

THE SONG OF DEBORAH:
POETRY IN DIALECT

CHAPTER TWO

THE LITERARY COMPONENTS
OF THE DEBORAH–Jael–BARAK
TRADITION

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Equating the prose literary unit and the poetic unit in Judges 4 and 5 with precisely the current chapter divisions, 4 and 5, respectively, has been standard procedure in all studies that I have taken the opportunity to review. Malamet's statement (1971: 137) is typical of exegetical tradition on this point:

. . . in analyzing the Deborah episode we have two versions before us: the narrative account (Jud. 4) and the Song of Victory (Jud. 5). Such double accounts, prose and poetry, of military victories are found elsewhere in the Bible (cf. Ex. 14 and 15) and in the Ancient Near East.

But this identification of the literary units as Ju 4:1–23 (prose) and Ju 5:1–31 (poetry) is not entirely accurate. The chapter units do not coincide with the original literary units. The chapter division should have come after 4:22 to mark the original literary division in the text. The *prose introduction* to the poem, Ju 4:23–24 (“And at that time God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan . . . until they destroyed the king of Canaan”), has consistently and mistakenly been identified as the *conclusion of the prose account* of the defeat of Sisera in 4:1–22.

The poem as it now stands in Judges 5 (MT) is part of the slightly larger literary unit composed of Ju 4:23–5:31. This unit consists of (1) a prose formulaic introduction, (2) the poem proper, and (3) a prose formulaic conclusion. The isolated tradition about Shamgar in Ju 3:31 is the missing link in the poem which, when restored to its proper position, provides the *poetic introduction* of the original poem.

I. Clues from the formulaic use of שָׁקַט and כָּנַע

The account in Ju 4:1–22 has the characteristic Deuteronomic introduction (“and the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh”) but no formulaic conclusion. The literary unit of Ju 4:22–5:31 has a pre-Deuteronomic introduction, with

the formulaic **וַיִּכְנַע אֱלֹהִים** “and God subdued,” and the formulaic conclusion, **וַתִּשְׁקַט הָאָרֶץ** “and the land was at peace.” The formulaic verbs in 4:23 and 5:31, **וַיִּכְנַע . . . וַתִּשְׁקַט**, provide a prose *incipit* and a prose *inclusio* for the poem.

Despite the claims of Eissfeldt (1925: 26–27; 1966: 259), Richter (1964: 14), and Soggin (1972: 142) that the formulaic use of **כִּנַּע** and **שָׁקַט** is Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic, the conclusion of S. R. Driver (1913a: 166–167) appears to be more in concord with the biblical material. Opting for the pre-Deuteronomic origin of this formula, Driver noted

It is very possible, therefore, that there was a *pre-Deuteronomic collection* [Driver’s italics] of histories of Judges, which the Deuteronomic compiler set in a new framework, embodying his theory of the history of this period. Perhaps one or two of the recurring phrases noted above, such as “subdue” (3:30; 4:23; 8:28; 11:33), which seem to form a more integral part of the narratives proper than the rest, may mark the portions due to the pre-Deuteronomic compiler.²⁴

The verb **כִּנַּע** occurs thirty-three times in the Bible, but it is not a word common to the Deuteronomic material. Over half of the occurrences are in 1–2 Chronicles. It occurs but once in Deuteronomy and only once in each of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Its use four times in Judges hardly qualifies it to be designated Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic.²⁵ The most that can be said is that **וַתִּכְנַע** in Ju 3:30 (but not in Ju 4:23; 8:28; 11:33) stands in proximity to well-attested Deuteronomic formulae; but this fact is in itself not sufficient reason to equate the word with Deuteronomic material.

A similar pattern of usage prevails for **שָׁקַט** which occurs forty-one times in the biblical text, including fifteen times in pre-exilic prophetic literature. But it occurs only once in 2 Kings

²⁴ Compare Weinfeld (1972: 24, 351) who identified **כִּנַּע**, in the sense of humility before God, as a Deuteronomic term. It is significant that Weinfeld (1972: 398, 404) does not cite **שָׁקַט** as a Deuteronomic term either here or in the verses in Judges where the formulaic **שָׁקַט . . . כִּנַּע** appears. Compare Soggin (1972: 42) who treats **שָׁקַט הָאָרֶץ מִבְּלַחְמָה** as a “typically Deuteronomic” formula.

