

# From Samson to Structural Closure: A Syntactic-Hierarchical Reading of Judges 13:2-21:25

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## 1. Introduction

The Samson narrative (Judg. 13-16) and the final chapters of Judges (17-21) are frequently treated in scholarship as distinct literary appendices within the book's overall structure. Judges 17-21 is often designated a "double epilogue," understood as thematically parallel to earlier sections yet structurally detachable from the preceding cyclical narratives.<sup>1</sup> Such

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- 1 Gordon Oeste, 'Butchered Brothers and Betrayed Families: Degenerating Kinship Structures in the Book of Judges', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament XXXV* (2011): 295-316. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: Judges & Ruth* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2007), 25-263. Barry G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 46* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 81-206. David Beldman, *The Book of Judges: Deserting the King* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 11-12. Lawson G. Stone, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, Tyndale Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 37-42. Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 100. Gregory T. K. Wong, *Commentary on Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 12-52. Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*

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classifications, however, are typically based on thematic parallels or structural symmetry rather than sustained analysis of the Hebrew text's syntactic and discourse organization.

This study does not assume in advance that Judges 13:2-21:25 constitutes a single unified compositional movement. Rather, it explores this possibility as a hypothesis emerging from synchronic text-linguistic analysis of the final form of the text. Beginning from the macro-launch formula in Judges 13:1, the study examines whether Judges 13:2 functions as a significant transition introducing a new discourse phase that may extend through 21:25. Through detailed analysis of clause type, verbal morphology, participant continuity, lexical recurrence, and discourse-level structuring, it investigates whether these features exhibit sufficient coherence to support a macro-structural reading of this span.

Within this exploratory framework, clause patterns at 13:2, 17:1, 17:7, and 19:1 are analyzed not as predefined epilogical openings, but as potential discourse markers whose function must be determined on the basis of their syntactic and hierarchical relations within the text. Particular attention is given to correspondences between the Samson cycle and Judges 17-21, including repeated formulae, evaluative refrains, and shifts in clause prominence.

The refrain “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל) is therefore examined not only as theological commentary, but also as a possible discourse-structuring element contributing to the organization and progression of the narrative.

By using a synchronic text-linguistic and hierarchical approach, this study seeks to assess whether Judges 13:2-21:25 can be described

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(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 58-267.

as exhibiting a coherent macro-structural trajectory characterized by progressive intensification, and thereby to contribute to ongoing discussions on the literary architecture and theological movement of the Book of Judges.

## 2. Research History

### 2.1. Literary Units

#### 2.1.1. Tripartite Structure

Jeong Mi-hye, Lee Hee-hak, and Yang In-cheol all interpret Judges according to a tripartite structure, viewing Judges 17-21 as either a conclusion or an appendix to the main body of the book.

Jeong Mi-hye distinguishes Judges 17-18 from 19-21 on the basis that each section presupposes a different *Sitz im Leben* and implied readership.<sup>2</sup> Lee Hee-hak likewise regards Judges 17-21 as the concluding section of the book.

Yang In-cheol divides Judges into an introduction (1:1-3:6), a main body (3:7-16:31), and a conclusion (17:1-21:25).<sup>3</sup> Within this framework, the Samson narrative (13-16) constitutes the final subsection of the main body. He supports this interpretation by appealing to James Crenshaw's concentric structural analysis and by highlighting recurring literary features such as repeated verbs, themes, and female figures — including Samson's mother, the Timnite woman, the woman of Gaza, and

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2 Jeong Mi-hye, "Hidden Polemic in Judges 17-18," *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 31, no. 3 (2025): 243-70.

3 Yang In-cheol, "A Rhetorical Reading of the Samson Narrative (Judges 13-16)," *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 31, no. 4 (2025): 487-517.

Delilah — which collectively unify Judges 13-16 into a coherent literary unit.

The present study recognizes the originality and scholarly contribution of these approaches. At the same time, relatively little attention has been devoted to examining the syntactic organization of Judges at the level of the book's broader linguistic system. Accordingly, the present study seeks to contribute an additional perspective through text-linguistic analysis, recognizing that different methodologies may yield different but complementary interpretive insights.

### 2.1.2. Double Structure

In contrast to tripartite approaches, the present study proposes a bipartite macro-structure for the Book of Judges. The prologue extends from Judges 1:1-2:10, while the main body spans 2:11-21:25. This main body is further subdivided into two major sections: 2:11-13:1 and 13:2-21:25. Within this framework, Judges 13:2 is understood as a major structural transition introducing a new phase in Israel's narrative trajectory, which culminates in the social, religious, and tribal fragmentation depicted in Judges 17-21.

On the basis of text-linguistic analysis, the study argues that this macro-structure is best described in terms of two major bodies, 1:1-13:1 and 13:2-21:25. It further suggests that the narrative movement initiated at 13:2 continues within the broader historiographical sequence of the Former Prophets, contributing to the overall trajectory of the Samuel-Kings corpus.

## 2.2. Methodology

### 2.2.1. Historical-Critical Approaches: Merits and Limitations

Jeong Mi-hye argues that Judges 17-18 and 19-21 should be interpreted as distinct literary units because each section presupposes a different *Sitz im Leben* and implied readership. According to her reconstruction, Judges 17-18 was composed in support of Josiah's religious reform and functions as a critique of Jeroboam's idolatry and the cultic shrines at Bethel and Dan.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, she interprets Judges 19-21 against the historical backdrop following Judah's fall to Babylon, when Gedaliah, a non-Davidic governor, ruled the region.<sup>5</sup> Within this context, she suggests that the narrative reflects tensions between Benjaminite groups associated with Saulide traditions and Judahite groups favoring the restoration of Davidic kingship. Consequently, the negative portrayal of Benjamin in Judges 19-21 is understood as a literary strategy intended to undermine Benjaminite legitimacy.

Her reconstruction of the *Sitz im Leben* and implied readership constitutes a stimulating and methodologically coherent proposal within the framework she adopts. Nevertheless, such reconstructions inevitably remain hypothetical, since they rely on inferred historical settings that cannot be conclusively verified from the text itself.

From the perspective of the present study, it may be methodologically preferable to explore the literary and theological correspondences between Judges 17-21 and the narratives of Kings, arguing that the former anticipates themes later developed in the monarchy narratives. Such an approach allows the interpreter to discuss intertextual and literary

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4 Jeong Mi-hye, "Hidden Polemic in Judges 17-18," 243-70.

5 Jeong Mi-hye, "Hidden Political Script in Judges 19-21," 240-75.

relationships without depending upon highly specific reconstructions of hypothetical audiences or historical circumstances.

Yang In-cheol applies rhetorical criticism to Judges 13-16.<sup>6</sup> Moving beyond the earlier rhetorical approaches associated with James Muilenburg, he employs the more refined rhetorical categories developed by George Kennedy. He classifies rhetorical strategies into forensic, deliberative, and epideictic forms, identifying how each episode seeks to persuade its audience and explaining the intended rhetorical function of each narrative segment.

Particularly noteworthy is Yang's treatment of implied readership. Rather than limiting the text to a single hypothetical historical audience, he allows for multiple possible settings and readerships, including pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic, and transhistorical readers. In this respect, his approach successfully mediates between historical-critical approaches and broader literary interpretation.

From the perspective of the present study, this more open-ended literary approach provides a methodologically balanced alternative. Rather than asserting a single hypothetical readership with certainty, it may be preferable to examine the persuasive and theological effects of the text upon readers across multiple historical contexts.

### 2.2.2. The Deuteronomistic History Approach: Merits and Limitations

Lee Hee-hak accepts the existence of a Deuteronomist and argues that Judges 17-21 was shaped within the broader Deuteronomistic History extending from Joshua through Kings.<sup>7</sup> According to Lee, these

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6 Yang In-cheol, "Rhetorical Reading of the Samson Narrative," 495.

7 Lee Hee-hak, "Judges 17-21 and Pro-Monarchic Theology," *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 22, no. 4 (2016): 250-84.

chapters function to provide theological justification for the emergence of monarchy in Israel.

He points to various stylistic irregularities in Judges 17-21 as evidence of editorial activity. In his interpretation, Judges 17-18 emphasizes the religious corruption of the tribe of Dan, whereas Judges 19-21 highlights the moral corruption of Benjamin. Together, these narratives portray the religious and ethical disorder of the pre-monarchic era and implicitly argue for the necessity of righteous kingship under YHWH.

One of Lee's most insightful observations is his proposal that Judges 17-21 constitutes the first half of the broader sin-oppression-deliverance cycle characteristic of Judges, while 1 Samuel 1-7 forms its corresponding second half. This proposal offers an intriguing literary-theological connection between Judges and Samuel.

His work presents a compelling and sophisticated reading within contemporary scholarship on the Deuteronomistic History. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the present study, caution is warranted regarding the degree of confidence placed in hypothetical editorial reconstructions. Since the existence, extent, and compositional development of the Deuteronomistic History continue to be debated, such proposals should be regarded as tentative scholarly models rather than established historical conclusions.

Lee Eun-woo likewise surveys the theory of Deuteronomistic History while noting both its contributions and its limitations.<sup>8</sup> He recognizes that the theory has significantly enriched the study of literary strata, social context, political history, and theological development within the Former Prophets. At the same time, he observes that scholars differ considerably

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8 Lee Eun-woo, "Recent Trends in the So-Called Deuteronomistic History Studies," *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 14, no. 3 (2008): 67-86.

regarding the number of editors, the dating of redactional layers, and the historical periods involved, ranging from pre-exilic to exilic and post-exilic settings.

Lee argues that the diversity of these reconstructions underscores the uncertainty involved in identifying a Deuteronomist as a distinct historical figure or editorial entity. The present study therefore approaches such theories with methodological caution and does not regard the existence of a Deuteronomistic Historian as historically demonstrable. Instead, these proposals are understood as tentative scholarly hypotheses developed for interpretive purposes.

From a confessional perspective informed by Reformed theology, the present study additionally affirms the divine inspiration of Scripture through the work of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the extensive literary and theological coherence between Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets are viewed as reflecting a broader canonical and theological unity within the final form of the biblical text.

### 2.2.3. Synchronic Approaches (Rhetorical Analysis): Merits and Limitations

Jeong Dae-jun interprets Judges 19-21 as a unified narrative and appeals to Lawson Younger's concentric structural analysis in support of this view.<sup>9</sup> He contrasts this with David Dorsey's approach, which divides the material into two sections (Judges 19 and 20-21). According to Jeong, the movement from the former section to the latter reflects a transition toward partial restoration and thereby reveals the theological thrust of the narrative.

