E. a call for better military training was added in 2:20–3:6 and a justification for the Hasmonean annexation of Perea in 11:12–28. Otherwise, only a few details were added or altered: Heber the Kenite, to seal an alliance between the Maccabees and the Jewish group linked with the book of Enoch, in 4:11, 17, 21, and Jael's hammer, which was made into a "Maccabee" (*maqebet*) in 5:24.

Not everyone will find the proposed stages and settings convincing, but the author has made a serious attempt to grapple with the book's inconsistencies and history and has interacted with an impressive range of secondary literature. There are many intriguing observations that warrant further exploration and much food for thought. I will discuss some of the points that I found troublesome as a way of dialoguing with the author more than critiquing, since it is often not possible to bring counterevidence to disprove a suggested reconstruction. One general criticism can be made, however. The author has a tendency to assert a position, citing someone's discussion in a footnote, rather than presenting what he deems to be relevant evidence and making an argument for the position. Thus, it is frequently impossible to evaluate the strength or weakness of an idea without reading the secondary discussions.

There is some inconsistency in argument concerning the indicators of early Hebrew dialects versus late Hebrew containing Aramaicisms. On the one hand, what often are seen to be Aramaicisms in the Song of Deborah are argued instead to be evidence of early local dialects. On the other hand, what presumably are similar and overlapping indicators, though they are not discussed specifically to see how many are the same, are taken to demonstrate the late nature of the Hebrew in 6:17 and chapters 19–21. The valiant attempt to date Samson to the Assyrian period by showing he could be modeled on Enkidu and various Assyrian myths rather than on Hercules overlooks the explicit parallel details in 16:13–14 found only in the Greek tradition, pointed out long ago by O. Margalit (*VT* 36 [1986]: 225–34).

The likelihood that Bethel was the source of a collection of savior stories, as well as Amos and Hosea, is strong; I would also add the Elijah-Elisha stories and northern royal chronicles to this list. I myself argued for the existence of such an extensive library at Bethel in a paper given at the Westar Institute in 1988 and again in one given at the Chicago Society for Biblical Research in 1989. Whether the list of northern Benjaminite cities in Josh 18:21–24 reflects the reality of the time of Josiah, when this border region might have been taken from the province of Samerina (2 Kgs 23:15–20), or new boundaries established by the Neo-Babylonians in 586 when they created the province of Yehud, or a change instituted around 450 B.C.E. under Artaxerxes I when Jerusalem was rebuilt and the territory under its jurisdiction might have been reassessed is not clear. A case can be made for each of these dates. Guillaume has followed the dominant view, even though he notes specifically that the tradition in 2 Kings makes no claim of territorial conquest. In this particular instance, he has not explored other possibilities, as he does with most issues. Z. Kallai has proposed a date under Abijah (2 Chr 18; *Historical Geography of the Bible*, 398) for example, in addition to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian options noted above.

Were one to assign the change in border to the Neo-Babylonians or Persians, then his stages 2 and 3 would not work because there would not have been ready access to the Book of Saviors by Jerusalemite scribes, unless one were to posit that literary works traveled readily across political boundaries, which he does not. Notwithstanding, he never explains how Manasseh's scribes would have come to discover the Book of Saviors, composed at Bethel, in Samerina, and obtain a copy. His model, in fact, seems to require such a scenario for the initial transmission of the book from north to south, but not thereafter, when Bethel became part of the south. How tight political borders were is a question; we can posit their existence, since villages would have been enrolled within a given kingdom for purposes of paying taxes and conscription. While access across such borders may well have been unrestricted, would scribes have regularly traveled to libraries in adjoining lands to read the latest locally produced first editions?

It should also be noted that his proposed dating under Manasseh for the reference in 1:18 to Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron does not correspond fully with Sennacherib's having given the forty-six cities and towns with their dependent villages to Gaza, Ashdod, and Ekron, which he cites. Neither does his suggested parallel between the list of cities not conquered by Asher in 1:31 (Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob) correspond fully with Sennacherib's list of Sidonian fortresses covering roughly the same territory that he cites (Sidon the Great, Little Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Zarephath, Mahalliba, Ushu, Achzib and Acco).

Guillaume's adoption of J. Blenkinsopp's proposal that Bethel was the central sanctuary of the Neo-Babylonian province of Yehud carries with it the presumption that cult centralization had already been introduced before the end of the monarchy and was being carried on during the exile, even after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is more likely, however, that Mizpah had its own intramural sanctuary, given it was the new district seat, and that the altars and sanctuaries in towns that had not been destroyed remained intact. Gibeon probably also had its own sanctuary; it appears to have been deliberately destroyed at about the same time Bethel went out of existence. Further reflection on the nature and practice of the cult of Yahweh in Neo-Babylonian Yehud seems warranted.

The distinction proposed by Guillaume between the countryside and Jerusalem during the reign of Manasseh seems to hold under Josiah as well, so it seems possible to collapse these two editorial levels into one. I am not persuaded that there is a deliberate distinction being made in 1:4–18 between Judah and the sons of Judah; both groups fight in the hill country and Negeb. The two seem to be synonymous. Guillaume cites only 2 Kgs 21:16 in support of his view that there was antagonism between the two, and this text is open to a range of interpretations; there is nothing to favor a construal of the innocent blood to belong to countryside partisans or having been shed in an act of solidarity with them.