²⁵ The **כִּנַּע** of Ju 4:23 must be added to the concordance of Radday, Leb, and Natziz (1977:131–132).

and does not occur in Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, or in 1 Kings. It appears but twice in Joshua (11:23, 14:15) in the phrase *והארץ שקטה ממלחמה* “and the land was free from war,” which has been identified as a Deuteronomic phrase (Soggin 1972: 142). But this usage does not parallel the passages in Judges which consistently contain a numerical modifier, e.g., *שנה ותשקט*, “and the land was pacified for forty years” (Ju 3:11). Such sparse use of *כנע* and *שקט* in Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings cautions one against departing from Driver’s identification of these words as pre-Deuteronomic.

Although the formulaic use of *כנע* and/or *שקט* occurs only five times in Judges, the evidence is sufficient to enable one to recognize several different ways in which the formula was used. In Ju 3:30, both verbs are used in the same sentence to mark the conclusion of a narrative: “So Moab was subdued (*והכנע*) in that day under the hand of Israel, and the land was at peace (*והשקט*) for eighty years.” Likewise, the full formula occurs in Ju 8:28, where the context clearly indicates that the verbs mark the conclusion of the Gideon narrative: “So Midian was subdued (*והכנע*) before the people of Israel . . . and the land was at peace (*והשקט*) for forty years in the days of Gideon.”

In Ju 11:33, *כנע* was used (contrary to Masoretic accentuation) in an introductory or transitional statement: “So the Ammonites were subdued (*והכנע*) before the Israelites and Jephthah went to his home at Mizpah.” Here *שקט* does not appear with *כנע* since the story concludes (12:26) on a violent note telling of the death of forty-two thousand Ephraimites. In Ju 4:23–5:31, *והכנע* marks the transition to a new narrative, similar to the usage

The Song of Deborah is part of a larger narrative consisting of a cycle of “pacification” stories telling of these major events:

- (1) the subduing by Othniel of King Cushan-rishathaim, followed by forty years of peace (3:7–11);
- (2) Ehud’s assassination of Eglon, king of Moab, followed by eighty years of peace (3:12–30);
- (3) the defeat of Sisera by Deborah, Yael, and Barak, followed by forty years of peace (4:23–5:31);
- (4) Gideon’s subduing of the Midianites, followed by forty years of peace (6:1–8:28).

These pacification stories, characterized by their formulaic framework using *כָּנַע* and/or *טָקַשׁ*, are presented on a graduated scale according to the length of the narrative, from short to long. (The periods of peace could have been concomitant or overlapping and were not necessarily sequential, though the total of two hundred years is of interest.)

Richter (1963: *passim*; 1964: *passim*) called attention to the way in which these independent units were framed into a continuous narrative in a pre-Deuteronomic “book of saviour-figures, a *Retterbuch*.”²⁶ But my analysis differs from Richter’s in several ways: (1) I view the use of the verbs *כָּנַע* and *טָקַשׁ* as integral to the pre-Deuteronomic framework; (2) the poem in 5:1–31a was an integral part of the pre-Deuteronomic *Retterbuch*; and (3) Ju 4:1–22 was inserted by the Deuteronomic editor.

Recognition of Ju 4:23–24 as the prose prologue to the poem, rather than as the conclusion of the parallel prose account in 4:1–22, permits one to establish the following sequence in the pre-Deuteronomic tradition:

- (a) the destruction and death of Jabin, “king of Canaan”;
- (b) the oppression of Israel after the demise of Shamgar;
- (c) the rise of Deborah and her summons of Barak;
- (d) the defeat of Sisera and the Canaanite coalition; and
- (e) the assassination of Sisera at the hands of Yael.