More specifically, he argues that the concentric structure of Judges 19

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9 Jeong Dae-joon, "A Coherent Reading of the Violence Incidents in Judges 19-21," *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 29, no. 4 (2023): 102-32.

depicts the tragic consequences arising from the Levite's treatment of his concubine. He symbolically interprets the concubine as representing Israel itself, suggesting that her dependence upon a spiritually compromised Levite leads to catastrophe. In contrast, the concentric structure of Judges 20-21 portrays YHWH's involvement in resolving the tribal conflict against Benjamin.

Jeong further interprets the refrain, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes," as referring ultimately to the rejection of divine kingship. Accordingly, he argues that the restoration of Israel depends fundamentally upon the restoration of covenantal relationship with God.

Yang In-cheol, similarly, advances rhetorical criticism beyond the earlier approaches associated with Muilenburg by utilizing Kennedy's more developed rhetorical framework. His analysis examines how individual episodes within the Samson narrative employ distinct persuasive strategies and rhetorical purposes.

These synchronic approaches offer valuable literary and theological insights by emphasizing the coherence and persuasive function of the final form of the text.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Methodological Origin and Theoretical Framework

This study uses a synchronic text-linguistic approach aimed at describing the syntactic-hierarchical organization of the Book of Judges.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Eep Talstra, 'Clause Types and Textual Structure: An Experiment in Narrative Syntax', in Eep Talstra (ed.), *Narrative and Comment: Contributions to Discourse Grammar and Biblical*

It is grounded in the methodological framework developed by Eep Talstra, which seeks to identify structural relations within Biblical Hebrew texts through multi-level linguistic analysis. Talstra's approach builds upon the linguistic insights of Harald Weinrich, who advocated a systematic analysis of linguistic features to uncover the grammatical organization of texts.<sup>11</sup> It was further adapted for Biblical Hebrew narrative by Wolfgang Schneider.<sup>12</sup>

Talstra extends these earlier developments by integrating multiple linguistic layers into a unified analytical model. In this framework, textual features are examined across hierarchical levels, including grapheme, word, phrase, clause, and discourse levels. At the grapheme and word levels, attention is given to features such as person, number, gender, verbal form, stem, and lexical repetition. At the phrase and clause levels, syntactic function and clause type are analyzed. At the discourse level, distinctions between narrative and direct speech, as well as participant tracking across units, are used to trace continuity and structural progression.

This multi-layered approach allows for the identification of hierarchical or parallel relationships between textual segments and provides a structured account of discourse organization within Biblical narrative.

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*Hebrew: Presented to Wolfgang Schneider* (Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1995), 166–80.

- 11 Harald Weinrich, 'Die Textpartitur als heuristische Methode', in Wolfgang Dressler (ed.), *Textlinguistik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).
- 12 Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch: Ein Lehrbuch* (Munich: Claudius, 2001).

#### 3.2.4. Text-Linguistic Approach

Building upon this framework, the present study applies synchronic text-linguistic analysis to the Book of Judges in order to investigate its syntactic-hierarchical organization as reflected in its final form. Its central research question is whether the clause-level and discourse-level structures of Judges exhibit sufficient coherence to justify reading Judges 13:2-21:25 as a structurally integrated macro-unit within the book, rather than as a discrete appendix detached from the preceding narrative.

The analysis focuses on recurring clause patterns, discourse markers, participant continuity, lexical recurrence, and hierarchical embedding as potential indicators of textual cohesion. Particular attention is given to how these features may signal discourse boundaries, transitions, and internal structuring within the narrative flow of Judges.

Importantly, the study does not presuppose the existence of a unified macro-unit prior to analysis. Rather, the proposed segmentation is treated as a possible structural outcome to be evaluated on the basis of linguistic evidence from the text itself. Accordingly, the investigation is not limited to isolated passages but considers discourse relations across the Book of Judges as a whole in order to assess whether consistent syntactic-hierarchical patterns emerge at the macro-structural level. Within this approach, textual hierarchy provides the primary framework for interpreting discourse relations between divisions. On that basis, rhetorical structure and linguistic coherence are examined to assess and strengthen the validity of the proposed structure.

## 3.2. Terminology<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2.1. *Mother Clause and Daughter Clause*

When a clause is structurally linked to a preceding clause, the later clause is designated a daughter clause, while the earlier clause is identified as its mother clause. The mother clause provides the governing structural framework, and the daughter clause depends upon it for its syntactic or discourse function.

### 3.2.2. *Types of Clause Relationship*

The relationship between two clauses is considered hierarchical when the subsequent clause remains grammatically distinguishable yet structurally dependent upon the preceding clause. In contrast, a relationship is described as parallel when two clauses share equivalent linguistic features at the relevant analytical levels, functioning side by side without subordination.

### 3.2.3. *The Best Mother Clause*

When a daughter clause may be connected to more than one preceding clause, the preferred mother clause is the one demonstrating the strongest degree of structural and linguistic coherence with it. This clause provides the most plausible governing framework for interpretation.

### 3.2.4. *Antecedent Information*

Antecedent information establishes the background or circumstances that frame the ensuing narrative development. It commonly appears in the

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13 The terminology and analytical framework adopted in this section build upon categories previously developed by the present author in Gyu-sang Jin, "The Structuring Role of Wayhi in the Book of Joshua," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 58 (2026): 390-425.

protasis of conditional or circumstantial constructions. Such protases may begin with a wayhi clause and be elaborated by subordinate structures (e.g., infinitive constructs or xQtX forms) that specify the relevant condition or setting. The apodosis then presents the principal assertion within that contextual framework.

### 3.2.5. *Main Narrative Line*

Clauses that follow a protasis-apodosis construction typically advance the primary narrative sequence. They unfold within the contextual boundaries established by the antecedent material and carry the discourse forward.

### 3.2.6. *Connectivity between Clauses*

Clause connectivity may be assessed at several levels:

(1) When two clauses share comparable clause types, similar word order, corresponding grammatical features (such as person, number, and gender), related verbal stems, and identical discourse participants, these correspondences suggest syntactic linkage.

(2) Connectivity may also extend beyond individual clauses to larger textual units. If a daughter clause introduces a unit that retains the same participants as a unit governed by a preceding mother clause, the two units are structurally related. In such cases, the daughter clause and its associated unit may be subordinated to the governing mother clause.

(3) Where a daughter clause containing antecedent material could relate to multiple possible mother clauses, the most suitable governing clause is the one whose contextual assumptions are already presupposed by the daughter clause, enabling the latter to extend the narrative framework and advance the discourse.

### 3.3. Rules for Determining Clause Relationships

Figure 1 presents the hierarchical structure of the text in Judges 1:28-3:7, with intermediate clauses excluded for simplicity. The figure employs specific abbreviations to denote key components of the analysis: Ch (Chapter), Vs (Verse), CLTP (Clause Type), CLAN (Clause Atom Number)

These abbreviations help identify the hierarchical relationships between clauses and allow for a clearer understanding of how different clauses function within the overall structure of the passage. The diagram highlights the primary units and their interrelations, offering a visual representation of the syntactic hierarchy across the text.

Ch	Vs	CLTP	CLAN	Text-Hierarchy
01,	28	Way0	24475	[ ] <Cj>] [יהי <Pr>]
01,	28	xQtX	24476	[כי <Cj>] [הזק <Pr>] [ישראל <Su>]
02,	11	WayX	24536	[ ] <Cj>] [יעשו <Pr>] [בני-ישראל <Su>]
02,	11	AjC1	24537	[אתה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Co>]
03,	07	WayX	24615	[ ] <Cj>] [יעשו <Pr>] [בני-ישראל <Su>]
03,	07	AjC1	24616	[אתה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Co>]

Figure 1. The Text-hierarchy in 1:28-3:7

#### 3.3.1. Hierarchical Relationship between a Main and a Subordinate Clauses

The *Wayhi* clause in 1:28 (24475) introduces a new paragraph and is immediately followed by an *xQtX* clause in 1:28 (24476). This *xQtX* clause, which combines a qatal verb with an explicit subject, elaborates on the preceding main clause by specifying the period during which Israel was

strong.<sup>14</sup> The conjunction (כִּי) in 1:28 (24476) indicates that this clause is subordinate to 1:28 (24475). As a result, 1:28 (24475) functions as the mother clause, while 1:28 (24476) serves as the daughter clause. Together, these clauses provide antecedent information that establishes the contextual framework for the subsequent narrative line, guiding the reader through the hierarchical progression of events.

### 3.3.2. Hierarchical Relationship between Main Clauses

2:11 (24536) introduces an embedded narrative under 1:28 (24475). In 1:28, clause 24476 is subordinate to 24475, as indicated by the conjunction (כִּי), and together these two clauses form a single syntactic unit that provides the antecedent framework for the events described in 2:11 (24536-24537), where the sons of Israel “did evil in the sight of YHWH.” The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 2:11 (24536) inaugurates a new paragraph under 1:28 (24475). The differing clause types (*Wayhi* vs. *WayX*) signal separability, yet connectivity is maintained through shared participants: the reference to (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) in the inflection of (יַעֲשׂוּ) (2:11) echoes (יִשְׂרָאֵל) and the inflection of (הָזִק) in 1:28 (24476). Consequently, the *Wayyiqtol-X* in 2:11 (24536) is hierarchically embedded under the leading *Wayhi* clause in 1:28 (24475), illustrating the syntactic layering of the narrative.

### 3.3.3. Parallel Relationship between Main Clauses

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 3:7 (24615) exhibits a parallel relationship with that in 2:11 (24536). Both passages share the same clause type (שִׂיאִי), identical phrase order (Conjunction-Predicate-Subject), corresponding

14 ETCBC Glossary, November 2016, Accordance database documentation, <https://www.accordancefiles1.com/products/ETCBC%20Glossary.pdf> (accessed 8 March 2026)

PNG features (person, number, gender), and the same lexical elements, specifically the conjunction (ו), the predicate (יַעֲשֶׂה), and the subject (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל). As in 2:11 (24536-24537), the adjectival clause in 3:7 (24616) is subordinate to its preceding *Wayyiqtol-X* clause (24615), indicated by the relative pronoun(הַ), which marks subordination. This clause further specifies that the actions of the sons of Israel were evil in the sight of YHWH. At a higher hierarchical level, the sequence WayX-Adjective Clause (24615-24616) mirrors that of 2:11-24537, demonstrating structural connectivity. Based on these multi-level linguistic correspondences, 3:7 (24615) is syntactically parallel to 2:11 (24536).

