

Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation¹

Nicolai Winther-Nielsen
Copenhagen Lutheran School of Theology (Dansk Bibel-Institut)
nwn@dbi.edu

Reference: Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, "Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation." *SEE-J Hiphil 2* [<http://www.see-j.net/hiphil>] (2005). Accessed DD.MM.YYYY.

History and the Book of Judges

The recently published Danish dissertation by Jens Bruun Kofoed, *Text and History* (2005), makes a fresh attempt to explore history-writing as a genre and as a source for reliable reporting of historical events in Ancient Israel. It is a serious attempt to deal with the methodological and philosophical challenges by other more well-known scholars from Copenhagen (2005:27), and in the wake of these contributions ask "(h)ow we can use the relatively late texts of the Hebrew Bible as witnesses to much earlier events" (2005:30). Kofoed argues, among other things, for the possibility of accurate oral tradition (2005:83-89) and calls fellow researchers to disclose their belief systems and presuppositions as they reconstruct the historical world of the Hebrew Bible and write histories befitting their presuppositions (2005:109-112).

This most recent prophet out of Copenhagen may not become very popular inside his minimalist hometown, but the multitudes abroad will no doubt heed his challenge to reconsider presuppositions and explore new ways to define evidence and historical reconstruction. Yet, although a new approach sensitive to narrative genre and authorial intent has been proposed (2005:235-247), it is clear that much still need to be done in terms of showing the positive contributions that this new approach could lead to. The following is one such attempt to search beyond the Books of Kings and the monarchy looking at an even more challenging and difficult case like reconstructing history for the Book of Judges.

The Judges narrative is an important case, since the book may have avoided severe criticism solely because it was never "convincingly presented as real history" (Scham 2002:38). However, according to one scholar, "scraps of circumstantial detail" in this book are of no relevance to a dating to an Iron Age setting, nor for that matter "local oral traditions" (Davies 2003). Indeed, there could not exist "a pre-exilic written book of Judges or anything like its equivalent in an oral form. The book as a whole is an unhistorical reconstruction of an Israel between settlement and monarchy." This verdict is simply the most recent statement of the important pioneer work by scholars like Lemche (1985; 1998), Thompson (1992) and others. In the face of such sweeping statements anyone with a less minimalist mindset will immediately recognize the presuppositions involved and then ask two important questions on text and history: (1) what kind of evidence might support the historical account in the Book of Judges, and (2), which textual approaches other than genre and author analysis could lead us into the world narrated in the Book of Judges?

In the following I will discuss the nature of the evidence, and ask to what degree it could support the historical veracity of events narrated in the book. I will look for positive evidence

¹ I am grateful for helpful suggestions made by professors Richard S. Hess and Kenneth A. Kitchen as well as student of archaeology Anine Madvig Struer. Birger Petterson made the final language corrections.

to corroborate the approach of Kofoed (2005). My case is in many ways similar to Younger (1999), who is amassing the positive evidence for Early Israel in terms of the Book of Joshua and the comparative evidence. I will look at the most recent discussion of the same evidence and focus on the Book of Judges. My main goal, however, is to probe beyond the usual kinds of questions, and look for clues from communicative interaction in everyday conversation and from a contextual explanation of intentional communication since "the meaning of a text emerges only against the backdrop of the author's intended action and the background of the author's context" (Vanhoozer 1998:252). In a search for new perspectives on text and history I will especially work with a notion of context that can anchor the intended meaning on solid contextual ground. This may help us to combine historical, archaeological and cultural data and assess them in a clearer understanding of the linguistics of context in a text. In this way I continue earlier work on history-writing and reconstruction based on the communicative principle (intentionality) and the coherence principle (contextuality) in a study of the pragmatics of the Book of Judges (Winther-Nielsen 2002:55-57, *et passim*).

In current scholarship on the Hebrew Bible there is no historical consensus within sight. A few years ago one scholar for Judges could claim that "even scholars who date the book late accept that the stories of the deliverers are rooted in historical reality" (Block 1999:26) This is no longer the case for scholars like Davies (2003), and Finkelstein and Silberman (2001) possibly represent a growing group claiming that "[w]e will never know to what extent the stories in the book of Judges are based on authentic memories of local heroes and village conflicts preserved over the centuries" (2001:120). They are convinced that "the Bible's stirring picture of righteous judges... has very little to do with what *really* happened in the country of Canaan in the Early Iron age" (2001:122).

In view of such negative verdicts on the book it is important to take a new look at the evidence in order to find out what is at stake. To begin with the Bible, the early period in question is referred to as *the days of the judges* (Ruth 1:1; cf. 2 Kings 23:22). The reference to these days by the historian of the Book of Kings does support the setting of the charming story of Ruth, but the biography of Ruth and her family can not be traced directly in any other historical source from that time. Characters and events from the Book of Judges are hinted at in the literature of the 8th century (Hos 6:7-9. 9:9. 10:9) and slightly later (Isa 9:3. 10:26), and they at least bear witness to familiarity with the stories in some circles in monarchic Israel. A speech by Samuel also refers to some of the judges (1 Sam 12:9-11), and even to a puzzling otherwise unknown Bedan who may or may not be judge Barak from Judges 4. The reference occurs within a long monologue which literary-critical scholarship has relegated to one of several purely fictional deuteronomistic speeches of late pre-exilic origin (Noth 1967:5.10.67).

Canonical references like these are important textual evidence in their own right, but they clearly derive from later oral speech or preaching, and the question is still whether we can find positive evidence beyond the few monarchic cases discussed by Kofoed (2005)? Is the world of the Judges really gone for ever or could we track the text into history? To corroborate the background for the period and the persons we will need look at archaeological evidence and extra-biblical references relevant for the world portrayed in the Book of Judges.

Tracking the archaeological world of Judges

To track the world of Judges we will first look at the results from archaeological surveys and excavations and at their interpretation as evidence for the Early Iron Age period prior to the monarchy. During the last 15 years it seems that the two main solutions in the 20th century,

the conquest model and the infiltration model, have lost their appeal.² The Canaanite origin of Israel is now argued at length by Dever (2003:191-221), who interprets ancient Israel as made up by disaffected Canaanites who withdrew to the hill country in the LB/Iron I transition period. Despite obvious changes in the pottery techniques and the simplified repertoire, Dever believes that the pottery assemblage of the Iron I hill country must have been brought from colonists from the Late Bronze Age Canaanite society. Nevertheless, even Dever argues for the distinctiveness of Early Israel since terraces, silos, cisterns, iron, and pottery are five "new" technologies developed by the emergent proto-Israelites (2003:113-18). This inconsistency not only reflects the complex nature of our data but also the problems inherent in archaeological interpretation.