II. The isolated Shamgar tradition in Ju 3:31

Eissfeldt’s statement (1966: 266), “we must reckon . . . with a ‘neutralizing’ of materials which contradict the bias of a particular redactor,” provides the clue for recovering the original poetic introduction of the Judges 5 poem. Most critics are in agreement that Ju 5:1 was not the original initial verse of the poem. For

²⁶ Note also the statement of van Selms (1964: 296): “The characteristic word in these separate stories, which were taken over by the author of the whole book from oral tradition without a literary stage, is not ‘judge’, but the verb *הוֹשִׁיעַ* and its derivations . . . we should call our book rather the ‘Book of Deliverers’ than the ‘Book of Judges’.”

example, J. Gray (1967: 276) typically noted that MT **וּבְרַק בֵּן נְבִינֵם** is a secondary addition in a verse that simply ascribes the hymnic elements to Deborah.

I concur that 5:1 was not the initial verse of the poem, but, contrary to Eissfeldt, I consider it an integral part of the poem. As noted above, MT **וַתֵּשֶׁר** is better identified with **אֲשֶׁר** or **שׂוּר** “to march forth.” If it is the former, **תֵּשֶׁר** (with defective spelling) was written for **תֵּשֶׁר** (as **תֵּשֶׁר** appears for **תֵּשֶׁר** in Jer 2: 36). With the deletion of the **ו** conjunction, the verse reads “Then Deborah made Barak march forth on that day” (with the MT **לְאִמֹר** going before **יְהוָה** **יְהוָה**, to introduce the exhortation).

However, when 5:1a is read, “then Deborah made Barak march forth,” Ju 5:1 cannot be the immediate sequel to 4:24, which speaks of a major victory for the Israelites. Between the victory over Jabin and the marching orders to Barak there must have been other events necessitating the sequential “then” clause. Those events appear to have been the rise and demise of the heroic Shamgar. If the two disparate elements composing the Shamgar tradition (3:31 and 5:6–7) are united, they provide the introduction to the poem and the transitional event which triggered Deborah’s ordering Barak into battle.

Scholarly opinion on Ju 3:31 is generally mixed. Few have invested this verse with historical integrity. Burney (1918: 76) argued that it was a late insertion made after the redactors introduced the “minor” judges into the book, possibly making Shamgar a substitute authority figure for the corrupt Abimelek. Later commentators such as Richter (1964: 92–97), J. Gray (1967: 215–216, 266) and Boling (1975: 89–90) generally concurred. They consider this verse to be a Deuteronomistic or post-Deuteronomistic interpolation, possibly extrapolated from the story of David’s hero, Shammah ben-Agee (**שָׁמַח בֶּן-אֵגִי**, 2 Sam 23:11), or the “oppressor” Shamgar ben-Anat, cited in Ju 5:6–7. But the opinion of Schroeder (1911: 479) is more likely: “vielmehr werden wir es hier mit einer guten historischen Notiz zu tun haben.”

Schroeder based his claim for the historical integrity of this verse on the emendation of **הַמְלִיחָה דָקָר** to **בַּמְלִיחָה דָקָר**, “tötete er mit Wurfgeschöß,” which won no acceptance. A better claim for the integrity of the passage can be made by demonstrating that the verse is a poetic tricolon with syllable balance, meter, synonymous parallelism, and archaic grammatical and lexical

features. When restored to its poetic form, Ju 3:31 can be recognized as part of a three-verse Shamgar tradition which included Ju 5:6–7 as well.

With the emendation of MT *ואחר היו היה* to *ואחר היו היה* and *ויכא את* to *ויכא את*, Ju 3:31 can be read and scanned as follows:

ואחר היו היה שמגר בן ענת.
ויכא את פלשתים
שש מאות איש במלמד.
הבקר וישע גם הוא את ישראל.

Then later appeared on the scene Shamgar ben-Anat!
He smote (with) a plowshare two bands of marauders,
he plundered hundreds of men with a goad.
He was appointed overseer and he gained victories
by himself for Israel!