### 3.3.4. Determining the Best Mother Clause among Competing Candidates

Clause 3:7 (24615) shows some connectivity with 1:28 (24475), as their higher-level syntactic units — 3:7 (24615-24616) and 1:28 (24475-24476) — share the participant (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל), reflected in the verbal inflections of (יַעֲשֶׂה) and (חִזַּק), respectively. Nevertheless, key differences indicate separability. The clause types differ — WayX in 3:7 (24615) versus *Wayhi* in 1:28 (24475) — and 3:7 (24616) introduces participants, (עֵינַי יְהוָה), (רַע), absent from 1:28 (24476). At a higher syntactic level, the clause sequence WayX-Adjective Clause (3:7, 24615-24616) contrasts with *Wayhi-xQtX* (1:28, 24475-24476), reinforcing their distinct hierarchical positions.

In contrast, 3:7 (24615) and 2:11 (24536) exhibit identical clause types, phrase order, and lexical correspondences across all relevant levels. Their higher-level sequences — WayX-Adjective Clause (3:7, 24615-24616) and *Wayyiqtol-X*-subordinate clause (2:11, 24536-24537) — show a closer structural correspondence. Accordingly, 2:11 (24536) is identified as the most appropriate mother clause governing 3:7 (24615-

24616), rather than 1:28 (24475).

#### 4. A Macro-Structural Overview from Deuteronomy to 2 Samuel

Before delving into the internal structure of Judges, it is crucial to first situate it within the broader macro-structural flow that spans from Deuteronomy to 2 Samuel. Within this extended narrative progression, the Book of Judges stands as a cohesive literary unit, functioning in tandem with the books of Joshua-1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. As such, its organization should not necessarily be constrained by the conventional tripartite framework of introduction, body, and conclusion that is often proposed in scholarly discussions. Rather, the sections of Judges are arranged as part of an uninterrupted historical sequence, contributing to a continuous narrative arc that encompasses the entire period of Israel's early history.

DEUT	32,48	WayX	21756	[ ] <Cj>] [ יְדַבֵּר <Pr>] [ יְהוָה <Su>] [ אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה <Co>] [ בְּעֵצָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה <Ti>]
DEUT	34,05	WayX	21905	[ ] <Cj>] [ יָמַת <Pr>] [ שָׁם <Lo>] [ מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה <Su>] [ עַל־פִּי יְהוָה <Aj>] [ בְּאָרְץ מוֹאָב <Aj>]
JOZ	01,01	Way0	21925	[ ] <Cj>] [ יְהִי <Pr>] [ יְהוָה <Su>] [ אַחֲרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה <Ti>]
RICHT	01,01	Way0	24371	[ ] <Cj>] [ יְהִי <Pr>] [ אַחֲרֵי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ <Ti>]
ISA	01,01	WayX	27280	[ ] <Cj>] [ יְהִי <Pr>] [ אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן־הַרְמְתִים צוֹפִים מֵהַר אֶפְרַיִם <Su>]
IISA	01,01	Way0	31836	[ ] <Cj>] [ יְהִי <Pr>] [ אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׂאוּל <Ti>]

Figure 2. Macro-Structural Flow from Deuteronomy to 2 Samuel

At the macro-structural level, the death of Moses, the servant of YHWH, is recorded in Deuteronomy 34:5, marking the conclusion of both Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch. In Joshua 1:1, the transition to a new era in Israelite history is signaled by a *Wayhi* clause, followed by the temporal phrase (אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה). Similarly, Judges 1:1 begins with a *Wayhi* clause and is immediately followed by a temporal phrase (אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), indicating the start of the next historical phase.

In contrast, 1 Samuel 1:1 departs from this pattern, introducing Elkanah instead of beginning with a transition after a death. Saul's death is noted at the end of 1 Samuel 31:6, and 2 Samuel 1:1 resumes with a temporal phrase referencing events "after the death of Saul" (אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת שָׂאוּל). These examples illustrate how the *Wayhi* + temporal phrase construction functions as a key structuring device at significant transitions, particularly in Joshua 1:1, Judges 1:1, and 2 Samuel 1:1. This pattern marks critical shifts in leadership and historical development.

Thus, the sequence *Wayhi* + predicate + temporal phrase, especially when initiated by (אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת), serves as an essential macro-structural marker of historical transition within the Deuteronomy-Samuel narrative corpus.

## 5. The Syntactic-Hierarchical Structure of the Book of Judges

### 5.1. Macro-Structural Overview

The following outline presents the macro-structure of the Book of Judges. 1:1-27 offers comprehensive antecedent information, detailing

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how the Israelites were successful in their conquest of the Canaanites as long as they remained faithful to YHWH and obeyed His commands. In contrast, 1:28-2:10 provides a more specific antecedent account, showing Israel's gradual compromise with the Canaanites. Instead of fully driving out the Canaanites, Israel allowed them to stay, imposing forced labor. This decision led to Israel's weakening, strained relations with the Canaanites, and the Danites' eventual confinement to the hill country, unable to expand into the plains.

The section 2:11-21:25 consists of two major parts: the first half depicts the nation's progressive moral and spiritual decline through repeated apostasy, while the second half focuses on the personal and tribal manifestations of corruption. This shift highlights how the lack of effective leadership and adherence to Torah law brought chaos, affecting both the collective community and its individual members. The narrative emphasizes the vital role of leaders like Joshua, who guided the nation in covenant faithfulness. Without such leadership, Israel descended into disorder.

2:11-13:1: This section is the first major body and consists of three sub-bodies. It portrays Israel's gradual moral decline, intensified by increasingly severe disciplinary actions from YHWH. At the same time, the judges' effectiveness declines, reflecting the nation's deeper spiritual deterioration.

13:2-21:25: The second major body contains four sub-bodies. It shifts the focus from collective apostasy to individual and tribal corruption. The section begins with the story of Samson (13:2-16:31), a flawed judge whose personal weaknesses mirror the nation's condition. It then portrays the breakdown of religious and moral order on the household level (17:1-6), followed by the corruption of a Levite and the tribe of Dan (17:7-18:31). The final part, 19:1-21:25, culminates in

01, 01	Way0	24371	וְ] <Cj> <Ti>] אַחֲרַי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ] <Pr> <Pr>] יְהִי <Cj> <Co>]
01, 01	WayX	24372	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִשְׁאַלְהוּ] <Pr>] בְּיַד־יִשְׁרָאֵל] <Pr>] <su>] בְּיַד־יִשְׁרָאֵל] <Pr>] <Co>]
01, 28	Way0	24475	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Cj> <Pr>]
01, 28	xQlx	24476	כִּי <Cj> <Pr>] יִשְׂרָאֵל] <Pr>] <su>] יִשְׂרָאֵל] <Pr>] <su>]
02, 11	WayX	24536	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
02, 11	AjC1	24537	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
03, 07	WayX	24615	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
03, 07	AjC1	24616	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
06, 01	WayX	24960	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
06, 01	AjC1	24961	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יִעֲשֶׂה] <Pr>] <re>] אֲחִיהָ] <Co>]
13, 02	WayX	26033	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ אֶחָד מִגִּזְרָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדִּינִי] <su>] <Co>]
13, 02	NmC1	26034	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ אֶחָד מִגִּזְרָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדִּינִי] <su>] <Co>]
17, 01	WayX	26563	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ מִהַרְאֲפָרִים] <su>] <Co>]
17, 01	NmC1	26564	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ מִהַרְאֲפָרִים] <su>] <Co>]
17, 07	WayX	26594	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] נָעַר מִבֵּית לָהֶם יְהוּדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת יְהוּדָה] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <su>]
17, 07	NmC1	26595	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] נָעַר מִבֵּית לָהֶם יְהוּדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת יְהוּדָה] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <su>]
17, 11	WayX	26616	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] פֶּאֶרֶז מִבְּנֵי] <sc>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Co>]
17, 12	WayX	26617	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אֲחִיד הָעֹלָם] <su>] <su>] <su>] <su>] <Ob>]
17, 12	WayX	26618	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] לְכֹהֵן] <su>] <su>] <su>] <su>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Co>]
17, 12	Way0	26619	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] פֶּרֶזְרֵי הַרְאֲפָרִים] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Co>]
19, 01	WayX	26790	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ לֹו] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>]
19, 01	Way0	26791	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] אִישׁ פֶּלְטָשׁ] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>] <Co>]
21, 04	Way0	27181	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] מִבְּחֹרֹת] <Ti>] <Ti>]
21, 25	NmC1	27276	וְ] <Cj> <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] יְהִי <Pr>] <Pr>] מִבְּחֹרֹת] <Ti>] <Ti>] אִין] <nc>] <su>] <su>] <su>] <su>] <Pr>] <Pr>] <Co>]

Figure 3. Macro-Structure of Judges

a civil war sparked by the Levite's abandonment of his concubine, her subsequent death, and the resulting intertribal conflict against the tribe of Benjamin.

## **5.2. The Prologue (1:1-2:10)**

### **Composition**

1:1-27 provides a broad foundational background for the events that follow in 1:28-2:10. This section illustrates how the Israelites, relying on YHWH's guidance and command, successfully cooperated in their conquest of the Canaanites. In contrast, 1:28-2:10 offers more specific antecedent information that sets the stage for the unfolding events in 2:11-13:1. It depicts Israel's compromise with the remaining Canaanites, a decision that significantly weakened their military strength. This decision drew the criticism of YHWH's messenger and led to Israel's spiritual decline, as the nation lacked a strong leader to teach and guide them according to the Torah. The narrative in this section anticipates the negative consequences of this compromise, foreshadowing the ensuing deterioration of Israel's spiritual and national integrity.