The problem of the continuity from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age and the elusive Israelites is crucial for discussions on how material culture can have any bearing on ethnic identity for this period.³ Surveys and excavations have identified hundreds of Early Iron Age settlements in the hill country. Without going into too much detail, the results from the surveys since the 1980s are broadly as follows. The Ephraim survey of Finkelstein (1988:119-204) found an increase from five settlements in the Late Bronze to more than 120 settlements in Early Iron. Manasseh was the most densely settled area with more than 200 Early Iron I sites, and 75 percent of the sites were new foundations (Zertal 1998:240). Zertal also believed that the evolution of three different types of cooking pots indicated an east-westward movement in settlement (1998:242-243). The Upper Galilee survey traced 40 newly founded small settlements (Frankel 1994:25-26). Lower Galilee had an extended Late Bronze Age culture with cities and villages in the valleys, but several sites were destroyed or abandoned at the beginning of the Early Iron (Gal 1994). Recently a new line of argument has appeared in the work of Faust (2003; 2005), who in evidence from the rural sector observes an urbanization concomitant to the emergence of the monarchy. The Early Iron I villages were abandoned due to "a combination of security problems and a policy of forced settlement by the newly established monarchy" (2003:147). Since none of the villages continued, but were either deserted or developed into towns, the period can be demarcated from its end, probably in the wake of the Philistine wars and due to the centralizing monarchy.

The settlement situation in Transjordan has similar traits for the Ammon area and Northern Moab, while Southern Moab and Edom remained settled by pastoral nomads. The former gap in our knowledge of the settlements in Moab is now being filled by the Madeba project's excavations at Tell el-'Umayri, which has traced Late Bronze II settlement within the earlier fortifications (Herr 1998:253) and found Early Iron casemates and buildings (1998:254). Among the archaeological results is a multifunctional building with features indicating its use as a temple or a palace (Bramlett 2004). Surveys since 1998 have also given new evidence for the archaeology of Edom from the excavation of an extensive cemetery in Wadi Firan that belonged to the *Shasu* nomads (Levy, Adams and Muniz 2004:64-65). The earliest data are of early Iron II in the tenth period, while the Biblical and Egyptian texts testify to the presence of the *Shasu*/Edomites in Bronze Age and Early Iron (2004:86-89).⁴ In Egypt we may also note the important results in tracking the coastal highway in the Northern

² See the details of the early discussions in Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994), Gitin, Mazar and Stern (1998) and the surveys of Bloch-Smith and Nakhai (1999:66-70) and Levy and Holl (2002:86-90).

³ Focusing on the Late Bronze/Iron I transition is not meant to side against the early dating of the Exodus, and the continuity of certain aspects of the Late Bronze Age culture into the Iron Age could be an important argument. For a recent summary of evidence supporting an early date, see Wood (2003).

⁴ Levy, Adams and Muniz (2004:86-89) are helpful in their treatment of the problem of defining ethnic association. Note also their assessment of recent work on Edom (2004:72-76). Levy and Holl (2002:91-92) argue from elliptical sites to transition to a pastoral-based Israelite society. For the most recent debate on earlier evidence proposed by Thomas Levy and others and now refuted by Piotr Bienkowski and Eveline van der Steen, see the Arabah Project Website www.wadiarabahproject.man.ac.uk.

Sinai Archaeological Project which again corroborates the scene for the Exodus in this early period (Hoffmeier 2004).

However, there is no end to the theories formed to explain this evidence, once the Biblical texts are removed from the pool of evidence. Any number of outside forces like the Canaanites, Philistines and Egyptians could have exerted pressure that forced smaller or larger local groups to retract to the hills. Or the process may testify to revolts, relocations of farmers, cyclical patterns of sedentarization and abandonment, semi-nomadic symbiosis in peaceful trade, food production and demographic change. It could even reflect a simple mundane hope for a new start in a "quest for a new society and a new lifestyle" (Dever 2003:178) – nothing revolutionary, just a mid-life crisis!

The most recent discussion among the archaeologists may perhaps point to a tendency to accept that we *can* distinguish the highland settlers as a separate group apart from the prior and contemporaneous Bronze Age/Canaanite culture in terms of cultural features (Fritz 2002:30-31), but this does not prove their identity with the Israelites. Earlier discussions of ethnic identity focused on the presence of the so-called altar at Ebal and its evidence for absence of unclean animals (Zertal 1998:243-245).⁵ More recent evidence is discussed in anthropological and ethnogenetic research on evidence for the Israelites in burial customs in the new central highland villages. Kletter (2002) has made a strong case for the fact that in spite of numerous excavations and surveys, very few Iron I burials have been found, and this is in contrast to the rich evidence on cemeteries and caves from the Late Bronze and Iron II periods. Kletter interprets the lack of burials in social categories as evidence for a new non-Canaanite population living in a relatively poor society (2002:36). The very few Late Bronze types of burials from the Early Iron Age are evidence of a continuation of the Late Bronze culture in areas mainly outside the highland settlements (2002:30-33). Bloch-Smith (2004) has tried to defend her view that Late Bronze type burials were used also by the new highland settlers, but is it very difficult to adduce any substantial evidence against the theory that the settlers are marked by invisible burials. Furthermore, Faust (2004:177) objects to the interpretation of Kletter by pointing out that there is no evidence for poverty in the new settlements, but rather of social stratification. For this reason we should not look for explanations in social reality, but rather in the way ideas and beliefs shaped their burial behaviour (2004:178), and he points to "the existence of an ethos of simplicity and egalitarianism (a 'primitive democracy')" (2004:182). Evidence for the settlers' simplicity of lifestyle is also found in the new non-decorated pottery, the limited ceramic repertoire and the absence of imports and temples. The invention of the four-room house has also been interpreted as a possible marker of an egalitarian ethos, since this unique architectural invention of the Late Bronze/Iron Age possibly conveys important ideas about equal status, private space, and seclusion for purposes of purity (Faust and Bunimowitz 2003:25-29).⁶

If we identify the highland settlers with the Israelites of the Judges period, the archaeological results from the Late Bronze/Early Iron transition can indeed contribute to our understanding of the world of Judges. Yet there is at least one crucial problem to consider. Millard (2004:154) has discussed a significant parallel between the Amorite emergence in Mesopotamia and the similar emergence of Israel in the hill country. Without the textual

⁵ This evidence was used in the careful analysis of the archaeological evidence for early Israel by Hess (1993). The animal bones at Mount Ebal were sheep, goat, cattle, and fallow deer, and there was no evidence for pigs. A new study by Hesse and Wapnish (1997) downplays the distinctiveness of this feature. In the LB Fosse Temple at Lachish all the bones are metacarpals of the right foreleg and therefore not completely similar to the Ebal evidence (cf Lev 7:32 and Millard 2004:157).

⁶ See also Bunimowitz and Faust (2002). The four-room house appears to be an important labor-intensive achievement in its own right (Clark 2003). James K. Hoffmeier has uncovered interesting remains of huts at Tell el-Borg which could be interpreted as the predecessors for workmen's houses, according to lecture in Copenhagen May 23 2005.

evidence from Mesopotamia we would not be able know anything about the Amorite rule since the culture continues without disruption from the 3rd dynasty of Ur (2004:148-152). The Amorite analogy is supported from the Biblical witness on the Israelites in Judges 1, which assumes the "continued existence of Canaanites in the land, often sharing places with the Israelites" (2004:158). Furthermore, even if we can observe changes in settlement patterns, burials, pottery repertoire, housing and religion it still only "might be the consequence of a new element dominating the population, but that cannot be proved from these changes". Granted the Amorites analogy, the settlers are as invisible as the burials from the hamlets and villages, and it will take textual evidence to resurrect these settlers. However, in the light of recent archaeological interpretation it may be even more accurate to argue that the Early Iron Age highland culture is quite distinct, but it is the contemporary documents from the area that are invisible in the sense that the original written documents on papyrus were not preserved and are far more invisible than the cuneiform texts documenting the Amorites.