(Meter 3 + 2 / 3 + 3 / 2 + 2 + 2; Syllables 7:5::8:7::6:6)

Unrecognized or rare items in the *poetic* lines of 3:31 include

- (a) the *hoph'al* of בקר “to oversee”,²⁷
- (b) את “plowshare” (the first את), which has been misunderstood as the first of two direct object signs;
- (c) את (the second את) used more as an *emphatic* particle than simply as the direct object sign;
- (d) feminine dual פלשתים, with the ב/פ variant, a cognate of Aramaic/Syriac בולשת and בלשיא “thieves, marauders, a reconnoitering troop.”²⁸

²⁷ For a discussion on the use of בקר in Lev 27:33 and Ezek 34:11–22, as well as the use of מבקר in 1QS 6:12, 20 and CD cols. 9, 13–15, see pages 61–64.

²⁸ Jastrow (1903: 175, 1185); R. Payne Smith (1897–1901: 541, 3163), noting especially the citation: “Credo *פלשתים* nomen esse gentis cujusdam barbarae, quae famam sibi malam ut milites mercenarii acquisivisset.” Note also J. Payne Smith (1903: 47, 449). Undoubtedly the stem is related to the Ge'ez and Amharic *falasa/falaša* “to emigrate, wander, to be in exile” known from the name of the Falashas, the “Beta Israel” of Ethiopia, now in Israel.

- (e) שָׁשׁ “to plunder,” cognate of Ugaritic *ṭš* and a by-form of שָׁסָה and שָׁסַס.²⁹

Synonymous parallelism is conspicuous with (1) the *yqtl* יָךְ (or וַיִּכֶּה) “he smote” and the *qtl* שָׁשׁ “he plundered,”³⁰ (2) the dual פְּלִשְׁתִּים “two bands of marauders” in parallelism with מֵאוֹת אִישׁ “hundreds of men,” and (3) מִלְגֹּמֶד “oxgoad” in parallelism with אֶת “plowshare.” Aural coherence appears with the noun אֶת and the particle אֶת and the use of שָׁשׁ and אִישׁ.

The obvious sequel to this restored tricolon follows in Ju 5: 6–7, which is followed in turn by Ju 5:1 ff.

(But) from the days of Shamgar ben-Anat,
 from the days he used to attack,³¹ caravans ceased.
 Caravaneers had to roam roundabout routes.
 Warriors disappeared, from Israel they vanished—
 until the rising (to power) of Deborah,
 the rising (to power) of a Mother in Israel.
 Then Deborah made Barak march forth

The questions why and when the Shamgar tradition was divided and transposed cannot be answered with certainty, but I suspect that the material was “neutralized” by the Deuteronomic

²⁹ Gordon (1965: 507 no. 2757) cited text 127: 47–48, *ltdy ṭšm*, but did not translate the phrase. However, G. R. Driver (1971: 47, 151) translated it as “thou canst not put down them that despoil,” and cited Hebrew שָׁסַס and שָׁסָה “plunder” as cognates. J. Gray (1964: 29, 78) translated the phrase, “thou didst not drive away those who prey,” and cited the support of Virolleaud (1936: 16), Ginsburg (1946: 32), and Gordon (1949: 82). Lambdin (1953: 155) called attention to Egyptian *š3s* “to traverse” and *šasu* “nomads, marauders.” Note in contrast the comments of Fenton (1969: 65–66) on the meaning of *ṭš*, שָׁסַס, and שָׁסָה, and of Guillaume (1959–1960: 16) who cited Arabic *سوس* “to be bold in attacking” as its cognate.

³⁰ For a study of the *qtl*–*yqtl* sequence of identical verbs, see Held 1962: 281–290; and for a similar sequence of synonymous verbs, see McDaniel 1968b: 215 and Dahood 1970: 420–423. The restoration of an אֶת lost by haplography, restores the by-form of נִכְּהָ as found in Job 30:8, Isa 16:7, and Prov 15:13, 17:22, and 18:14.