01,01	Way0	24371	אָהרֵי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ] <Pr>  יְהִי] <Cj>  וְ] <Ti>
01,01	WayX	24372	בִּיהוּת] <su>  בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל] <Pr>  יִשְׁאָלוּ] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,04	WayX	24384	יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <su>
01,10	WayX	24409	יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,17	WayX	24438	יְהוּדָה] <su>  יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Aj>
01,18	WayX	24443	יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְהוּדָה] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,22	WayX	24456	בִּיהוּת] <su>  בִּיהוּת] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,28	Way0	24475	יְהִי] <Pr>  וְ] <Cj>  וְ] <Pr>
01,28	xQtx	24476	יְהִי] <Pr>  יְהִי] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <su>
01,28	Way0	24477	יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,34	WayX	24491	יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
01,35	WayX	24494	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <su>
01,35	InfC	24495	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,01	WayX	24499	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,04	Way0	24515	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,04	InfC	24516	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,04	WayX	24517	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,06	WayX	24521	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,07	WayX	24525	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>
02,08	WayX	24529	יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Pr>  יְעַל] <Cj>  וְ] <Co>

Figure 4. The Prologue

### 5.3. Major Body1(2:11-13:1)

Figure 5 presents the expanded structure of Major Body 1. Under the antecedent framework established by 1:28 (24475-24476), three *Wayyiqtol-X* clauses in 2:11, 3:7, and 6:1 initiate parallel narrative lines, forming Sub-Bodies 1-3. In each instance, the accompanying adjective clause (24537, 24616, 24961) functions as the object of its preceding main clause (24536, 24615, 24960), collectively stating that the sons of Israel “did evil in the sight of YHWH.”

Under 3:7 (24615), two additional *Wayyiqtol-X* clauses in 3:12 (24634) and 4:1 (24722) create a further parallel sequence. Similarly, under 6:1 (24960), clauses in 10:6 (25738) and 13:1 (26029) form a corresponding pattern. In each case, infinitive constructs and adjective clauses (24635-24636, 24723-24724, 25739-25740, 26030-26031) elaborate on their preceding main clauses (24634, 24722, 25738, 26029).

These recurring syntactic constructions highlight the persistence of Israel’s evil deeds. Consequently, the sequences 3:7-5:31 and 6:1-13:1 exhibit a deliberate parallel structure, underscoring the compositional coherence and hierarchical organization of Major Body 1.

Each syntactic construction in 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, and 10:6 introduces a new rebellion episode within the established cyclical pattern. Significantly, however, 13:1 does not continue this pattern beyond its initial notice. Rather than introducing another parallel rebellion cycle, 13:2 initiates a new syntactic and discourse movement at a higher textual level. Unlike the preceding rebellion notices, which summarize Israel’s apostasy in formulaic and collective terms, 13:2 shifts the narrative focus toward individualized and localized portrayals within Israelite society. The text increasingly concentrates on specific persons, households, and social settings, thereby moving from repetitive national cycles to extended character-centered narration.

01,28	Way0	24475	[ן <Cj>] [יהי <Pr>]
01,28	xQtX	24476	[כי <Cj>] [חזק <Pr>] [ישראל <Su>]
02,11	WayX	24536	[ן <Cj>] [יעשו <Pr>] [בני־ישראל <Su>]
02,11	AjC1	24537	[אתה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Co>]
03,07	WayX	24615	[ן <Cj>] [יעשו <Pr>] [בני־ישראל <Su>]
03,07	AjC1	24616	[אתה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Co>]
03,12	WayX	24634	[ן <Cj>] [יספו <Pr>] [בני ישראל <Su>]
03,12	InfC	24635	[לעשות <Pr>]
03,12	AjC1	24636	[ה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Aj>]
04,01	WayX	24722	[ן <Cj>] [יספו <Pr>] [בני ישראל <Su>]
04,01	InfC	24723	[לעשות <Pr>]
04,01	AjC1	24724	[ה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Aj>]
06,01	WayX	24960	[ן <Cj>] [יעשו <Pr>] [בני־ישראל <Su>]
06,01	AjC1	24961	[אתה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Co>]
10,06	WayX	25738	[ן <Cj>] [יספו <Pr>] [בני ישראל <Su>]
10,06	InfC	25739	[לעשות <Pr>]
10,06	AjC1	25740	[ה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Aj>]
13,01	WayX	26029	[ן <Cj>] [יספו <Pr>] [בני ישראל <Su>]
13,01	InfC	26030	[לעשות <Pr>]
13,01	AjC1	26031	[ה <Re>] [רע <PC>] [בעיני יהודה <Aj>]

Figure 5. Major Body 1

This structural shift suggests more than a simple continuation of the rebellion cycle. The omission of a further cyclical development after 13:1 may reflect a deliberate rhetorical withholding of the expected pattern, implying YHWH's diminished engagement with Israel's persistent rebellion. At the same time, the narrative “zooms in” on corruption at multiple social levels within Israelite society, helping readers understand

why the rebellion cycle continues without meaningful resolution or development.

#### **5.4. Major Body2 (13:2-21:25)**

##### *Composition*

Building on the antecedent framework provided in 1:28 (24475-24476), the recurrence of the clause order (WayX-NmCl), introduced by *Wayhi*, in 13:2, 17:1, and 17:7 highlights individuals who fall short of moral and spiritual standards. These figures include Manoah, who lacks adherence to the Torah and fails to lead his wife and son in following YHWH; Micah, who worships his mother instead of YHWH and exploits a Levite for personal gain rather than respecting legitimate religious authority; and a Levite, who prioritizes worldly success over his sacred role and worships those who provide material benefits rather than YHWH. These characters exemplify how personal ambition and worldly values can corrupt one's inner character.

In contrast, 19:1 (26790-26791) shifts to a different clause order (WayX-Way0), introduced by *Wayhi*, depicting a Levite whose actions reveal deep moral failings. He takes a concubine for self-serving desires, abandons her for self-preservation, and places personal pleasure and emotion above communal responsibility. His behavior ignites tribal conflict and demonstrates how the tribes, though partially reliant on YHWH, ultimately pursued their own arbitrary desires, protecting the Benjaminites rather than fulfilling YHWH's commands of herem.

In summary, the episodes in Major Body 2 illustrate the profound corruption both at the individual and tribal levels. The absence of Torah-centered spiritual leadership led to a moral and religious decline, which the narrative attributes to the failure of Joshua to pass on Torah-guided leadership to a successor. The text underscores the critical need for a leader

01,01	Way0	24371	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מוֹת אַחֲרֵי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ] יְהִי] <TI>]
01,01	WayX	24372	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] בְּנִי-יְהוֹדָאֵל] <su>] בִּיתוֹה] <Co>]
01,28	Way0	24475	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>]
01,28	xQtX	24476	כִּי] <su>] יִשְׂרָאֵל] <PR>] הַחֵק] <CJ>] כִּי]
13,02	WayX	26033	וְ] <CJ>] אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצָּרְעָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדְּבִירִים] <PR>] יְהִי] <CJ>] אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצָּרְעָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדְּבִירִים] <su>]
13,02	NmCl	26034	וְ] <CJ>] קִנְיָה] <su>] שְׂמוֹנִים] <PC>]
17,01	WayX	26563	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִדֹּר־אֶפְרַיִם] <su>] אִישׁ מִדֹּר־אֶפְרַיִם] <PC>]
17,01	NmCl	26564	וְ] <CJ>] שְׂמוֹנִים] <su>] מִיְכָיִהוּדָה] <PC>]
17,06	NmCl	26590	וְ] <CJ>] מִיְכָיִהוּדָה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִהוּדָה] <PC>]
17,07	WayX	26594	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] יְהוֹדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת יְהוֹדָה] <PR>] יְהִי] <CJ>] יְהוֹדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת לָחֶם יְהוֹדָה] <su>]
17,07	NmCl	26595	וְ] <CJ>] הוּא] <su>] כִּי] <PC>]
17,11	WayX	26616	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] הַעֲבֹר] <PR>] לֹא] <sc>] מִפְּנֵי] <PC>] פֶּאֶחַד מִפְּנֵי] <PC>]
17,12	WayX	26618	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] לֹא] <sc>] הַעֲבֹר] <su>] לְכַהֵן] <PC>]
17,12	Way0	26619	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] בְּבֵית מִיכָיָה] <PC>]
18,01	NmCl	26624	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל] <PC>]
18,01	PtcP	26625	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] שִׁבְטֵי הַדְּבִירִים] <TI>] <Co>]
19,01	Way0	26788	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] <TI>]
19,01	NmCl	26789	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] <Co>]
19,01	WayX	26790	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] <Co>]
19,01	Way0	26791	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] <Co>]
21,04	Way0	27181	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] <TI>]
21,25	NmCl	27276	וְ] <CJ>] יְהִי] <PR>] מִיְכָיִה] <TI>] אִישׁ מִיְכָיִה] <su>] <TI>] <Co>]

Figure 6. Major Body 2

rooted in Torah to ensure YHWH's guidance, protection, and blessings for Israel.

### Hierarchical Relationship between Clauses

#### *Sub-Body 2-1 (13:2-16:31)*

The *Wayyiqtol-X* clause in 13:2 (26033) introduces a new character (אִישׁ אֲדָמָה), Manoah, from the tribe of Dan, and initiates Sub-Body 2-1 (13:2-16:31) within the broader narrative framework introduced in 1:28. The phrase (מִשְׁפַּחַת הַדְּנִי) connects this individual back to Israel, linking him to (יִשְׂרָאֵל) and the verb (הִזְקַ) in 1:28 (24475-24476). The embedded nominal clause in 13:2 (26034) further identifies him as Manoah (מָנוּחַ). This clause differs from the preceding one in terms of clause type, word order, and participants.

The narrative in 13:2-16:31 portrays Manoah, a father who lacks knowledge of the Torah and is incapable of guiding his son, Samson, in its observance. The text shows how Manoah's failure to fulfill his paternal role results in Samson's inadequate formation as a judge of Israel. Ultimately, Samson fails to lead Israel effectively, underscoring the tragic consequences of parental failure and lack of proper spiritual guidance.

#### *Sub-Body 2-2 (17:1-6)*

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 17:1 (26563) introduces a new character, Micah (אִישׁ מִיכָה), from Mount Ephraim, and begins Sub-Body 2-2 (17:1-6). This clause shares the same clause type and phrase order (Conjunction-Predicate-Subject) as the previous clause in 13:2, though the *Wayhi* verb (וַיְהִי) in 17:1 introduces the new individual (אִישׁ) from Ephraim instead of Zorah. The nominal clause in 17:1 (26564) identifies him as Micah (מִיכָה), and the structure mirrors that of 13:2, supporting the

embedding of 17:1 under 13:2.

The clause 17:6 (26590), embedded under 17:1 (26564), states, “In those days, there was no king in Israel.” While both clauses share a similar grammatical structure, they differ in their beginning and participants. The time phrase (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם) and the negative complement (אֵין) in 17:6 contrast with the conjunction (ו) in 17:1. These differences confirm that 17:6 is subordinate to 17:1.