In the light of the nature of interpreted archaeological evidence it is therefore important that Kofoed (2005) has argued at length that there is no inherent reason for supposing that narration in the Bible could not be handed down accurately over many centuries and be known from copies made a millennium later. With strong, but inconclusive, evidence from archaeological sources it is important that we move on to textual evidence for the period of the Judges.

Tracking the textual world of Judges

In our next step we will proceed to the more important, yet smaller epigraphic documentation of Early Israel in the land in order to see what role textual evidence can play for establishing the identity of the settlers in the hill country in the period of the Judges. One way or another most scholars will hold reservations because of the temporal remove between the events and the final form of the accounts in the Hebrew Bible. Yet it is also clear that "[w]ithout written evidence indicating a group's affiliation or clarifying how, for example, others regarded it, it is very difficult to establish ethnic identity" (Bloch-Smith and Nakhai 1999:63).

As historical evidence within the Book of Judges we can count the information on the socio-political nature of pre-monarchic Israel which is so pervasive that identity concepts seem to be the central cue for the group(s) referred to in the texts. Social evidence for tribal cohesion abound in frequent references to *Israel* and pan-Israelite unity, in the struggle to keep the nation united, in the standard phrase *from Dan to Beersheva* and in archival judges lists, to mention just a little of the evidence (Block 1999:30-31).⁷ Another kind of argument with strong chronological implications is found in the onomastic evidence presented by Hess (2003; 2004). Collecting all the evidence on the personal names in the Book of Judges, Hess has presented compelling data showing that the names of the book in most cases have similarities to other names of the Early Iron period. Within Judges 5 most of the names are attested at an early date, i.e. Deborah in Canaanite, Barak from Late Bronze Age Alalakh, Abinoam in second millennium West Semitic, Jael in Ugaritic, and Heber in Amorite. Shamgar and Sisera may have Hurrian and Cretan backgrounds, but they still belong to the second millennium. Hess then considers a total sample of 42 personal names from the Book of Judges and concludes that four names (Ehud, Gaal, Eglon and Oreb) only have first millennium parallels from Israel, while no less than 26 names contain West Semitic elements that are attested in second millennium sources.

Outside the Bible there is only one single contemporary text with a reference to Israel. The famous Victory Stele of Merneptah from 1209 BC containing the name has recently

⁷ The evidence is so pervasive that it may indicate that early Israel's tribal structure is a pre-monarchic reality (Kitchen 2003a:219-221).

been interpreted as literature rather than history by Hjelm and Thompson (2002:17).⁸ They suggest that Pharaoh Merneptah plays a mythic role as the conqueror of Libya (2002:7) and then interpret *Ysr'l* as an eponym "personifying the people of Hurru as a whole, including Gaza, Ashkelon, Gezer and Yenoam" (2002:15). As a personification of a people, the term does "not embrace a distinct ethnic entity *within* Palestine" (2002:16). However, this interesting reading has been countered by Kitchen (2003b) on the grounds of genre, since victory hymns were poetical celebrations which "drew on places, peoples and incidents from the activities" (2003b:263). The stele was set up as a triumph-hymn and functioned as one of several parallel multiple-genre records recording a recent victory in rhetorical format, but is not as such unhistorical (2003b:268).⁹ With fifty years of experience in Egyptology, Kitchen confirms the scholarly consensus that 'Israel' is the only valid reading of the name, and that Israel consists of a people in the hill country (2003b:270-271).¹⁰

A voice directly out of the world of Judges is heard from two ceremonial bronze arrowheads from the middle 11th century referring to a name similar to Shamgar Ben Anath mentioned in Judg 3:31 and 5:6 (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:15-16).¹¹ In the inscription, *ḥṣ bn ʿnt//bn mṛṣ* 'arrow of Ben/son of Anath// Ben/son of Maras', the ben Anath name may have been used as nickname for famous warriors. Based on Egyptian evidence the Apiru may have used the name of the Canaanite goddess of war to mark their membership in war, and due to his exploits against the Philistines Shamgar "was added to the roster of Israelite heroes" (Matthews 2004:62-64). However, we can not be sure of this interpretation, and even so this does not prove the existence of some Shamgar contemporary with Deborah, nor his exploits. Like all other inscriptional evidence it must be used with care lest we construct too far-reaching hypotheses on the background of a minor Judge like Shamgar, whom the narrator chooses not to elaborate on.

The textual evidence and the onomastics discussed so far are important for our knowledge of the world, but they do not conclusively prove the existence of any of the events or persons encountered in the Book of Judges. The names of Israel and the persons are just windows into the identity of Israel in the Early Iron I context. Even one of the most thoroughly researched and erudite presentations of the archaeological and comparative material concludes that from the external sources we will never get a complete picture of Israel in the Early Iron, and "only outlines are possible" (Kitchen 2003a:222).

So far we have only considered relatively straightforward comparative material, but there are other ways to combine text and history. At this point I will briefly single out and discuss the merits of three other approaches which I will refer to as the historical-rhetorical, the cultural-archaeological, and the literary-semantic. I shall shortly suggest that this may pave the way for my own approach, the pragmatic-contextual approach, which I will develop in the second part of this paper.

The first option, the historical-rhetorical approach, uses older theories of rhetoric and combines literary criticism with solid historical data. A very impressive case for a historical setting for Judges within Old Testament scholarship has been made by O'Connell (1996). He argues that historical-rhetorical analysis can trace evidence indicating that the writer of Judges wanted to prepare the way for the new king David chosen from the tribe of Judah. The book of Judges reflects the religious-political situation of the early years of King David's reign reported in 2 Samuel 1-4 (314-320). It is clear that the tribe of Judah has a prominent

⁸ See translation by James K. Hoffmeier in Hallo and Younger (2000:40-41).

⁹ Similarly for the "victory-review" (Kitchen 2003b:266) that does "not impinge on the historical detail"

¹⁰ Or less likely in Transjordan (cf Herr 1998:260 with bibliography).

¹¹ For the four el-Khadr bronze heads see conveniently Kings and Stager (2002:306-307). Altogether 47 arrowheads with inscriptions by Hess (2003) who found 12 out of 54 names occurring in the Book of Judges.

role in the central utterances of Judg 1:1-3 and 20:18-28, but in other cases the pro-Judahite tendency is much harder to prove (e.g. 17:7; 19:3-10.11-14; see Winther-Nielsen 2002:63-64). However, O'Connell's well-argued proposal does have the drawback that it shifts the focus away from the internal world of Judges to the situation of a later, albeit early, period in the history of Israel which can at best serve as a possible reconstructed context of understanding. The early dating of the book has so far not had many followers either.¹²

The second option is the cultural-archaeological approach. Scham (2002:37-41) has suggested that we should not focus on historical veracity, but rather on the cultural analogy depicted in the Book of Judges. She has some interesting points on the use or non-use of the Bible by traditionalists and revisionists (2002:37-38), and for Judges she wants to "explore the genuine substance of this work without reaching peremptory conclusions as to an historical 'period of the Judges'" (2002:39). Critical of the comparative methods of the "traditionalists" (maximalists) as well as of the socio-cultural methods of the "revisionists" (minimalists) she combines anthropological and archaeological methods in order to gather evidence from the material culture and the textual symbolism and to establish regional and demographic differences from the *plots* of the narratives.¹³ In the Debora, Barak and Jael stories she finds a frontier culture bent on taming the wild, in the Gideon narrative the attempt to optimize the natural world, and the hero stories of Ehud and Samson represent the existence of nature for human exploitation. This attempt to open a path directly into the early data draws heavily on the culture of the Early Iron Age and combines it with certain aspects of the texts, and she also uses linguistic tools.¹⁴ However, from the outset she rejects the challenge to probe for the history of the actual events depicted in the texts, and for this reason it is by no means clear how the suggested symbolism in the end will help us track a historical world for people and events of the period.

