CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE STAGE:
PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AND CURRENT ISSUES

Critical Survey of Previous Scholarship on Judges

Within the last century, scholarship on the book of Judges has taken some significant turns.

1. Historical-Critical Scholarship and Noth’s Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis

At the dawn of the 20th Century, scholarship on Judges was largely dominated by historical criticism. Interest was mainly on discovering the sources that underlie the book, and Wellhausen’s approach to the Pentateuch so widely accepted at the time was applied also to the study of Judges.

Under this approach, diversity of language and style and perceived repetitions and duplications in the various narratives in Judges are seen as indicative of distinct, underlying sources. In particular, words and phrases that are thought to characterise two of the underlying sources for the book seem to correspond respectively to the language of J and E that supposedly underlie the Hexateuch. This suggests that J and E did not end their histories with the conquest of Canaan, but must have extended their respective histories to the period of the judges and beyond. Thus, the redactor who united J and E into one composite history for the Hexateuch is seen as likely also having brought J and E together into a pre-Deuteronomic book of Judges. This non-ideological pre-Deuteronomic Judges, redacted mainly for harmonistic purpose, is then thought to have been revised by a Deuteronomic redactor, who gave the work a definite theological

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1 Moore, xx, xxiv; Burney, xxxvii.
2 Moore, xxy–xxvii, xxxii–xxiv; Cooke, xx–xxi; Burney, xxxviii, xli, xlix.
3 Burney (xli–l) thinks that the portion usually attributed to a Deuteronomic redactor was in fact the work of a redactor who was influenced by the later Ephraimite school of prophetic teachers and who did his work prior to the promulgation of
perspective by adding framework passages to individual hero stories, arranging the stories according to a cyclical framework, and giving the book a programmatic introduction.\textsuperscript{4} This Deuteronomic redaction then went through further revision by a post-exilic redactor, who not only restored older material from pre-Deuteronomic \textit{Judges} that the Deuteronomic redactor had left out, but also added minor glosses and material of his own.\textsuperscript{5} As this post-exilic redactor is said to demonstrate traits associated with the Priestly school,\textsuperscript{6} this essentially results in the presence in \textit{Judges} of all four major redactional sources, \textit{J}, \textit{E}, \textit{D}, and \textit{P}, that supposedly underlie the \textit{Hexateuch}.

But a significant drawback of this type of source analysis is that it leaves the text highly fragmented. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Simpson’s meticulous attempt to separate the entire book into its various strands of sources.\textsuperscript{7} However, this would soon change with the introduction of Noth’s Deuteronomistic History hypothesis in 1943.\textsuperscript{8}

In this work, Noth argues that the division of Deuteronomy into separate books in their current form actually represents a secondary development. At their inception, these books originally constituted one continuous narrative composed by an exilic historian Noth calls the Deuteronomist (Dtr). Although Dtr also made extensive use of older traditional materials and incorporated them into his composition, Noth maintains that Dtr was not just another redactor in the source-critical sense. Instead, he should be considered the author of a history as he was the one who brought together materials from highly varied traditions and, along with summaries he himself composed to anticipate and recapitulate events at different points of the narrative, organised them into a coherent and connected

\textsuperscript{4} Moore, xxxiv–xxxv; Cooke, xxi–xxiii; Burney, xxxv–xxxvii, xli.

\textsuperscript{5} Moore, xxxv; Cooke, xxiii–xxiv; Burney, xxxvii. The material restored by the exilic redactor is generally believed to include 1:1–2:5, 9:1–57, 16:1–31, and 17:1–21:25. Notices of the minor judges in 10:1–5 and 12:8–15, as well as other glosses, are seen to be this redactor’s own contribution.

\textsuperscript{6} Cooke, xxiii; Burney, I.

\textsuperscript{7} Simpson, 9–147.

\textsuperscript{8} The English translation published by JSOT in 1991 is a translation of pp. 1–110 of the third German edition of Noth’s \textit{Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien} published in 1967.