³¹ For the proposal to read the *hiph^lil* of עָלַל “to attack (secretly),” instead of the name Yael, see the discussion below (pages 114–115) on 5:6.

editor. If Ju 3:31 were the original initial tricolon of the poem, it would not have satisfied the theological bias of a Deuteronomic editor since Shamgar delivered Israel לְהוֹרֹתָם “by himself,” a phrase that a scrupulous Deuteronomic editor could have taken to imply “without Yahweh,” instead of its obvious meaning of without the help of other judges or military alliances.³² By a modest modification in shifting the initial verse of the poem (dealing with Shamgar’s exploits) to its present position in 3:31, as the initial statement of the entire Deborah–Barak–Yael tradition, the neutralization was partially achieved.

The note on Shamgar in 5:6–7 includes two temporal phrases, “from the days of Shamgar” and “until the rising of Deborah.” The שִׁקְמוֹתֶיהָ of the MT, contrary to many who identify the verb as a *shaph^cel* of קָם (= “I raised up”), is the relative pronoun שֶׁ and the feminine participle, with the archaistic *hireq compaginis*.³³ Since the form is a homograph of the 1cs *qal* perfect, and since $\text{עַד שִׁקְמוֹתַי דְּבוֹרָה}$ could mean “until I, Deborah, arose,” the lines were treated as a quotation of Deborah and inserted by the Deuteronomic editor into Deborah’s exhortation, now found in Ju 5: 3–5 and 8–9, the only part of the poem in which Deborah speaks.

With this bifurcation of the Shamgar tradition, the neutralizing of the poetic introduction was fully accomplished. The failure of scholars to recognize that the verses in which Shamgar is mentioned are related to one another and are an integral part of the original poem demonstrates the effectiveness with which the Deuteronomic editors did their work.

³² Note the statement of Eissfeldt (1966: 259): “The narratives about the minor Judges . . . all begin with a statement about Israel’s sinful actions which have as their consequence the anger of God expressed in terms of permitting hostile attack, and about the cry for help which then moved God to send the judge (iii, 7–9, 11b; iv, 1–6; vi, 1–14; x, 6–16; xiii, 1–5).” Compare Seeligmann (1961: 201–221) and Weinfeld (1967: 93–113). Regarding the pre-Deuteronomic identification of the sin of Israel as the non-expulsion of the Canaanites, Weinfeld (105) stated, “This historiographic view was incompatible with the conception of the Deuteronomic editor . . . he ignored this historical introduction expressing this view and wrote his own introduction consistent with his ideological principles.”

³³ In his commentary, Soggin (1981c: 86) reversed his earlier position (1975: 201, note 34) that שִׁקְמוֹתֶיהָ is a *shaph^cel*. On the *hireq compaginis*, see page 119 below; GKC 90¹; McDaniel 1968b: 29; and Layton 1990: 107–154.

III. Judges 4:1–22

The Deuteronomic editor is to be credited with more than the neutralizing of the poetic introduction. He was responsible for giving a theological introduction to the entire Deborah–Yael–Barak tradition. Once Shamgar had been moved from his initial position in the poem to the initial position in the combined prose-poetry Deborah tradition, his deliverance of Israel was read as a postlude to the Ehud story. But he was so isolated in 3:31 from the Song of Deborah that, subsequently, he was viewed by some readers as an oppressor of Israel when he was mentioned again (“in the days of Shamgar”) in Ju 5:7.³⁴

The Deuteronomic editor was also responsible for making the prose account of Sisera’s defeat (4:1–22) into a *midrash* on what must have become by his time a difficult poem to understand since the misdivision of some words in the poem, no doubt, predated him. On the other hand, one must assume that the poem was fairly, if not totally, comprehensible for the pre-Deuteronomic editors who incorporated it into their *Retterbuch*.

Ju 4:1–22 must be viewed as a Deuteronomic insertion into the pre-Deuteronomic tradition which consisted of two quantitatively unequal elements: (a) an early prose narrative telling of the defeat of Sisera which paralleled at points the poetic account; and (b) the Deuteronomic formulae³⁵ which can be recognized in the following phrases from 4:1–3:

וּסְפּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
 וַיִּמְכְּרֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד . . .
 וַיִּצַּעְקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יְהוָה.

And the Israelites continued to do evil
 in the eyes of Yahweh
 And Yahweh sold them into the hand of . . .
 And the Israelites called out to Yahweh.