The third option is the literary-semantic analysis of texts. Marais (1998) explores the world view of the Book of Judges in terms of semantic representation showing that reality in the Old Testament is represented in a typical mode characterized by a paradoxical juxtaposition of perspectives.¹⁵ Marais does consider the reality represented in schemas and frames (1998:10.14), but he is more interested in historically conditioned conventions (1998:28), and he tries to work out how representation depends on the reality-base of literature (1998:15.18.27). Marais uses Hrzushovski's ideas on integrational semantics as a comprehensive theory of reality in poetic texts (1998:33-58).¹⁶ Marais addresses reality in the process of communication and activation processes exploited by the speaker, and he also recognizes various perspectives on texts (1998:50). However, this approach is so absorbed in postmodern literary criticism that it never really approaches real historical reality outside the worlds of the literature, and the reality of this reality seems too slippery.

From this discussion of recent approaches to the world of Judges it is clear that there are interesting attempts to establish the ancient audience of the book in rhetorical approaches

¹² For a convenient overview of dates ranging from the time of David (O'Connell) and the exile of Northern Israel after 732 (Block) to post-exilic and later times, see Block (1999:64-66).

¹³ Postprocessual methods focus on how past cultures classify their living world, and "[w]ith a more holistic view of the ancient culture the best we can hope for is to catch a glimpse of the cognitive processes of the people who used these objects and heard these stories." (Scham 2002:63).

¹⁴ Symbolism in "images of nature in material culture" (Scham 2002:43) is treated as "communicative (structural) and figurative (expressive) content reflecting, either intentional or not, ideas and associations."

¹⁵ The distinctive narrative mode is "the typical conventions and codes of story-telling, the typical corpus of "reality-things" which are selected to be told, the stereotypes or unique ways in which reality is represented" (Marais 1998:2).

¹⁶ Marais (1998:16) does allow for a true knowledge of reality in a reciprocal relation between text and reality and he has conjectures on postmodern epistemology (1998:13-14), but basically he assumes a fictional illusory world (1998:11.16.55).

(O'Connell), to explore the world of the Early Iron Age in the archaeological and anthropological work (Scham), and to work with ways to activate reality in texts (Marais). However, these approaches can not stand alone and need to be supplemented by historical analysis of texts and names (e.g. Kitchen, Hess) and ethnogenetic interpretation of archaeological data (e.g. Faust). This will enable us to use data from cultural and anthropological works on Judges, such as the exploration of the everyday life of Michah and the Levite in Judges 17-18 (King and Stager 2001:9-19), and it will help us to explain narrative props like the key and the inner room in the story of Ehud (2001:31-33). As historically and culturally interested readers of Judges we will be greatly assisted by new commentaries, such as Matthews (2004), which focus on cultural features from social norms and customs in the narrative.

However, since we are dealing with historical texts from a particular historical discourse situation and portraying narrated acts of communication, we still need to develop a better linguistic approach that effectively will deal with the world in terms of a real historical context. One option is to search for historical vestiges of oral communication (Wagner 2000) or to explore the pastoral vocabulary (Levy and Holl 2002:94). However, our goal is rather to probe further on into how linguistics can be useful beyond rhetorical, symbolic and literary approaches or, more precisely, how the contextual world might look in an approach informed by discourse-pragmatic studies.

A new model for the use of context in language

The new approach to text and history in Kofoed (2005) quite explicitly recommends a multiplicity of methods for the purpose of writing the histories of Israel, and this is also clear from the approaches discussed so far. The problem of these methods and results is that an archaeological approach can dig beneath the text, but can not address the less tangible aspects of narration and communication in texts. A comparative approach can focus on other texts, and at best provide external parallels and perspectives in some restricted areas, but no more than that. In this sense they do not address the whole world of a particular text. We have also seen that the text is more closely integrated in modern studies of rhetorical strategies, cultural patterns and literary conventions, but such approaches do not address the world of a particular text in its entirety in a document from a particular period, if this was what its author intended. In the following I will therefore present an alternative comprehensive theory of texts that should be able to include all of these concerns and combine the achievements of prior methods, and it should also exploit the insights gained by linguists and anthropologists working with data from living languages. I will, provisionally, call my new proposal a pragmatic-contextual approach and I will argue that it may help scholars to focus far better on historical discourse by means of linguistic tools on top of and in addition to historical research.

For the last couple of decades most new areas of research have included theory of language and discourse within their particular area of work. All sciences somehow have to be aware of our linguistic means of relating not only to other persons, but also to our world. Recent studies of language use interpret utterances from the way they are situated in context. They explain the way language refers to actual situations and the way speakers and hearers exploit knowledge about the situation and the world at large when they interact with each other, and "[p]eople use and share language so well precisely because it is a system continually interacting with their shared knowledge about their world and their society" (de Beaugrande 1997:11). Linguistic pragmatics in this regard has the strongest focus on how meanings are communicated in relation to social patterns, cultural beliefs and extra-linguistic knowledge (Yule 1996:4-5). Sociolinguistics is a related branch of study which focuses on the study of language use in society in order to understand how language is tied "to particular

social situations or particular cultural beliefs" (Hudson 1996:3).¹⁷ Schiffrin (1994) includes pragmatics and sociolinguistics as discourse approaches covering effects and inferences of utterances as well as the structure of texts and conversations.

These studies all have in common that they include the context in relation to the place of occurrence, linguistic markers for the social status of participants and the cultural norms determining interaction among characters and interlocutors. They are well aware that the relation between language use and context is highly complex and needs to be carefully defined. Context is often used in two general senses for the textual context surrounding the verbal utterance and for the situational context surrounding a communicative action.¹⁸ Furthermore, the situational context breaks down into several different elements which do not depend on the preceding discourse or the permanent cultural knowledge available in a society.

Several scholars have proposed useful models explaining how these different features of context work during language encoding and decoding, but here we will use a functional theory developed in Sweden some years ago. Linell (1995:43-44) has used the contextual features for a classification of different types of contexts and built a model of contextual resources around them, and Linell and Karolija (1997:173-174) have refined this model with greater precision. The model contrasts the immediately preceding discourse context and the surrounding situation with the contexts that are created during *current* interaction and with information on context derived from general background knowledge. The model is sensitive to the fact that it is impossible ever to define a complete and full context for specific communicative action because context will always be restricted to what participants assume, believe or know and thereby can act on in their current interaction. What humans use as context is "*not objective environments ..., but relevant contexts*" (Linell 1995:48), i.e., they activate that part of the context which is necessary for their current purpose, but nobody can use everything in a specific context.

