CHAPTER FOUR

PROLOGUE AS PARADIGM: LINKS BETWEEN THE PROLOGUE AND CENTRAL SECTION OF JUDGES

Although consisting only of 41 verses, the prologue of Judges (1:1–2:5) has generated much debate from a historical-critical perspective. Such debate revolves around two main areas. On the historical front, it concerns whether the conquest account in Judges 1 presents a more reliable picture than the somewhat idealised account in Joshua 10–12.¹ On the literary front, there are also a couple of problems for which no consensus has been reached. One concerns the source behind the conquest accounts in Joshua 13–19 and Judges 1, whether dependency exists, and if so, the direction of dependence.² The other involves the redactional history of the prologue, whether it has internal unity, and how it is connected to what precedes in Joshua and what immediately follows in the introductory framework to Judges’ central section in 2:6–3:6.³

Although it does not fall within the mandate of the present chapter to examine these critical issues, a simple observation can nonetheless be made. Even from a cursory survey of the issues cited, it is obvious that when it comes to the prologue of Judges, there is far more interest in its relationship with Joshua than there is in its relationship with the central section of the book. In fact, Auld once commented that discussion of Judges 1 has become “something of an appendix to discussion of the book of Joshua”,⁴ as the critical position generally assumes no immediate or contextual connection between the prologue and the central section of Judges.⁵ Yet is this perceived disconnection between the two sections accurate? This will be the focus of the present chapter.

¹ Moore, 7–8; Wright, 1946:105–14; Rösel, 1988:121–35; Callaway, 53–84; Younger, 1994:207–27.
⁴ Auld, 1975:262.
⁵ This is noted by O’Doherty (1–2) and Mullen (1984:34–35).
Under critical scholarship, the prologue of Judges is generally viewed not as a unified document but as a “collection of miscellaneous fragments of varying dates and varying reliability”. Such a conclusion is reached by and large on the basis of perceived historical and literary inconsistencies within the section, as well as contradictions with material that is considered part of Deuteronomistic History.

Yet by focusing almost exclusively on the redactional process through which the prologue arrives at its current form, perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the rhetorical concerns of the section as a whole and to its relationship with the rest of the book. Thus, a different approach may be needed.

Assuming that whoever was responsible for the final form of the prologue and its placement at the beginning of the canonical text did not put the section together unthinkingly but purposefully, it is perhaps worthwhile to examine the section not from the perspective of its redactional history, but from the perspective of its overall rhetorical structure, in order to discover the section’s main rhetorical concerns. Once these concerns are discovered, they should then be compared to the rhetorical concerns of the central section, to see if any correspondence exists. If significant correspondence in fact exists, then it is possible that the two sections are more closely related than has hitherto been assumed.

**Rhetorical Structure of the Prologue**

As it currently stands, the prologue of Judges is by and large structured as one continuous narrative. This is seen in that the narrative is basically presented through a continuous series of consecutive verb forms from 1:1 to 1:26 with only minor interruptions. Be that as

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6 Wright, 1946:109. This is also echoed by Auld (1975:275–76) and Mullen (1984:34).

7 This position is best exemplified by Auld (1975:261–85) and Lindars (1995:3–73), and is also reflected in Weinfeld (1993a:388–400), although the primary concern of the latter is to demonstrate the pro-Judah stance of the final redactor.

8 The verbal consecution is halted in 1:27–33 because these verses consist predominantly of negated clauses which cannot continue the verbal consecution by virtue of the presence of the negative particle.

9 Of the interruptions, four disjunctive clauses in 1:10,11,23,26 are intrusive exegetical notes. As for the disjunction in 1:21, even had the fronting of the direct object to clause initial position not taken place, the verbal consecution would still