³⁴ Moore 1898b: 159–160; Nestle 1912: 424–425; Burney 1918: 77; and Albright 1921: 55–56.

³⁵ Richter 1964: 6. But, as argued above (pages 29–32), Richter is incorrect in identifying the formulaic verbs וַתִּשְׁקַט . . . וַתִּכְנַע as Deuteronomic.

By deleting the Deuteronomic material one can recover the pre-Deuteronomic text in the following collection of words:

ואהוד מת יבין מלך כנען אשר מלך בחצור
 ושר צבאו סיסרא והוא יושב בחרשת הגוים
 כי חשע מאות רכב ברזל לו
 הוא לחץ את בני ישראל בחזקה עשרים שנה:

And Ehud died Jabin king of Canaan who ruled in Hazor
 and an officer of his army Sisera and he dwelt in
 the enclave of the foreigners
 indeed he had nine hundred chariots of iron
 he oppressed the Israelites mightily for twenty years.

This conglomeration of words can be transformed into a very meaningful narrative introduction (compatible with Ju 4:23–24, as defined above, and with Joshua 11) by emending וְאֶהוּד (וְאֶהוּד) to the graphically similar וְאַחַר “then after,” and reading צְבָאוֹ as the infinitive צְבֹא “to wage war.” The שֶׁר of צְבָאוֹ שֶׁר is actually the 3ms of שָׁר “to go forth, to march out.”³⁶ With these changes, the pre-Deuteronomic text of 4:1–3 can be translated:³⁷

³⁶ BDB 1003; Lane 1872: 1483b, 1484b; and G. R. Driver 1956: 69, 148.

³⁷ Aharoni (1967: 201–203) suggested that חַרְשֵׁת הַגּוֹיִם was not a place name but designated “the forested regions of Galilee” (= “Galilee of the Gentiles”). The translation of חַרְשֵׁת as “the defensive enclave” of the foreigners is based upon the Arabic cognate حرس “to guard” and حرسه “what is guarded, preserved” (Lane 1872: 546). Dozy (1927: 269–270) cited حرسى “un soldat destiné à garder une place,” and محرس “une enceinte fermée de murs et assez grande pour loger une petite garnison, où les zélés musulmans se réunissaient pour faire la guerre aux non-musulmans,” and referred to the place name محرس (Machres), which would be analogous to Hebrew חַרְשֵׁת (which lacks, however, the preformative מ) used as an “evident appellative” in a construct chain (GKC 125°). This חַרְשֵׁת could be related to חַרַשׁ IV “to divine” (see page 255).

Drews (1989: 20–21) dealt with the problem of Sisera’s having iron chariots since “in the twelfth-century B.C.E. both offensive and defensive weapons were normally made of bronze”—with only 3 of 150 pieces of weaponry found from the twelfth-century being of iron rather than bronze. Therefore, he concluded that the chariots were probably iron-tired chariots rather than being ironplated or the *currus falcati* “scythed chariots” of the Vulgate.

After Jabin, the king of Canaan who reigned from Hazor, died,
 Sisera who dwelt in the defensive enclave of the
 foreigners then went forth to wage war.
 Indeed, he had nine hundred chariots of iron.
 He harshly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Here the sequence of major characters and events, except for the omission of any reference to Shamgar, is the same as that found in Ju 4:23–5:23, where the deceased Jabin was followed by Sisera, whose oppression led to the rise of Deborah and the mobilization of the Israelite militia. The precise place chosen by the Deuteronomic editors for inserting their formulaic material and prose “commentary” is significant. The editors transformed the pre-Deuteronomic prose *incipit* of the poem into a prose *inclusio* for the “commentary” in 4:1–22. Thereby a theologically acceptable and literarily uniform parallel account introduced the archaic poem of the “Yahweh war.”

The question arises, “Why were the formulaic insertions made at their present positions and not elsewhere in the tradition?” The phrase *וַיִּמְכְּרֵם יְהוָה בַּיַּד* could just as easily have been placed before the name of Sisera as before the name of Jabin. Had it been so placed, the prose *incipit* to the poem could have remained an *incipit*, and the historical ambiguities between Judges 4 and Joshua 11 could have been avoided—assuming that MT *וַאֲהוּרַד* was a later *plena* spelling of *וַאֲהוּרַד*, which was a misreading or modification of the original *וַאֲחַר*.