The connection between 17:6 and 17:1 highlights a key theological point: Micah’s corruption is a result of Israel’s lack of a king. The text presents Micah’s moral failings not as an isolated event but as a reflection of the broader spiritual and social disarray of the time. The absence of a faithful leader, whether in the family or the nation, mirrors the larger crisis in Israel, where there was no divinely sanctioned ruler to guide the people, unlike during the time of Moses or Joshua. This absence of leadership led to a cycle of moral corruption, where even a figure like Micah becomes emblematic of a nation in crisis.

#### *Sub-Body 2-3 (17:7-18:31)*

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 17:7 (26594) introduces a new character, a young man (נַעַר) from Bethlehem, Judah, and initiates the embedded Sub-Body 2-3 (17:7-18:31). This clause shares the same grammatical structure as the earlier one in 17:1, with a conjunction-predicate-subject word order, led by *Wayhi* and the predicate (יָהִי). However, while the man in 17:1 is from Ephraim, the young man in 17:7 is from Judah, which highlights a contrast between the two figures. This parallel structure suggests that 17:7 is embedded within the framework established in 17:1.

The nominal clause in 17:7 (26595), which is embedded under 17:7 (26594), specifies that the young man was a Levite (לֵוִי). This clause differs from the preceding one in terms of clause type, phrase order, and

participants. However, at a higher syntactic level, both 17:7 and 17:1 follow the same clause sequence (WayX-NmCl), further reinforcing the embedding of 17:7 (26594) under 17:1 (26563).

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 17:11 reintroduces (הַנְּעָר) (the young man) as the explicit subject and initiates a new paragraph under 17:7 (26594). This clause shares the same clause type, similar initial phrase order (Conjunction-Predicate-Subject), and the same subject (הַנְּעָר). However, in contrast, the phrases (Subject Complement, Predicate Complement) and (בְּנָיִי) (his sons) are unique to 17:11, while (בַּיִת לְחָם יְהוּדָה) (Bethlehem in Judah) is only found in 17:7. These linguistic distinctions strongly support embedding 17:11 under 17:7.

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 17:12 (26618) reintroduces (הַנְּעָר) (the young man) as the explicit subject and opens a new paragraph under 17:11. It specifies that the boy served as a priest for the individual. The use of (לוֹ) (for him) before the boy emphasizes that the priest was attached to a private individual rather than to YHWH, highlighting a significant theological deviation. This syntactic emphasis underscores the priest's abandonment of his covenantal responsibility to guide and lead in obedience to the Torah. Instead of serving YHWH exclusively, he seeks personal gain and security. Additionally, rather than remaining devoted to YHWH, the priest serves the idol created by Micah's mother. The narrative, therefore, portrays a corrupted priesthood that is unable to address the spiritual and moral decay of society during that period.

The *Wayyiqtol-0* in 17:12 (26619) is embedded under 17:12 (26618) and specifies that the young man was in Micah's house. The inflection of (יְהִי) (he was) in 17:12 (26619) links back to (הַנְּעָר) (the young man) in 17:12 (26618), and the inflection of (יְהִי) in both clauses reinforces the connection. Additionally, the name (מִיכָה) (Micah) links back to the suffix of (לוֹ) (to him) in the same clause. These linguistic markers strongly

support embedding 17:12 (26619) under 17:12 (26618). The structure of these clauses suggests that the priest's material dependence is on Micah, emphasizing the priest's subservience to Micah's personal interests rather than his service to YHWH.

The nominal clause in 18:1 (26624), which is embedded under 17:12 (26619), states that "there was no king in Israel in those days." While these two clauses differ in clause type (NmCl vs. Way0), phrase order, and participants, the connection between 18:1 and 17:12 establishes an important discourse relationship. The refrain about the absence of a king functions as a theological commentary on the preceding narrative, highlighting that the priest's allegiance was not to YHWH but to a corrupt individual who provided him with material support. This underscores the priest's deviation from his covenantal duty. As a result, the narrative suggests that the priest's actions are not merely an isolated incident but are indicative of a wider, systemic issue during that period, where Israel's spiritual and moral decay was exacerbated by the absence of righteous leadership.

The participle in 18:1 (26625), embedded under 18:1 (26624), describes how the tribe of Dan was seeking a territory for settlement during that time. The two clauses share a nearly identical phrase order (Time-Subject-Predicate Complement). Additionally, the phrase (מִיָּמֵינוּ) in 18:1 (26625) is repeated in 18:1 (26624), reinforcing the textual connection between them. In this way, 18:1 serves as a hinge, closing the previous episode while simultaneously transitioning to the following narrative concerning the tribe of Dan.

In contrast, the two clauses differ in type (Participle vs. Nominal Clause) and participants. At the discourse level, however, their connection invites a comparison between the tribe of Dan and the absent king, implying that the tribe took on a role akin to that of a king. This is further

emphasized when the tribe renames the city Dan after conquering Lais, symbolizing their assumption of authority and leadership in the absence of a rightful king.

The *Wayyiqtol-0* in 19:1 (26788), embedded under 18:1 (26625), closes the episode concerning the tribe of Dan and functions as a protasis, setting the time with “in those days.” The two clauses share the same time phrase (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם), though they differ in clause type (Participle vs. *Wayyiqtol*), phrase order, and participants.

The nominal clause in 19:1 (26789), embedded under 19:1 (26788), serves as an apodosis, declaring “there was no king in Israel.” Together, 19:1 (26789) and 18:1 (26624) form an inclusio, emphasizing the core reason the tribe of Dan failed to secure territory. Their failure lies in not worshipping YHWH, but instead, they assumed the role of king themselves. The narrative thus cautions against the peril of self-idolatry and the abandonment of divine leadership.

#### *Sub-Body 2-4 (19:1-21:25)*

The *Wayyiqtol-X* in 19:1 (26790) introduces a new participant, (לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) (“a Levite man”), and opens Sub-Body 2-4 under 13:2 (26033). This indicates that the Levite man was residing in the hill country of Ephraim. The two clauses share identical clause type, the predicate (יָהָיָה), and the lexeme (אִישׁ). However, they differ in phrase order and participants, marking a shift in the narrative while maintaining structural connections to the preceding context.

The *Wayyiqtol-0* in 19:1 (25691) introduces new participants, (אִשָּׁה) (“a woman”) and (בֵּית לְחֶם יְהוּדָה) (“Bethlehem of Judah”), and is embedded under 19:1 (26790). This clause indicates that the Levite had a concubine from Bethlehem of Judah. The suffix (לוֹ) in 19:1 (26791) links back to (אִישׁ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) (“a Levite man”) and to the inflection of

(יְהוֹיָכָן) in 19:1 (26790), establishing a strong syntactic connection.

The subsequent narrative illustrates the Levite's actions driven by personal desires. He remains in her house for several days, intends to bring her back with him, but abandons her when a crisis occurs. His behavior ultimately escalates the conflict, leading to severe strife between the eleven tribes of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, rather than fostering reconciliation.

The *Wayyiqtol-0* in 21:4 (27181) opens a new paragraph under 19:1 (26790), marking the transition to the next day. Both clauses share an identical initial phrase order (Conjunction-Predicate). However, they differ in clause type (Way0 vs. WayX), phrase functions, and participants. This contrast highlights the shift in narrative focus and the development of the events that follow.

The nominal clause in 21:25 (27276), embedded under 21:4, declares that “there was no king in Israel in those days,” marking the conclusion of both Sub-Body 2-4 and the entire book of Judges. While the clauses differ in clause type, phrase order, and participants, the phrase (יָמֵינוּ הָאֵלֶּים) in 21:25 partially links back to (מִן־הַיּוֹמָה) in 21:4, enhancing the textual cohesion between the two. This connection between 21:4, 21:25, and 19:1 underscores that the Levite's corrupt actions are not an isolated case, but rather part of a wider social and theological issue that permeates Israel during that time. The narrative reinforces the overarching theme of instability and moral decay due to the absence of a strong, divinely ordained leader.

In conclusion, the four episodes involving the corrupted father, judge, individual, mother, and priest highlight the failure of the people of Israel to worship YHWH, instead turning to idol worship, which led to widespread moral decay. These tragic events unfolded because there was no faithful judge, like Moses or Joshua, to guide and instruct the people

in obedience to YHWH. The narrative underscores the critical need for a spiritual leader to ensure fidelity to divine commands and implicitly critiques Joshua for not preparing a successor. This failure to raise up a new leader set the stage for the tragic consequences that followed in Israel.

*Thematic development between the Major Body 1 and Major Body 2*

While Major Body 1 follows a repetitive structure, presenting the rebellion cycle seven times and illustrating both YHWH's punishment and deliverance, Major Body 2 departs from this pattern. Rather than repeating the cycle of sin and redemption, it shifts focus to the corruption of individuals at various levels within Israelite society. This section examines the depth of moral and spiritual failure, emphasizing that the absence of leadership like Joshua, who could teach the Torah and guide the people in obedience, has led to widespread corruption. The narrative zooms in on the individuals — from the Levites and priests to the tribes of Dan and Benjamin — demonstrating that without Torah-based leadership, both military and religious authority have crumbled. This systematic breakdown in leadership is central to understanding Israel's spiritual decline and subjugation. The text serves as a warning, urging readers to uphold the Torah, live in faithful obedience, and cultivate the next generation of spiritual leaders to prevent similar collapse.

## **6. Discussion with Scholars' divisions**

This section compares the proposed syntactic delimitation with thematic divisions advanced in previous scholarship and demonstrates the advantages of a syntactic approach, particularly in relation to the disputed boundary verses.

### 1) 13:1, 13:2

Terry L. Brasinger designates 3:7-11 as “The Pattern Established: Othniel,” 3:12-5:31 as “The Pattern Affirmed: Ehud and Deborah,” 6:1-10:5 as “The Pattern Threatened: Gideon and Abimelech,” and 10:6-16:31 as “The Pattern Ignored: Jephthah and Samson.”<sup>15</sup> Brasinger’s proposal acknowledges the cyclical nature of the rebellion pattern in Judges and attempts to trace its development. While his divisions are useful for understanding the thematic flow of the book, they face some structural challenges. These include difficulties with identifying precise boundaries between cycles of rebellion and deliverance, especially in cases where the narrative doesn’t follow the established formula of sin, punishment, and deliverance.

In contrast, a syntactic approach to delimiting the text offers a clearer demarcation of boundaries based on the textual flow rather than thematic repetition. For example, the boundary at 13:1 marks the shift from the period of the Judges (as established by Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah) to the introduction of Samson, and this syntactic break is clearly supported by the textual structure and clause organization.

