In historical critical scholarship, the prologue and epilogue of Judges are generally taken to be later additions that do not belong to the original core of the book. Under the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis, these sections are especially seen as “intrusions into a continuous account which relates Joshua to Judges and Judges to Samuel”.

And in a way, such a view is not unjustified. For while the central section of Judges is seen as fitting naturally into the continuous narrative of Deuteronomistic History, when it comes to the two peripheral sections, significant linguistic, stylistic, and thematic differences seem to set them apart from the central section. These observations thus lead to the conclusion that the prologue and epilogue must have been derived from a different hand than the one responsible for the central section, and that in all likelihood, they were independent compositions that were only later appended to the central section under different circumstances. Perhaps for this reason, historical critical scholarship has generally shown little interest in exploring any formal relationship between the prologue and epilogue of Judges.

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1 Mayes, 1985:13.
3 See Mayes (1985:13–16) for a detailed presentation of these differences.
4 One notable exception is Boling (1975:29–38), who argues for definite redactional relationships between the prologue and the epilogue. But rather than taking the prologue and epilogue each as a distinct unit, Boling sees two concentric frameworks being supplied by different redactors at different points in time. In his view, the inner framework was composed by a seventh century deuteronomic redactor and includes 2:1–5 of the prologue, 17:1–18:31 of the epilogue, as well as 6:7–10; 10:6–16; 16:1–31 of the central section. This inner framework is then bracketed by an outer framework which was composed by a sixth century deuteronomic redactor and comprises 1:1–36 of the prologue and 19:1–21:25 of the epilogue.
With the rise of literary/rhetorical studies, however, the search for links between the major sections of the book to justify an integrated reading has resulted in an awareness that certain themes introduced in the prologue actually emerge again in the epilogue. An obvious example is the selection of Judah in 1:2 and 20:18 to take the lead in two very different military campaigns. Unfortunately, discussions of such links are inevitably brief, and seem to comprise little more than observations about thematic associations at the most superficial level.\(^5\) Thus, while some view such links as evidence that one unifying mind must have been responsible for the compilation of the book in its present form,\(^6\) little attempt has been made to further validate this through careful consideration of the language and rhetorical significance of the links to see if they are in fact indicative of common authorship at the compositional level.

In view of such deficiencies, in the following discussion, episodes in the prologue and epilogue that seem to be thematically related will be closely examined to determine if there is more to these links than superficial thematic association. If there is, an attempt will then be made to determine whether such links point to conscious design, since that would imply a closer relationship between the two sections than is generally recognised. After all, conscious design is often indicative of common authorship.

In addition, another distinctive feature that seems to be shared by the prologue and epilogue of Judges will also be explored. This concerns the pervasive use of references in both sections to the book of Joshua. While the more direct references to Joshua have long been noted and discussed by historical critical scholars interested in the source and ideology of Judges’ prologue,\(^7\) it is the more subtle and frequently overlooked allusions to Joshua in both the prologue and epilogue of Judges that seem most intriguing. These cases of subtle allusions will thus be closely examined to determine if collectively, they provide further indication as to whether the prologue and epilogue of Judges are related at a compositional level.

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\(^5\) See, for example, Gooding, 75–77; Webb, 1987:197–98; Gunn and Fewell, 120.
\(^6\) See, for example, Gooding, 72.