An answer may be found in Ju 4:7, where Sisera is identified as *שֵׂר צַבָּא יַבִּין* “an officer of Jabin’s army” (GKC 128^{s-u}). In spite of the claim of Cooke (1892: 16), Moore (1900b: 116), Burney (1918: 81), and C. A. Simpson (1957: 14–15) that the references to Jabin (4:7, 17) were from an independent tradition which had been erroneously interwoven with the Sisera tradition, the reference in 4:7 can be retained as a slur on Sisera’s position and power, since he was not a king residing in a fortified city but simply a survivor of a defeated army who was forced to operate out of a defensive enclave of foreigners and/or fortunetellers. As such, Sisera was vulnerable, not invincible—his nine hundred chariots of iron not withstanding. But the Deuteronomic editors missed the slur. They viewed Sisera the way many interpreters

do, transforming him into *the* highest-ranking officer of the *reigning* King Jabin, rather than *an* officer of the *deceased* king.

This misunderstanding resulted in the reappearance of Jabin in the narrative after his death, only to be defeated a second time at the hands of Deborah, Barak, and Yael (Ju 4:1–24). Assuming that 4:7 and 4:17 were in the text of the Deuteronomic editor, he may have felt the need to correct the tradition in Ju 4:1 (which read, as reconstructed, וַאֲחֵר בִּזְיָן יָבִין) if Jabin was presumably still alive according to 4:7 and 4:17.

IV. Summary

In summary, the proposal here is that the Deuteronomic editors, by changing an original וַאֲחֵר to וַאֲחֵד (or וַאֲחֵדִּי) and צַבָּא or צַבֹּא to צַבָּאָא, were able to alter the received tradition sufficiently to accommodate the insertion of their theological formulae and to harmonize their astutely constructed theological prose introduction (4:1–3) with the existing introduction to the poem (4:23–24). But this harmonization transformed the introductory words of 4:23–24 into a conclusion for the prose narrative of 4:1–22. Historical accuracy was sacrificed by this editorial creation of a theologically harmonious unit out of 4:1–22 and 4:23–24. The different traditions about who killed Jabin were probably an insignificant issue for the Deuteronomic editors, if the issue was recognized at all. Indeed, until the excavations at the city of Hazor (1955 to 1958) proved otherwise, the Deuteronomic editor and his successors, like the modern pre-excavation commentators, could have conjectured along the same lines as Moore (1900a: 112):

The relation of the Jabin of our text to the one in Jos. 11, and the question how Hazor, which was totally destroyed by Joshua, is here again the center of the Canaanite power in the north, are much discussed The common solution is, that Hazor had been rebuilt . . . and that the Jabin here named was a successor, and probably a descendant, of the Jabin of Jos. 11.

But the archaeological evidence clearly establishes, with little reservation, that the Late Bronze Age city of Hazor (Upper City stratum XIII, Lower City stratum 1A) was destroyed in the second half of the thirteenth century. This destruction was followed by temporary and limited Israelite settlements (strata XII and XI). The city was not rebuilt until the mid-tenth century (stratum X), and then by Solomon, not by the Canaanites.

Bimson (1978: 194–200) theorized that there were two destructions of Hazor, assigning the destruction by Joshua to the MBA (fifteenth century) and the one by Barak to the LBA (thirteenth century). But it is no longer necessary to rework the biblical chronology so radically, separating these events by 200 years. The crux can be surmounted by reconstructing the pre-Deuteronomic elements within the Deborah–Barak–Yael tradition.