This view of context has far-reaching consequences for the dynamic exploitation of contexts during language use. Context will always be restricted to only partially shared knowledge or belief, but will still be available to the communication partners as either activated or as sufficiently well reconstructed through utterances, and discourse actions are always contextualized for and by the actors in time, place and activity (Linell 1995:49-50). The reason is that people will build up appropriate contexts as they speak and will communicate aspects of this particular context by integrating new information into an "appropriately activated, body of knowledge" (1995:50), as formed by their discourse model.¹⁹ Even if participants in almost all contexts have a partly discrepant understanding of the discourse and the relevant contexts, they can still reach an understanding that will serve them sufficiently well as an intersubjectively valid common context. This will enable them to make their communication partners pick out the most appropriate clues to identify the intended context.²⁰

¹⁷ Sociolinguistics studies, among other things, the social nature of speech in face-to-face communication (Hudson 1996:106), and how language is constrained by social activity and society (1996:107). It deals with such issues as the use of deictics in speech events (1996:109) and speech as a signal of social identity, power and solidarity (1996:120-131).

¹⁸ Other distinctions are linguistic vs. pragmatic context, or co-text vs. context (Renkema 1993:45).

¹⁹ Linell explains the use of context technically "as starting from a fragment and building around and beyond this an *island of temporarily shared understanding*" (1995:51; Linell and Karolija 1997:169, 195-196).

²⁰ Cf. Linell's (1995:50) cognitive account of partial, yet valid knowledge: "In our flow of consciousness, streams of fragments, glimpses, impressions and associations get *cognitively organized locally* When we look at talk-in-interaction, i.e., dialogue, we can study the processes of *collaboratively and (partially) intersubjectively constructed cognition*." There may of course be a false communal consensus as in

The following table shows this model of contextual resources and the distinctions which we will exemplify and discuss by examples from Judges.²¹ The model has been enriched by a psycholinguistic understanding of context as common ground. The social and cognitive research of Clark (1996) explains how speakers and hearers coordinate on a common ground based on their general beliefs and the current conversation so far (1996:13). If interaction depends on people sharing a common ground of mutual beliefs, we do not have to appeal to intuition to explain the actual circumstances of an utterance (1996:92).

A model of contextual resources

Based on Linell (1995), Linell-Karolija (1997) and Clark (1996)

GROUND: Active co- and context

- *Immediate contextual resources:*

Ia PRIOR DISCOURSE

Actions

Ib SURROUNDING SITUATION

Talk-and-interaction setting

Personal CG: PERCEPTUAL basis

FLOOR: Actual interaction

- *Actors' belief and understanding of topics:*

IIa' MODEL OF DISCOURSE

Content in mental representation

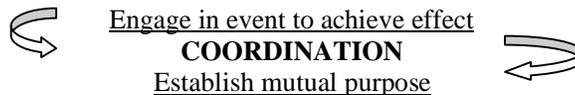
(Discourse world)

IIa PROJECTS

Current & upcoming

Communal CG: Cultural NORMS

(social skills and institutional skills)



- *Specific knowledge about situation at hand:*

IIb PERSONS

Experienced events, biographies

Personal CG: ACTIONAL basis

IIc FRAME

Activity type, system and genre

Communal CG: Cultural PROCEDURES

(routine actions and scripts)

AREA: Inactive knowledge and belief

- *General background knowledge*

II d BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

World

Communal CG: Cultural FACTS

(nature, social life, history, geography, society)

II d' LANGUAGE

Communicative routines

Clark divides common ground into two, a communal common ground (comm.CG) and a personal common ground (pers.CG). By the first type, the communal common ground, speakers categorize people into cultural communities based on nationality, profession, language and religion (1996:100-104).²² Cultural facts (II d), norms (IIa) and procedures (IIc)

misjudgment of facts, political biases or personal problems (Clark 1996:111), but this is more a matter of ultimate truths than cognitive resources.

²¹ Givón (1995:350) distinguishes between a sharing of current text (Ia, IIa), current speech situation (Ib) and permanent generic-lexical knowledge (IIb-d). Goodwin and Duranti (1992:6-8) focus on the social dimensions of the speech situation and include (1) social-spatial setting (Ib), (2) behavioral environment (IIa-c); (3) extrasituational context and background knowledge (II d); (4) Language as context (II d').

²² Note the definition of culture as "socially acquired knowledge", both "know-how" and "know-that" (Hudson 1996:71). It covers the external relation of language to culture and thought. The communal

enables us to use inferable background knowledge (1996:108-110). There is also a second type, a personal common ground based on shared perceptions, the perceptual basis (Ib), or our common actions in the past, the actional basis (IIb), and both enables us to make situational inferences from the context (1996:112-116).²³

The classification of context types by Linell and Karolija and the account of how content forms a shared common ground by Clark can be integrated in a refined model of contextual resources. The centre of the model is organized around interpersonal interaction, in studies of communication often called the common floor (Linell and Karolija 1997:168). The already activated co-text and context around the floor can be called the shared ground. The inactive pool of general background knowledge could be visualized as the general area, the local region or the world around.

Within this framework we contend that novel theory and research on context emerging from modern analyses of language and discourse give us a clearer understanding of contexts of language use and bring us closer to the world of the text beyond archaeological and comparative evidence. Additional resources can clarify the nature of the task of reconstructing the world of a historical text in relation to the double reference to both communication partners and to real-world references. This use of language is assumed to be crucial for texts of any period, be it modern, ancient or biblical.

Tracking the world of Judges through contextual resources

The model of contextual resources set out above can now be used for analysis of the universe of discourse in the world of Judges. In the following I will exemplify the distinctions from the text and then look at some cases of conversational interaction.

The primary context of an encounter is the prior discourse in a text or in an interaction (Ia) and the concrete surroundings in the present situation (Ib). Our surroundings provide us with a perceptual basis for the common ground (Clark 1996:113). It involves the activity and gestures of partners as well as salient events occurring at this moment. Gestures are part of the perceptual context when Yahweh turns towards Gideon in speaking (Judg 6:14) and when Jephthah rends his clothes in despair before the conversation with his daughter (11:34).

The role of prior discourse (Ia) is central to linguistic studies of the use of referring terms and anaphora in discourse. It was earlier on treated in terms of topicalization, and Functional Grammar has developed notions like Discourse Topic, Given Topic and Sub-Topic.²⁴ Current work focuses on the cognitive status of referential nouns in the mind of speakers and on the distinction between three types of activation status.²⁵ Nominals can be (1) active in the text or in the situation; (2) inferable from the discourse or the situation; (3) either inactive as brand new terms introduced for the first time without being known previously, or else as introduced from background knowledge. Cognitively active terms are entities prototypically referring back to prior discourse.

Languages use deictic elements to point directly to the situation at hand. Among these *indexicals* we typically find linguistic terms for the speaker's own point of reference, or what has been called his *I*, *here* and *now* orientation.²⁶

Near and distal demonstrative adjectives are illustrated by the following clauses (J 18:12):

lexicon consists of conventional words in a particular community (Clark 1996:107). Revell (1996:29-44) has a useful classification of social terms in Hebrew.

²³ These two types of common ground are stored in large mental encyclopaedias and logs of personal experiences in memory (Clark 1996:106 and 114).

²⁴ For topics, see Renkema (1993:150-151) and Linell and Karolija (1997:169-171), and for Hebrew, Revell (1996:58-80).