By focusing on clause types, participants, and their relationships, this syntactic framework accounts for the textual transitions more precisely, offering a clearer understanding of how the narrative moves between cycles and narrative bodies. This also addresses some of the ambiguities present in Brasinger’s thematic divisions, particularly in the transitions between characters and cycles of leadership.

First, the rebellion formula appears not only in 3:7, 3:12, 6:1, and 10:6, but also in 4:1 and 13:1. By merging the units introduced by 3:12

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15 Terry L. Brasington, 1999. *Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 50-170.

and 4:1 into a single textual block (3:12-5:31), and similarly combining the sections introduced by 10:6 and 13:1 into 10:6-16:31, Brensinger overlooks the independent structural force of each rebellion formula. Each formula serves as a distinct macro-syntactic boundary and should be treated as initiating a separate unit.

The rebellion formula's recurrence is not merely thematic but is structurally significant. Each occurrence of the formula signals a transition to a new narrative stage, demarcating discrete sections within the book. By treating these markers as independent structural units, we can better appreciate how the narrative develops, with each rebellion cycle representing a pivotal shift in the story's progression.

Thus, the syntactic approach emphasizes that each formula functions as a boundary in the text, with its own syntactic and thematic significance. This allows for a more precise understanding of the text's structural composition, recognizing that each rebellion cycle — whether in 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, or 13:1 — marks the beginning of a new narrative unit. The merging of these sections, as suggested by Brensinger, fails to account for the individual importance of these transitions.

More significantly, Brensinger's proposal does not sufficiently account for the hierarchical relationship between what may be termed “mother clauses” (major cycle initiators) and their embedded “daughter clauses” (subordinate expansions). For instance, 2:11 functions as a programmatic introduction, setting the tone for the rebellion cycles to follow, and parallels 3:7 in its role as an overarching initiation. Within the cycle initiated by 3:7, 3:12 opens an embedded sub-unit, and 4:1 functions at the same hierarchical level as 3:12, continuing the cycle with a fresh narrative development.

Moreover, 6:1 stands parallel to 3:7 at a higher textual level, indicating that the two clauses are part of a broader structural unit that

reflects a new phase in the narrative. In turn, 10:6 initiates a subordinate development within that broader section, and 13:1 corresponds structurally to 10:6, functioning as another level of expansion within the overarching narrative framework.

This layered structure demonstrates the need to treat these clauses as components of a hierarchical system, where each mother clause (like 3:7, 6:1) establishes a broad unit, and the daughter clauses (such as 3:12, 4:1, 10:6, and 13:1) provide necessary expansions or further elaborations. These relationships should not be overlooked, as they offer significant insight into the book's syntactic and thematic organization.

Brensinger's approach, by treating these boundary markers as part of a single unified cycle, misses the complexity and depth that the hierarchical relationships between the major and subordinate clauses bring to the text's structure.

When these hierarchical relationships are properly observed, the narrative progression of Judges becomes significantly clearer. The movement from the higher unit (3:7-11) to its subordinate expansions (3:12-31; 4:1-5:31) demonstrates an escalating cycle of Israel's moral decline. As the narrative unfolds, Israel's idolatry intensifies, YHWH's punitive response grows progressively more severe, and the quality of leadership deteriorates. This pattern, however, is not merely repetitive; it reflects a deepening crisis within the nation's spiritual and social fabric.

Similarly, within the larger section 6:1-10:5, the subsequent developments (10:6-12:15; 13:1) show a recurrence of apostasy, but with a radical intensification. The narrative reveals that divine punishment no longer takes the form of mere foreign oppression. Instead, it is accompanied by leadership instability — Abimelech seizes power illegitimately, the judges' terms become shorter and more ineffective, and YHWH's deliverance becomes increasingly unclear or absent.

The abrupt notice in 13:1 acts as a signal of a decisive rupture in the established cyclical pattern, marking the end of the relatively consistent framework of divine judgment and deliverance. This disruption underscores the narrative's thematic shift: the judges, once a sign of hope and leadership, are now insufficient and unable to guide Israel back to faithfulness. The failure to maintain stable leadership and covenantal obedience leads to even more profound crises, underscoring the necessity for a true and faithful leader who could restore the nation to YHWH's purposes.

By overlooking these hierarchical and recursive relationships, Brensinger's structural demarcation falls short in its precision. His decision to combine Ehud and Deborah into a single literary unit, or to group Gideon and Abimelech without clear structural justification, creates interpretive ambiguities. Furthermore, treating Jephthah and Samson as a coherent block, despite the distinct role of 13:1 as a clear structural marker, contributes to the confusion. When Brensinger's divisions are mapped hierarchically, the structural correspondences between higher and lower textual units become inconsistent, resulting in instability regarding the discourse functions of each section.

As a result, while Brensinger rightly identifies the cyclical pattern of rebellion and deliverance in Judges, his structural approach fails to capture the complexity and precision of the book's hierarchical organization. The absence of careful attention to the syntactic markers and hierarchical structures leads to a broader interpretive challenge. Without recognizing the recursive nature of the narrative, Brensinger's framework does not fully explain the discourse development and shifts in the book, missing out on key structural insights that would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of its composition.

## 2) 17:1

Serge Frolov designates 13:2-16:31 as “A Hero in Context,” 17:1-6 as “The Blood Money,” 17:7-18:31 as “The Upside-Down Conquest,” and 19:1-21:25 as “Things Fall Apart.”<sup>16</sup> Serge Frolov’s subdivision of the text into thematic units is textually defensible in its alignment with syntactic demarcations, but the thematic labels fail to fully explain how these sections work together within the broader framework of Major Component 3 (3:7-21:25). While the thematic subdivisions correspond to specific passages, they do not clarify how the discourse progression contributes to the larger macro-theme of the book. Each subdivision is given a thematic label, but the rationale for their sequential arrangement and their connection to the broader compositional strategy remains inadequately developed. This lack of a clear underlying structure leaves the theological and literary coherence of these divisions somewhat unclear.

A more coherent reading of these sections would interpret them as follows: 13:2-16:31 illustrates a corrupted judge (Samson); 17:1-6 presents a corrupted layman (Micah); 17:7-18:31 depicts the corruption of a priest and a tribe (Dan); and 19:1-21:25 exposes the collective corruption of the tribes of Israel. This sequence progresses from individual leadership failure to priestly distortion, to tribal apostasy, and ultimately to national disintegration. Rather than functioning as isolated episodes, these narratives represent an intensifying escalation of moral degeneration across increasing social levels.

By adopting this interpretation, it becomes clear that 13:2-21:25 functions as a unified literary body. The text does not merely present a series of loosely connected episodes, but constructs a deliberate escalation of corruption, culminating in intertribal violence and societal collapse.

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16 Frolov, *Judges*, 372-556.

This progression serves to reinforce the theological message of the book — that the absence of covenantal fidelity produces structural chaos at every level of Israelite society.

Thus, while Frolov’s syntactic demarcations are convincing, his thematic classifications need further refinement. A more comprehensive thematic reading would better illuminate the macro-structural coherence of the book and enhance the understanding of its theological and literary development.

### Other Scholars’ Views

David Beldman designates 17:1-21:25 as “Conclusion,”<sup>17</sup> and Lawson G. Stone labels the same unit “The finale: a decadent community.”<sup>18</sup> While both scholars correctly recognize the finality of this section, a closer examination of the text’s hierarchical structure reveals that such labels are methodologically problematic.

The first body of Judges (1:1-16:31) chronicles Israel’s progressive corruption, YHWH’s punitive responses, the nation’s cries for deliverance, and YHWH’s eventual deliverance. This section situates the cycle of failure within the historical context of Joshua’s death and raises the important theological question of why Israel continually falls into apostasy. The second body (17:1-21:25), however, narrows the focus, concentrating on individuals at multiple social levels — familial, cultic, and tribal — and reveals how each participant’s actions reflect ignorance of Torah and failure to live according to its commands.

The relationship between the two bodies is not one of simple

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17 David Beldman, 2017. *The Book of Judges: Deserting the King*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 27-41.

18 Lawson G. Stone, 2012. *Tyndale Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 38.

beginning and conclusion, but rather a shift from general to particular: the first body presents a macro-level view of Israel's collective failure, while the second body zooms in on moral decay at the micro-level. The second body offers a more detailed illustration of how corruption permeates the family, cultic leadership, and tribal structures.

Moreover, the narrative emphasizes the importance of covenantal faithfulness by portraying how each of these individuals' failures leads to larger societal problems. Unlike Joshua, who, despite the treaty with the Gibeonites, maintained qualified leadership, none of the individuals in 17:1-21:25 demonstrate lasting fidelity to YHWH's commands. The underlying message of this section encourages readers to obey Torah and worship YHWH exclusively, as this is the only reliable means of ensuring the well-being and protection of one's family, priests, and nation.

Therefore, 17:1-21:25 cannot be properly understood as a simple conclusion to the book of Judges. Its role in the text is more complex and nuanced, functioning as a detailed exposition of Israel's moral and spiritual decay, which began with corporate failure in the first body and continues at more granular social levels. The structure of Judges mirrors that of 1 Samuel, where no definitive summative closure is presented, leaving room for ongoing reflection and warning. Consequently, Beldman's and Stone's labels misrepresent the compositional and theological function of this final textual unit, overlooking its deeper role in highlighting Israel's systemic failure.

### Symmetry-Based Proposals

Laura A. Smit designates 1:1-2:5 as "The First Prologue," 2:6-3:6 as "The Second Prologue," 17:1-18:31 as "The First Epilogue," and 19:1-21:25 as "The Second Epilogue," presuming that a double introduction

corresponds structurally to a double epilogue.<sup>19</sup> Robert H. O’Connell likewise designates 1:1-3:6 as “Judges’ Double Prologue,” 17:1-21:25 as “Judges’ Double Denouement.”<sup>20</sup> Gordon Oeste also designates 1:1-3:6 as “Kinship Disintegration in the Double Introduction” and 17:1-21:25 as “Kinship Disintegration in the Denouement of Judges.”<sup>21</sup>

These symmetrical proposals aim to mirror structural elements across the text, suggesting that the book follows a balanced pattern with two prologues and two epilogues.