Editorial transposition of the formula *וַיִּמְכְּרוּ יְהוָה בַּיַּד* from 4:2a to 4:3a would go a long way toward clarifying the connection between Joshua 11 and Judges 4–5. Such an edited and emended text of Ju 4:1–3 (changing *וַיִּמְכְּרוּ* to *וַיִּחַרְרֶנּוּ* and *צַבָּאוֹן* to *צַבָּאוֹן*, as well as *בַּיַּד* to *בַּיַּדוֹ*) would read:

The Israelites continued to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh
after the death of Jabin, the king of Canaan
who reigned from Hazor.
Then Sisera, who dwelt in the defensive enclave
of the foreigners, proceeded to wage war;
and Yahweh sold them [the Israelites] into his hand.
The Israelites cried out unto Yahweh,
for he [Sisera] had nine hundred chariots of iron,
and he harshly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Younger's (1991: 127) "intertextual analysis" of the poetic texts and prose narratives dealing with the campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser I, Shalmaneser III, Thutmose III, and Ramesses II has demonstrated that

Ancient scribes could write different accounts about the same referents. But differences in purpose could determine differences in detail . . . , and in the selectivity of the events narrated If the scribes' purpose was to praise the king and/or the gods, poetry naturally offered a medium to heighten the emotions of praise through rhetorical embellishments. Hence, divine activity and praise of the deities is encountered more often in the poetic versions. Poetic versions, in fact, also provide a very suitable ground for legitimation But in most instances the poetic (or more rhetorical) text also added significant historical details so that the complementary nature of the accounts is manifest.

For Younger, Judges 4 provides a "logical account," while the song in Judges 5 renders "an emotional and figurative account with special themes and purposes." But as will be demonstrated, the song is as logical as it is emotional, and, at particular points, the prose of Judges 4:1–22 is really a *midrash* on Judges 5.

V. An Outline of the pre-Deuteronomic poem
of a Yahweh war

The above analysis of the Deborah–Barak–Yael tradition in Ju 3:31; 4:23–24; 5:1–31 permits the following outline for the poem.

- I. *Prose incipit*: the historical introduction to the victory of Israel over Jabin, “the king of Canaan” (4:23–24, which is balanced by the *prose inclusio* in 5:31b)
- II. *Poetic prologue* (3:31; 5:6–7; 5:1, which is balanced by the *poetic epilogue* in 5:31a)
 - A. Shamgar’s exploits and deliverance of Israel (3:31)
 - B. Economic oppression and Israel’s (military) inactivity in the post-Shamgar period (5:6–7a)
 - C. Deborah’s appearance on the scene (5:7b, 5:1a and 1b)
- III. Preparation for military activity (5:1c–5; 8–17a)
 - A. Appeal by Deborah for an Israelite militia (5:1c–2)
 - B. Deborah’s exhortation (5:2c–5, 8–9)
 1. *Incipit*: בָּרַכּוּ יְהוָה (5:2c)
 2. Warning to hostile rulers (5:3)
 3. Address to Yahweh (5:4–5)
 4. Affirmation of God’s equipping the Israelites (5:8)
 5. Appeal to the leaders and to the militia (5:9ab)
 6. *Inclusio*: בָּרַכּוּ יְהוָה (5:9c)

- C. Mustering of the troops (5:10–13)
- D. Strategy and deployment of forces (5:14–17a)
- IV. Military engagement (5:17b–23)
 - A. Israel’s provocative attacks (5:17b–18)
 - B. Canaanite counterattack through the wadi (5:19)
 - C. Yahweh’s counterattack: rain and flash flooding (5:20)
 - D. Defeat of the Canaanites (5:21–23a)
 - E. Victory for the Israelites (5:23)
- V. Aftermath of the battle (5:24–31a)
 - A. Assassination of the defeated Sisera (5:24–27)
 - 1. Blessing upon Yael (5:24)
 - 2. Sisera’s last meal (5:25)
 - 3. Sisera’s final “affair” (5:27a)
 - 4. Yael’s deathblows (5:26, 27b)
 - B. Anxiety and false hope in Sisera’s residence (5:28–30)
 - 1. A mother’s premonition (5:28)
 - 2. Vain hope offered by divination (5:29–30)
- VI. *Poetic epilogue*: a terminating affirmation (5:31a)
- VII. *Prose inclusio*: a formulaic epilogue marking the end of another “pacification” narrative (5:31b).