It is likely that the landed aristocracy were living at court and participating in affairs of state-owned estates in the countryside; this would have been standard. They always would have received a bigger share of the profit than those of lesser means because of the size of their land holdings, so the source of animosity triggered by heavier demands of production due to tribute burdens would logically have struck all land-owners alike. It is hard to distinguish Guillaume's countryside discontents from "the people of the land" who enthroned Josiah. I find no clear evidence to support his view that a new, anti-Assyrian elite that had traditionally been centered at Hebron now moved into the capital and inaugurated its new counterempire program. Certainly there would have been those among the landed aristocracy and at court who would have held a minority view on international politics and the course that should be taken by any given monarch. It must be remembered, however, that the political scene was changing with the rise of Egypt and Babylonia as allies against the Assyrians. In such a situation, internal policy would have needed reexamination and some who had favored cooperation might now have considered it expedient to attempt rebellion. We need not look for a coup by "the people of the land" to explain a change in royal foreign policy. He also fails to take into account the analyses of N. Na'aman of Josiah's political options (*TA* 18[1991]: 3–71), even though he has read this important article.

Guillaume's suggestion that stage 4 was characterized by a desire to reject Assyrian religious ideology and mythology under the new Neo-Babylonian regime is open to further consideration. If, indeed, the story of Jephthah is an attempt to "folklorize" the Tammuz ritual, it needs to be noted that the cult of Tammuz was not explicitly Assyrian; it was widespread in Mesopotamia and well-known in Babylonia. Samson's destructive foxes may relate to the Sumerian *Tale of the Fox*, but this is known in both Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian form, just as the proposed connection of the fox with Gula, the goddess of healing, or the jawbone as a play on Ninurta's weapon, the sickle-sword, can make sense in either context. Why then limit their practice only to the Assyrian period rather than seeing their continuation under the Babylonians, who worshiped these same gods? The historical implications of the further claims that the Samson story is also an onslaught against the main Phoenician divinities, Dagon and Shamash, are not explored to an equal degree. All of the proposed attempts to castigate non-Yahwistic religious practices and cults would make equal or better sense in the Persian period, after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple, when a new program pushing the cult of Yahweh-Elohim would have actively tried to eliminate the cults of all other gods that were being practiced within Yehud—be they of Assyrian, Babylonian, or Phoenician origin. In this case as well, it seems that stages 4 and 5 could be collapsed with no problem.

A point that has apparently been overlooked in determining the dating and shape of the Book of Saviors as it was made available to southern scribes is that the judges, as well as

the saviors, are all northern in origin. If there were longer traditions about these individuals that had already been gathered together or were recorded in various writings, it is more likely that they, too, would have been part of the library at Bethel and not the one in Jerusalem, which could have been moved to Mizpah after 586 B.C.E. Tola is an Issacharite from Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim; Jair was Gileadite, like Jephthah, Elon was from Zebulun, Abdon was from Pirathon in Ephraim; only Ibzan might be southern; he was buried in Bethlehem, but this might not have been the Judahite town of that name but the northern one in Zebulun (Josh 19:15). Logically, then, the judges should already have been part of the Book of Saviors when it was taken up by the southern scribes, or it needs to be argued explicitly that when the scribes of Josiah's court decided to augment the original work by adding the judges, they deliberately used old northern traditions to do so, in keeping with the character of the book. Guillaume sees them as ideal civil servants of the Josianic "Greater Israel" to be, whose rule, once Josiah had conquered Samerina, would mark the end of violence and institute a time of prosperity without cities, corvée labor, or deportations. He seems to have overlooked the fact that the *pax assyrica* had already descended on Samerina, ending violence and deportations there, while corvée labor would have continued whether the people had served the Assyrian king or the Judahite king.

It is unclear to me how his proposed rationale for the addition of the judges in the time of Josiah would have swayed potential northern readers to think that Judahite control would have benefited them more than Assyrian control. The judges make better sense as part of the postulated, original, pro-Assyrian book, where times are being depicted as irenic under the new lords and their local representatives, the judges, so that Yahweh will no longer need to raise up saviors; there will be no more threat of foreign invasion or attack by neighboring people now that the people are part of the Assyrian empire. Perhaps, if Guillaume wants to maintain the distinction between an original frame in 3:7–11 and the secondary schema in 2:11–23, he needs to consider that the book that was taken up by southern scribes, either at the time of Josiah, after 586 B.C.E., or after 450 B.C.E., already had been expanded by scribes in Bethel to include the judges alongside the saviors. In keeping with these observations, I would also add that more thought needs to be given to the geographical locations and opponents of the core saviors, the unnamed opponent of Cushan-rishathaim, Ehud, Barak, Gideon (and Abimelech). Why would these particular heroes have been assembled into a collection to form the basis of a book post-720 B.C.E.?

The objections I have raised should not be seen as an indication that this book has little merit; to the contrary, it tackles an amazing range of issues, large and small, all of which are controversial, with many possible options. Under the circumstances, one can only hope to persuade a majority of readers to agree with a number of the points and find the overall reconstruction plausible. The book stimulates much reflection and a reconsideration of

standard answers to many questions whose “givenness” should not be assumed but is. I recommend this book to literary, textual, ideological, and historical critics alike; it requires an active reading, not a passive one, and challenges us to examine our presuppositions and inherited models, some of which may have reached their sell-by date and others which may need modification in order to remain acceptable.