²⁵ Chafe (1997) is a convenient summary of this work. These distinctions were introduced in Winther-Nielsen (1995:63-64) and are now developed at length for Hebrew by Shimasaki (2002).

²⁶ See Renkema (1993:77), Clark (1996:80, 168), and Yule (1996:9-14).

Preceding context (NRSV) ...and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah.

ʿal-kēn qārʿ-û la-m-māqôm ha-hûʿ maḥănēh-dān
 therefore call-ed.they (to) (the) place (the) that Mahaneh-Dan
 On this account (Ia) that place (Ia) is called Ma'haneh-dan

ʿaḏ hay-yôm haz-zeh hinnēh ʾaḥărê qiryat yəʿārîm
 until (the) day (the) this here! behind Kiriath-jearim
 to this day (Ia) it is west of Kiriath-jearim (IIId)

The sentence conjunction ʿal-kēn and māqôm are clearly anaphoric discourse referents referring to the immediately preceding as active in the situation. On the other hand yôm refers to the situation of the author and his audience and is clearly deictic. It is followed by background information of archaeological and historical interest, although it does not help us much to know that Kiriath-jearim most likely is Deir el-ʿAzar. Nor can we know much about the significance of the camp, except that God was at work in Samson at an earlier camp-place (13:25). This reference might be an ironic commentary on a second mention with an opposite function and thus is informed by discourse reference (Ia).

The possessive pronouns *my* and *your* and definite forms of the nouns can also serve as pointers as shown in the following example (Judg 19:22).

Preceding context (NRSV): *While they were enjoying themselves,*

wə-hinnēh ʾanš-ê hā-ʿîr ʾanš-ê ḅən-ê - ḅəliyyaʿal
 and look! men-of the-city men-of children-of worthlessness
 the men of the city, a perverse lot,

nā-sabb-û ʿet - hab-bayit miṭ-dappəq-îm ʿal - had-dālet
 they.closed.around (et) the-house beating.violently on the-door
 surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door.

way-yōʾmər-û ʿel - hā-ʾîš baʿal hab-bayit haz-zāqēn lēʾmōr
 and-they.spoke to the-man master-of the-house the-old (cmp)
 They said to the old man, the master of the house,

h-ôšēʾ ʿet - hā-ʾîš ʾāšer - bāʾ ʿel - bêtə-kā wə-nēḏāʿ-ennū
 bring.out (et) the-man who he.came to house- your and-we.will.know-him
 "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him"

In this example *the men of the city* is preceded by the interjection *wəhinnēh* 'and look!' which clearly is the narrator's dramatizing device to prepare the audience for the exciting highpoint of the story. He introduces the men in the city as part of the cultural background knowledge about habitation (IIId). This information is then more closely defined by the peculiar term *ḅən-ê-ḅəliyyaʿal*, *a perverse lot*, or more literal 'sons of no good', which passes moral judgment on the town-people.²⁷ The surroundings of the house and the pounding on the door in part depends on a script for assault and in part on knowledge of the four-room house referred to earlier and known from the archaeology of Egypt, Moab and Israel. The *baʿal hab-bayit* 'master of the house' is introduced from background knowledge. After that *Bring out the man who came* identifies a referent from prior discourse (Ia). It is followed by *into your house*, which is deictic in the situation (Ib) while the pronouns in *that we may know him* are discourse co-reference (Ia)."

In the model developed by Linell and Karolija these contexts from the discourse and the situation serve as the immediate contextual resources for the actor's beliefs and the specific

²⁷ For detailed discussion on the term, see Block (1999:235).

knowledge and background. These currently actualized contexts first involve what participants believe about the discourse content they are talking about, and how they view their current and upcoming communicative projects.²⁸ The projects (IIa), the speakers' current and upcoming tasks in interaction, are highly influenced by conventions and cultural norms for interaction. Norms cover such aspects as eating meals at specific times, having social skills for meeting people and arguing with them, and assuming social roles like husband, father or child (Clark 1996:108-109). They also determine how we fit into institutions like family, tribe or congregation.²⁹

The story of the rape in Gibe'ah in Judges 19 is an excellent example of how norms are followed and flouted. The endless eating and drinking on the Levite's visit at his in-laws (19:4-10) in part follows the norms for entertaining guests which stipulates that you should accept what is offered and not leave before time.³⁰ However, the breaking of norms cries out loud when the father-in-law, rendered dominant as the sole and constant speaker, forces food and wine on his poor son-in-law, who never gets sober enough to leave in time to get home. The Levite's social skills in meeting people are exhibited in his way of asking the old man in Gibe'ah for lodging without ever requesting this explicitly (19:18-19), and the old man promptly follows norms and offers all he has for his guest (19:20). The most outrageous violation of norms of hospitality is found in the way that the citizens of Gibe'ah threaten to rape visitors lodging in their town (Judg19:22).

The institution of marriage is thematic in several cases and they are regulated by customs (Matthews 2004:102-103). Samson fell in love with a woman from Timna (14:1-3) and then had his parents arrange marriage. At a later stage he went to his father-in-law to claim his wife (15:1-2). Concubines did not have full rights in marriage, but the pity is surely with the concubine when the Levite sacrifices her to die after she has been molested (19:24-28).³¹ Honesty towards your loved one is flouted by Delilah in her attempts to uncover Samson's secret (16:4-21). Other examples are norms like asking gifts from your parents (1:14-15) and rules for negotiations with brigands (11:4-11). The Levite's conversation with his servants on the way home (19:11-13) follows norms of interaction with employees.

In other cases Judges portrays institutions for religious decision by lot (Judg 1:1-2; 20:18-28) and for justice (4:4-5; 20:1-10). At least one of the judges functioned in a clear institutional role of administering justice (4:5). This function may have been the primary function of the secondary judges (3:31; 10:1-5; 12:8-15), while the primary and heroic judges were deliverers chosen for individual projects (2:16.18. 3:9 etc).

These contexts show how interaction is at the centre of the contextual model, and how joint actions in language use are the most significant in common ground (Clark 1996:67). To cooperate, the participants need to coordinate on content, intentions of communication partners and rules for communication (1996:59.331). Language is chiefly used as an instrument for solving coordination problems (1996:62). Participants will believe they act on the same basis of mutual expectations (1996:65), and in conversations all participants "achieve what they do contribution by contribution" (1996:331). Each speaker does things with his words to achieve some end, and in interaction engages in establishing a common purpose. Through speech acts each individual makes assertions, requests, promises or

²⁸ Linell and Karolija (1997:173) do not distinguish between actor's models of the discourse and current and upcoming communicative projects, and we will not develop them here.

²⁹ These terms derive from sociology (Renkema 1993:45-46). People develop customs for eating and styles of living. These customs can become part of a cultural heritage as norms of individual and social praxis. Institutions are instruments to maintain society, and society provides *motivation* to adhere to its *norms* (Hudson 1996:119), and also include the face-work of social interaction (1996:120). When norms are linked to rules, they can determine institutions like education or courts.

³⁰ On hospitality and the norms, see especially Matthews (2004:68-69.181-182).

³¹ The echoes of Genesis 19 (cf Block 1994:532-534) must be part of literary background memory.

apologies,³² and they negotiate, gossip and get to know each other in interaction. In either case a speaker will make inferences from what an interlocutor asserts and presupposes in the prior discourse, the surrounding situation, his mental image of the interaction and the current projects, but he will also make inferences from his familiarity with the interlocutors' actions and from all further available background knowledge to be presently introduced.