However, while the symmetry-based approach may initially seem attractive, it risks imposing a discourse function upon the text rather than deriving it from clearly established textual markers. For example, from a hierarchical text perspective, 2:6 does not have the necessary structuring force to govern 2:11, which operates at a higher textual level and introduces the programmatic rebellion formula that is foundational to the cyclical structure of the book. The unit 2:11-3:6 functions independently as an introduction to the cycles of apostasy and deliverance, rather than as a secondary “prologue” within the text.

Furthermore, the structural connection of 17:1-21:25 as a single unit is stronger than the proposed division into two epilogues. The clause orders in 17:1 (*Wayhi* + nominal clause) and 17:7 (*Wayhi* + nominal clause), along with the clause order in 19:1 (*Wayhi* + *Wayyiqtol*-0), mark internal subdivisions within the broader unit, such as 17:1-6, 17:7-18:31, and 19:1-21:25. These divisions suggest that the section should be understood as a unified literary body, with the narrative progressing

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19 Laura A. Smit and Stephen E. Fowl. 2018. *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Judges & Ruth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 5-192.

20 Robert H. O’Connell. 1996. *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 58, 264.

21 Gordon Oeste. 2011. ‘Butchered Brothers and Betrayed Families: Degenerating Kinship Structures in the Book of Judges’, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35/3, 295-316.

through interwoven depictions of corruption rather than being split into separate epilogues. The internal cohesion provided by the syntactic markers indicates recursive structuring within a single body, not two distinct epilogues.

The narratives within 17:1-21:25 trace a cumulative degeneration across social spheres: the absence of Torah in the family leads to cultic distortion, compromised leadership produces judicial failure, and societal disorder ultimately leads to tribal fragmentation and violence. The corruption depicted here is not isolated but intensifies progressively as it spreads throughout various layers of Israelite society, from fathers to priests, judges, families, and tribes. The section shows how Israel's downfall is not episodic but rather a compounding issue of covenantal disintegration.

Thus, dividing 17:1-21:25 into two epilogues based on symmetry is methodologically flawed, as it imposes an external framework that fails to account for the internal hierarchical and recursive features of the text. The final section of Judges should not be treated as a formal epilogue; rather, it functions as a powerful intensification of the book's theological argument, demonstrating the far-reaching consequences of Israel's covenantal failure. The section stands as a coherent whole, culminating in the tragedy of societal collapse, rather than simply a concluding or summative section.

#### Lawson Younger Jr. and Mark J. Boda's Divisions

Lawson Younger Jr. divides Judges into three major sections: 1:1-3:6 as "Double Introduction," 3:7-16:31 as "Cycles of the Judges," and 17:1-21:25 as "Double Conclusion: Specific Conditions During These Times."<sup>22</sup> At first glance, this division appears clear and structurally

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22 K. Lawson Younger Jr. 2002. *The NIV Application Commentary: Judges, Ruth*. Grand

coherent. However, a deeper examination of the text-hierarchical and syntactic features reveals that this structure requires modification to better reflect the internal textual markers and the narrative progression.

*1:1-3:6 as “Double Introduction”*

From a hierarchical perspective, the section 1:1-3:6 does not function uniformly as a “double introduction.” Instead, it should be viewed as two distinct introductory movements: 1:1-27 serves as the first introductory movement, outlining the initial stages of Israel’s conquest. 1:28-2:10 provides a secondary introduction, describing Israel’s compromise with the Canaanites, leading to a gradual decline in military and spiritual strength.

The section 2:11-3:6, however, serves as a more programmatic introduction to the rebellion cycle that governs the rest of the book. The formulaic pattern in 2:11 marks the start of a cyclical structure that recurs throughout the narrative, making it a distinct structural element. Therefore, combining 1:1-3:6 into a single “double introduction” overlooks the crucial role that 2:11 plays in initiating the rebellion cycle.

*3:7-16:31 as “Cycles of the Judges”*

Younger’s designation of 3:7-16:31 as the “Cycles of the Judges” does not fully account for the macro-structure of the book. The rebellion formula appears in multiple places throughout the text (e.g., 2:11, 3:7, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1), which indicates that the cyclical framework extends beyond just 3:7. In fact, the entire section 2:11-13:1 more accurately reflects the full development of the rebellion cycle, not just 3:7-16:31.

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Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 38.

Therefore, grouping 3:7-16:31 under a single heading without recognizing the broader extent of the rebellion formula diminishes the narrative's cyclical and recursive nature. It would be more accurate to recognize that 2:11-13:1 represents the full initiation and development of the rebellion cycle, with each section following this pattern of sin, punishment, repentance, and deliverance.

#### *17:1-21:25 as "Double Conclusion"*

The designation of 17:1-21:25 as the "Double Conclusion" also requires modification. The text beginning in 13:2 marks a shift in the narrative focus. At this point, the story transitions from national deliverance (which is cyclical) to a series of increasingly intensified portrayals of individual and societal corruption. This shift from cyclical national deliverance to social and individual degeneration is key to understanding the final chapters. The syntactic and thematic patterns suggest that 13:2-21:25 forms a coherent literary body that moves progressively from personal corruption (e.g., the flawed leadership of Samson in 13:2-16:31) to cultic failure (e.g., Micah's idolatry in 17:1-6) to intertribal conflict and eventual societal collapse (in 19:1-21:25).

By treating 17:1-21:25 as a "double conclusion," Younger fails to account for the shift in the thematic and syntactic structure that occurs at 13:2, which is more than just a conclusion. It is a critical juncture that signals the breakdown of the societal and spiritual order in Israel. Therefore, 17:1-21:25 should not be isolated as a final "conclusion" but understood as a progression of escalating corruption culminating in the disintegration of tribal unity.

#### **Mark J. Boda's View**

Mark.J.Boda designates 17:1-21:25 as "The Tribes of Israel-Part

[www.kci.go.kr](http://www.kci.go.kr)

Two.”<sup>23</sup> While this designation captures the importance of tribal identity in the later chapters of Judges (e.g., the conflicts involving the tribe of Dan and the intertribal war against Benjamin), it overlooks the significant thematic development that leads from individual moral failure to tribal collapse. The section begins with Micah’s Idolatry (17:1-6) and the Levite’s transgressions (17:7-13), which are primarily individual-centered narratives. Only later does the narrative shift to tribal-level conflict, and then to national disintegration.

From a text-hierarchical perspective, the primary organizing principle of 17:1-21:25 is not simply tribal identity but the progressive escalation of moral corruption. The section traces this degeneration across various levels of society: from individual sins (Micah and the Levite), to priestly and cultic corruption, to tribal aggression (Dan), and finally to national collapse (the war against Benjamin). The tribal aspect does emerge toward the end, but it functions as a culmination of earlier individual and cultic failures rather than being the primary focus of the entire section.

### Conclusion

Both Lawson Younger Jr. and Mark J. Boda present structural divisions that are clear at first glance, but their demarcations fail to fully account for the hierarchical relationships and narrative development in the text. Younger’s tripartite model and Boda’s emphasis on tribal identity miss the significance of key structural markers, such as 2:11 and 13:2, which initiate major shifts in the narrative’s focus. A more accurate understanding would recognize the complex interplay of individual and collective corruption, where the societal breakdown depicted in the

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23 Mark J. Boda and George M. Schwab 2012. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 318.

final chapters is not simply a conclusion but the culmination of a larger narrative of spiritual and social decay.

Similarly, John R. Franke designates 17:1-13 as “Micah’s Idolatry.”<sup>24</sup> His designation presents a structural issue by combining two distinct narrative episodes — the idolatry of Micah (17:1-6) and the Levite’s actions (17:7-13) — into a single thematic unit. While Micah’s Idolatry (17:1-6) indeed focuses on Micah’s personal corruption and his creation of an idol, the Levite’s episode (17:7-13) introduces a separate character, the Levite, who becomes involved in the situation, further corrupting the religious practice and compounding the moral decay in Israel.

By conflating these two narratives under the label of “Micah’s Idolatry,” Franke overlooks the fact that the text is illustrating a progressive sequence of escalating moral failure. Micah’s idolatry, which begins as a personal sin, is followed by the Levite’s personal compromise and failure, as he accepts the priestly role for material gain and facilitates Micah’s idolatrous practices. This development marks an intensification of the sin, as the failure of one individual leads to the corruption of another.

Recognizing these as separate, though interconnected, episodes clarifies the broader thematic trajectory of the book. The narrative moves from individual sin to the larger national catastrophe, progressively showing how small acts of disobedience and compromise escalate into widespread social and spiritual collapse. Micah’s Idolatry is the initial sin that opens the door to further corruption, symbolized by the Levite’s involvement, and eventually, this cycle culminates in national catastrophe, as seen in the subsequent episodes of the Danites’ conquest and the civil war with Benjamin.

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24 John R. Franke 2005, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament IV: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and 1-2 Samuel*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 168.

Thus, Franke's approach underestimates the escalating nature of moral failure across multiple levels of society. Treating Micah's Idolatry and the Levite's episode as distinct narratives allows the text to be understood as a gradual intensification of sin, culminating in the collapse of Israel's covenantal integrity. This distinction underscores the broader theological message of the book of Judges: that individual and collective failure to adhere to the covenant leads to societal disintegration.

### 3) 19:1

Lawson Younger Jr. further subdivides the so-called double introduction into: (1) "Foreign wars of subjugation with the herem being applied" (1:1-2:5) and (2) "Difficulties with foreign religious idols" (2:6-3:6). Correspondingly, he divides the double conclusion into: (1) "Difficulties with domestic religious idols" (17:1-18:31) and (2) "Domestic wars with the herem being applied" (19:1-21:25), arguing for an inclusio between introduction and conclusion.<sup>25</sup>

His demarcation raises an interesting thematic comparison, particularly when aligning foreign wars of subjugation in the introduction with domestic wars of subjugation (the herem against Benjamin) in the conclusion. This parallel structure can indeed be theologically significant, drawing attention to the recurrence of Israel's battles, both external and internal, and the application of herem (the divine command for total destruction) as a key thematic element. However, the syntactic and hierarchical markers in the text do not fully support the symmetrical structure Younger proposes.

From a structural and text-hierarchical perspective, 1:1-27 presents the foreign wars of incomplete conquest, where Israel's failure to fully

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25 Younger, *Judges, Ruth*, 38.

drive out the Canaanites begins the cycle of compromise. 1:28-2:10 introduces YHWH's rebuke via His messenger and further demonstrates Israel's compromised settlement within Canaan. The passage highlights Israel's failure to apply the herem fully, opting instead to enslave the remaining Canaanites, which leads to weakening Israel's military and spiritual position.