In the speech situation participants also depend on specific personal experience from common events in the past and from professional backgrounds which dictate competence, status and power relations (IIb).³³ This actional basis is crucial when the elders of Gilead approach the brigand Jephtah to offer him leadership in spite of their conflicts in the past (Judg 11:6), and when Jephtah holds their former hatred against them (11:7). The disastrous developments at the wedding ceremony in Timnah were set off when the town appointed 30 men to tightmark groom (14:10) and thus teased Samson into a counter-attack with his nasty riddle. In Judges we finally find common professional terms for skills like being a king of Moab (3:12), a Canaanite army commander (4:1), lords of the Philistines (16:5), goldsmith (17:4) and Levite (17:7), but also people serving functions like revolutionary leader (9:1ff. 11:1ff) or prophet (4:4-5; 6:7-10).

In the speech situation participants finally depend on the frame which is abstract knowledge about the type of activity or situation they are involved in (IIc).³⁴ This knowledge forms the backbone of cultural procedures (Clark 1996:109). People instantly interpret many situations based on pre-existing knowledge structures in memory. Some of these cognitive structures are stable configurations of entities called *frames*. In the case of an apartment frame interlocutors will instantly assume that this kind of housing contains a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, but it is superfluous to mention such elements expected in a frame, unless a certain element has to be activated in order to play a role in the plot (Yule 1996:86). Events are sometimes just *routine actions* like shaking hands or offering thanks, but others are larger *scripts* which dictate what normally happens in routine situations like frequenting a doctor's clinic, a movie theatre, a restaurant, or a grocery store.³⁵ In Judges we find the scripted procedures for the case made by the Levite (Judg 20:3-10) and for deciding on war against Benjamin (20:11-48) and handling religious crises (21:1-4). A simple parallel to an apartment frame is the description of how the rapers in Gibe'ah *beset the house* (definite noun, activated from prior discourse) *round about, beating on the door* (definite nominal as part of the frame for a house; 19:22).

The final contextual category is the general background knowledge about world and culture (II d), the cultural facts. This vast amount of knowledge was available to the common Israelite in various degrees. This context can not be identified precisely, since it varies with each person, time and culture. It also important to realize that the modern reader of the Hebrew Bible gets this mass of knowledge neatly served in storied portions appropriate for the ancient audience. In the geographical background knowledge we find references to the extent of Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba (20:1), descriptions of roads west of Shilo (21:19), identifications of ancient city names for Hebron and Debir (1:10-11) and mention of springs

³² Note also the overview of action levels in language in Clark (1996:17-18 *et passim*).

³³ Linell and Karolija (1997:174) posits a specific organizational context with working conditions, documents, regulations, a hierarchy among (professional) roles and actors' educational backgrounds (training).

³⁴ Linell and Karolija (1997:174) defines this *abstract situation definition* or 'frame' as that part of an encounter which makes it into an instance of a certain activity type, situated activity system or a communicative genre like a court trial, family dinner-table conversation or speech.

³⁵ A *schema* of previous experiences can get organized into more dynamic types of schemata as *scripts*, which are "a pre-existing knowledge structure involving event sequences" (Yule 1996:86). Most details of these situations are known and unstated by the participants, and "for members of the same culture ... shared scripts allow much to be communicated that is not said" (1996:86).

which are totally unknown today (1:15).

The Israelite audience clearly knew about the great events from the canonical literature. Judges 1-2 presumes their familiarity with the end of the Book of Joshua (Judg 2:6-10) and mentions Moses of the Pentateuch (1:18). As background knowledge of history would count how prior events of the period are referred to in anticipation (2:11-3:6) and in summary (10:6). These traditional elements from the formative Mosaic period are indispensable for understanding the religious deterioration after the settlement of the tribes of Israel as narrated in the Book of Judges.

The contextual role of language and communicative routines (Ilđ) need not detain us much, except for their fatal effect in the case of the Ephraimites' dialectical pronunciation of Shibboleth (12:6).

These examples can at least illustrate how a cognitively adequate contextual model of speakers' use of contextual resources can explain language use and discourse situations in the book of Judges. The interaction going on in the stories does not differ from natural language use in usual situations in the world. Such modern models of language use can help us grasp the deeper dimensions of the various roles and effects of contextual information, and how to use this approach in a methodologically precise way.

Tracking context in multi-party conversations

On the backdrop of this introduction to actual cases of the use of contextual resources we will now show how this model can help us analyse different kinds of knowledge in stories from the Book of Judges. In this way we can test our model on natural data from the book. We will restrict ourselves to a few analytic cases, and we will not elaborate on linguistic aspects of Hebrew, since the framework of this paper will only allow us to illustrate principles of contextual resources in relation to limited samples of extended texts.³⁶

Suitable test material can be found by analyzing larger stretches of conversations in the book of Judges. I have looked for complex cases of interaction with more than one exchange between the speaker and hearer and several interlocutors and have found five cases of multi-party conversations with more than two parties and several turn exchanges in the encounter. These cases reflect the highest degree of variation in their use of different contextual material. Two of those cases proved to be prototypical for the function of contextual resources in conversations.

The most complex multi-party conversation in Judges is found in the conversation between Gideon, Zebah and Zalmuna, Jeter and the Israelites (Judg 8:18-25).

³⁶ Two excellent full-scale studies are available. Miller (1996) builds her analysis of reported speech and verb frames on statistics, markedness and variation, and deals with data from Genesis-Kings. Revell (1996) uses pragmatic insights from Judges-Kings in a less formal way.

8:18-25: Multi-party conversation: Gideon, Zebah-Zalmuna, Jeter and Israelites		
8:18a	Gideon	"Where are the men (Ib) whom you slew at Tabor?"
18b	Zebah-Zalmuna	"As you (Ib) are, so were they (Ia), every one of them (Ib); they resembled the sons of a king (IIb)."
8:19	Gideon	"They (Ib) were my brothers (IIa), the sons of my mother (IIb)..."
8:20	Gideon to Jeter	"Rise, and slay them (Ib)." Jeter was afraid and did not do it
8:21	Zebah-Zalmuna	"Rise yourself (Ib), and fall upon us (Ib); for as the man is, so is his strength (IIb)." Gideon slew them himself
8:22a	Israelites	"Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also (IIa);
22b		for you have delivered us out of the hand of Mid'ian (IIb)."
8:23	Gideon	"I will not rule over you, ... the LORD will rule over you (IIc)."
8:24a	Gideon	"Let me make a request of you; give me every man of you the earrings of his spoil (IIc)."
24b	Israelites	"We will willingly give them."

Gideon first asks the two arrested Midianite leaders, Zebah and Zalmuna, about their treatment of Israelites slain at Tabor (8:18a). Gideon uses the definite noun *the men*. This must refer to their common personal actional basis (8:18a; Ib), since both parties have experienced the battle at Tabor. The battle is known by the participants, but has not been reported in the book, yet it can still function as a contextually available piece of information. Zebah and Zalmuna do not answer Gideon's question directly, and it will soon become clear that they have personal knowledge of Gideon and his brothers in mind (8:19). So while *you* and *them* are situationally available among the communicative participants (8:18b; Ib), the two foreign leaders seem to flatter Gideon as a king and emphasize his royal looks by referring to a professional status by the phrase *the sons of a king* (8:18b; IIb).