Moving to 2:11-3:6, this section operates at a higher structural level, focusing on the idolatry of Israel and the programmatic rebellion formula, which marks the introduction of the cyclical pattern of rebellion, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. The rebellion formula here does not belong to a "double introduction" but functions independently to introduce the cycles that follow. These three movements — foreign wars of subjugation, YHWH's rebuke, and Israel's idolatry — are distinct and hierarchical in their function, suggesting that 1:1-3:6 should not be viewed as a unified "double introduction."

Similarly, Younger's "double conclusion" subdivision — where 17:1-18:31 is labeled as "difficulties with domestic religious idols" and 19:1-21:25 as "domestic wars with the herem applied" — overlooks the internal syntactic structure that links these sections. 17:1-18:31 focuses on religious corruption within the household and tribe of Dan, beginning with Micah's idolatry and progressing to the establishment of an idolatrous shrine by the Danites. It marks the collapse of Israel's spiritual integrity on an individual and tribal level. This is more thematically about the idolatry of individuals and tribes, rather than "domestic wars" per se.

On the other hand, 19:1-21:25 portrays the intertribal conflict that arises when the Levite's actions lead to the horrific crime against his concubine, sparking a civil war against Benjamin. The section does deal with herem warfare, but this is not strictly a domestic war with the herem applied in the same way the foreign wars in the introduction were.

Instead, it is intertribal violence stemming from moral and social decay within Israel itself, making it a far cry from the foreign wars of subjugation depicted in the introduction.

In conclusion, the suggestion of a “double introduction” and “double conclusion” appears to overlook the text-hierarchical structure that underlies the book. 1:1-3:6 should be viewed as a multi-layered introduction with different movements, each operating at a distinct level, rather than as a singular “double introduction.” Similarly, the thematic comparison between herem warfare in the introduction and the conclusion is insightful, but the narrative complexity and textual structure do not entirely support a symmetrical inclusion of these sections. Instead, a more nuanced understanding of the text’s hierarchical divisions and thematic escalation would clarify the organization and theological message of the book.

This paper challenges the idea of a “double conclusion” for the final portion of the book of Judges, especially when analyzing the text from a syntactic and hierarchical perspective. By starting at 13:2, a new literary body indeed emerges, developing a progressive narrative that escalates in both thematic and social corruption. This section traces four distinct episodes — from the corrupt Manoah and Samson (13:2-16:31) to the corrupted layman Micah (17:1-6), then the corrupted priest and the tribe of Dan (17:7-18:31), and finally, the corrupted Levites leading to the intertribal civil war (19:1-21:25). Each of these sections is marked by recursive clause patterns, where the syntactic structure reinforces the narrative of escalating moral and social deterioration.

Thus, the idea of grouping 17:1-18:31 as a “unified epilogue” or 2:6-3:6 as a single, conclusive unit faces significant structural difficulties when aligned with the syntax and narrative progression. In fact, each of these subsections functions autonomously and introduces new social or

moral failures, as you noted. The corruption becomes more individualized, first focusing on individuals (Manoah, Micah), then extending to the priesthood and tribal behavior, and finally escalating to national collapse. This progressive structure undercuts any attempt to treat these sections as simple parts of a “double conclusion” or “epilogue.”

Now, when considering the comparison between 1:1-27 and 19:1-21:25, the reversal of roles is indeed a key theological marker. In 1:1-27, Israel is depicted as the instrument of YHWH’s judgment against the Canaanites through herem warfare. This is an execution of divine justice, where Israel acts as the agent of judgment. However, by 19:1-21:25, the situation has drastically shifted: Israel, now morally and spiritually corrupted, becomes the object of judgment, facing near annihilation in the civil war against Benjamin. This reversal is theologically profound, as it demonstrates the cyclical nature of disobedience — Israel’s failure to uphold the covenant, ignore the Torah, and abandon YHWH’s commandments leads them into a situation where they, too, become subject to the same judgment they once executed on the Canaanites.

This thematic and structural development highlights a critical shift from Israel’s role as the divine agent of judgment to the victim of it. It’s a powerful commentary on the consequences of covenantal disobedience and the breakdown of Israel’s identity and unity. Israel’s unfaithfulness causes their moral and social fabric to unravel, resulting in the disintegration of the tribes and even in civil war — culminating in near-total destruction. Thus, this reversal of roles underscores the central theological message of Judges: failure to remain faithful to YHWH’s Torah leads to divine judgment, even on the people who once enacted it.

In conclusion, the structural complexity of Judges suggests that while Younger’s thematic *inclusio* is insightful, the syntactic and hierarchical divisions point toward a more intricate compositional structure. The

transformation from Israel as the instrument of divine justice to Israel as the recipient of judgment can be best understood by focusing on the progressive nature of moral and social decay in the text, rather than forcing it into the binary categories of “double introduction” and “double conclusion.” The text is not merely drawing symmetrical parallels but rather depicting the deepening consequences of disobedience and the escalating breakdown of Israelite society.

## 7. Summary and conclusion

### 7.1. Summary

This study has conducted a reexamination of Judges 13:2-21:25, focusing on a syntactic-hierarchical analysis and engaging with recent scholarship on structural proposals. While thematic and symmetry-based models have traditionally influenced interpretations of this section, the study argues that macro-syntactic markers, particularly *Wayhi* and *Wayyiqtol-X* constructions, offer a more reliable framework for delimiting discourse units.

The investigation critiques several prominent proposals, including those that treat 17:1-21:25 as a “double epilogue” (Smit, O’Connell, Oeste) or as a “double conclusion” (Younger). Through a syntactic analysis, the study demonstrates that 13:2 marks the beginning of a new macro-unit, extending through to 21:25. Key clauses in 17:1, 17:7, and 19:1 should not be seen as isolated epilogical openings, but rather as recursive subdivisions within a single literary body. This contrasts with some earlier suggestions that treated these units as separate epilogues or conclusions.

The study also critiques Frolov’s thematic divisions, which, while

structurally close, fail to fully account for the progressive escalation in the material. The text moves from the Samson narrative (13:2-16:31), where leadership is compromised, to private cultic distortion (17:1-6), priestly commodification and tribal deviation (17:7-18:31), and culminates in national fragmentation and intertribal violence (19:1-21:25). This thematic progression is cumulative, not episodic, and traces moral disintegration at multiple social levels: individual, family, priesthood, tribe, and nation.

Comparison with symmetry-based proposals also reveals limitations. While symmetry between introduction and conclusion seems compelling thematically, syntactically, the markers of 13:2-21:25 do not support a “double epilogue” framework. Rather than resolving the book, this section intensifies its theological message, amplifying the consequences of covenantal disobedience.

## **7.2. Conclusion**

This study concludes that Judges 13:2-21:25 is a unified macro-structural movement, organized by hierarchical syntactic patterns rather than externally imposed symmetry. The macro-launch at 13:2 signals a decisive shift in narrative focus: moving from the cyclical deliverance of Israel to the escalating disintegration of Israelite society. The recurring clause patterns in 17:1, 17:7, and 19:1 function as internal subdivisions within this broader unit, preserving a cohesive structure that marks the intensification of the narrative.

The relationship between the earlier cyclical narratives and the final section is not one of “body and conclusion,” but rather a shift from general to particular. The first major body of Judges presents Israel’s corporate apostasy in cyclical form, while the final macro-unit exposes how covenantal infidelity permeates all levels of society. This thematic

progression — from foreign herem warfare (1:1-27) to intertribal near-annihilation (19:1-21:25) — underscores a theological reversal: when Israel abandons covenantal obedience, it becomes subject to the same judgment it once executed against others.

By focusing on observable syntactic hierarchy, this study offers a more precise account of the compositional strategy of Judges, in contrast to thematic or symmetry-driven models. The final chapters of Judges should not be viewed as a detachable epilogue but as the intensification and culmination of the book's theological argument. Understanding this hierarchical coherence provides a clearer understanding of the macro-structure of Judges and contributes to ongoing discussions on the book's literary design and theological trajectory.

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#### 검색어

에입 탈스트라의 텍스트 언어학, 사사기, 삼손 스토리, 사사기의 구문구조, 구문 패턴, 담화 표지어, 구획 원리

## From Samson to Structural Closure: A Syntactic-Hierarchical Reading of Judges 13:2-21:25

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This study proposes a syntactic-hierarchical reading of the Book of Judges, arguing that the narrative exhibits a coherent macro-structural trajectory extending from Judges 13:2 to 21:25. While Judges 17-21 is often treated as a secondary appendix or “double epilogue,” and the Samson narrative (Judg. 13-16) is frequently separated on thematic and compositional grounds, this study re-examines the book’s internal organization through a synchronic text-linguistic approach. The aim is to determine whether clause-level and discourse-level features of the Masoretic Text support a unified macro-structure, evaluated inductively from the final form without presupposing a Deuteronomistic framework or fixed literary divisions.

Methodologically, the study uses a synchronic text-linguistic model based on Eep Talstra, building on Harald Weinrich and Wolfgang Schneider. The analysis examines clause type, verbal morphology, participant tracking, lexical recurrence, and discourse segmentation, with special attention to *Wayyiqtol* structures, nominal clauses, infinitives, and *Waybi* + temporal expressions. These features are used to identify patterns of hierarchical embedding, parallelism, and discourse continuity.

The analysis shows that Judges is structured through recurring

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syntactic patterns that signal both progression and segmentation. The “sin cycle” in Judges 2:11-13:1 reflects a shift from collective apostasy to localized narrative episodes, while Judges 13:2 functions as a major transition introducing a macro-unit (13:2-21:25) characterized by increasing fragmentation and narrative intensification. This unit presents a sequence of narratives centered on individual figures who exemplify deficient engagement with Torah and exhibit moral corruption at various levels of Israelite society. Recurrent patterns, especially *WayX*-nominal clause sequences, function as structural markers linking individual narratives into a broader discourse network.

The results suggest that Judges exhibits a coherent syntactic-hierarchical architecture that cannot be adequately accounted for by traditional tripartite or purely thematic models. Instead, the final form reveals a structured progression in which clause-level organization reflects macro-level theological and narrative development. Accordingly, Judges 13:2-21:25 can be read as an integrated discourse unit characterized by intensification, fragmentation, and the absence of stable covenantal leadership, allowing for a canonical interpretation of literary unity within the Former Prophets.

key words

Text-linguistics of Eep Talstra, The book of Judges, Samson story,  
Text-hierarchy of Judges, Syntactic pattern, Structuring principle,  
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