Gideon responds negatively to this hint at an actional basis and instead asks his son Jeter to execute the killers of his brothers. He refers to the enemy leaders as *them* (8:20; Ia) because they can be pointed out in the situation. When Jeter nevertheless is too terrified to act, the two enemy leaders exhort Gideon himself to act according to the strength professionally befitting kings (8:21; IIa). The Israelites then open a new exchange on the institution of kingship and offer Gideon a hereditary monarchy. This is a project following conventions for acclamation of kings or leaders (8:22; IIa). They justify their offer by mentioning their shared experience of victory in the recent war and this serves as an actional basis (IIb). Gideon turns down the offer by referring to his religious background knowledge of Yahweh's kingship (8:23; IIc). Instead he asks them for earrings, which he can assume they seized as spoils from their enemies. The definite form *the earrings* is thus part of the script for plunder after winning a battle (8:24a; IIc). This conversation thus has ample evidence of how contextual resources are exploited during conversational interaction.

Another multi-party conversation occurs when Manoah asks for further instruction by the angel of Yahweh (Judg 13:8-14).

13:8-14: Multi-party conversation: Manoah, his wife, the angel of Yahweh

3:8a	Manoah:	"O, LORD, I pray thee, let the man of God whom thou didst send (Ia) come again to us,
8b		and teach us what we are to do with the boy that will be born (IIa)."
13:9		God answers by coming to Mano'ah's wife; she runs to her husband
13:10	Wife to Manoah:	"Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me (Ia)."
13:11a	Manoah to angel:	"Are you (Ib) the man who spoke to this woman? (Ib)...."
11b	Angel:	"I am."
13:12a	Manoah:	"Now when your words come true (IIa),
12b		what is to be the boy's manner of life, and what is he to do (IIc)?"
13:13	Angel:	"Of all that I said to the woman let her beware (Ia)."

After the first visit of the angel of Yahweh with the wife of Manoah, the husband prays to God for a new visit in order to get his own personal confirmation of the promise to his wife which is a part of the discourse context (13:8; Ia). Manoah is concerned with how to deal with the announced child, which is an institutional skill of upbringing of children and can influence upcoming projects (13:8b; IIa). The angel, instead, once more appears to his wife. She fetches her husband (13:9), and again refers to the prior discourse (13:10; Ia). When Manoah finally gets to meet the angel in person, he asks for identification of the angel's identity, addressing him by *you* as part of the situation and pointing deictically to *this woman* (13:11a; Ib). In the next turn Manoah refers to the social convention that you should trust people's promises in interaction (13:12a; IIa). This time he asks for information about what a miraculously born child might achieve in the future, and this depends on the scripted experience that children usually grow up and live eventful lives (13:12b; IIc).

Three other conversations are less complex. The story of Samson and Delilah (Judg 16:4-22) opens with an offer of payment by the Philistines, which is a routine when trying to enlist the service of a spy (16:5; IIc). In several episodes Delilah asks Samson about the source of "your great strength" (16:6), a fact known from prior discourse (Ia). Samson each time answers by mentioning items in background knowledge (IIc), such as fresh bowstrings (16:7), new ropes (16:11) and a web (16:13). The story of Ehud's request for an interview with Eglon, king of Moab, and his offer of secret information (Judg 3:19-23) is even more simple. In the presence of all the king's men he mentions that he has "a secret message", which is part of the routine situation of traitors offering valuable services (3:19; IIc). When he is alone with the king, he rephrases it as "a message from God", thus drawing on religious background knowledge about the God of Israel (3:20; IIc). The final multi-party conversation concerns the attempt to find the culprit after the destruction of Baal's altar (Judg 6:29-32). The story refers to knowledge of the surrounding situation, the destroyed altar (Ib), and on the power of a god like Baal, which would be background knowledge (IIc).

These five examples of multi-party conversations illustrate how various crucial kinds of contextual knowledge are at play in specific contexts. It is suggested that such examples can guide or at least inspire the analysis of historical texts from the Hebrew Bible in research on contextual resources at work in narration and conversation in the historical books of the Hebrew Bible. Contextual knowledge of various sorts ties the stories into situations in the world of the stories that at least look like factual narration of events and as communicative action with a proper grounding in the contexts of its worlds. It is clear, however, that it must be combined with archaeological, comparative and cultural information wherever available. Much more work is also needed to test and develop this particular pragmatic-contextual approach.

Conclusion

Our discussion of recent archaeological and textual evidence on the Period of the Judges has made us claim that the game of text and history must open up to new cognitively and linguistically adequate kinds of evidence based on current research on language use and context. We thus propose to study the world of the texts within the context of modern concepts of resources available in actual use of language.

We tracked the archaeological evidence that indicates a break from the former Late Bronze culture, and we have presented some research indicating that the founding of new highland settlements in the Early Iron Age was probably not an internal development within Canaanite society. Since our textual evidence claims that there was a separate people by the name of 'Israel' in the area, we conclude that there is a rather high degree of convergence between the archaeological and the textual evidence, even if we can never finally prove the identity of the new settlers, but only their ethnic separation (Fritz 2002). The new anthropologically-oriented evidence brought forward by Faust (2003; 2004; 2005) for Israel's ethnogenesis in the highland settlements and beyond the Jordan does suggest that the settlers may be more visible than suggested by Millard (2004), but he correctly observes that we can never know anything about an Early Israel without the textual evidence from the Bible, and all our detailed knowledge of the world of the Judges depends entirely on the Bible.

For this reason we will have to find a way to track the world through the texts. We considered various ways of approaching the world in current research on the Book of Judges, but rejected tracking the world in a later period (rhetorical analysis), in a symbolic world (cultural analysis) and a fictional world (literary analysis). There are no doubt other viable solutions, but we suggested that a real-world linguistic model of contextual resources such as that developed by Linell and Karolija can explain how language is used in actual modern contexts of communication. This model distinguishes between activated contexts of discourse and situation, current interactional contexts and more traditional notions of background information. We have explored these distinctions in stories in the Book of Judges and then looked at conversations as a way to illustrate how people use contexts in conversations.

We believe we have made a case for how a cognitively adequate model of speakers' use of contextual resources can explain language use and discourse situations. The interaction going on in the stories does not differ from natural language use in usual social situations. We have reasons to expect that modern models of language will help us to grasp the deeper dimensions of the various sources and effects of contextual information. However, even if the stories report communicative action in real-world contexts, this does not prove that the interaction is factual, rather than fictional, but only that it is real and contextually relevant. By this approach we can only know how context can work in the world of the stories and how we may understand context in actual story reading. If we want to argue for the likelihood that it did occur, we will still have to use archaeological data and comparative material, but we will appreciate far better why human beings never need to know everything about the people and the events we meet in our daily lives or in our encounters with history, and why the storied knowledge of the past is so crucial and also so informative. The texts and the world described therein can be known, and archaeology and comparative evidence is simply research in progress that may some of the facts in the world of the texts, but their real world does not depend on such evidence, given the Amorite invisibility argument advanced by Millard.

Even if there is little direct external evidence to underpin the early narratives of the Hebrew Bible, we do have our text in the Bible and ample evidence for a language use that is sensitive to cognitive and social constraints anchoring utterances contextually in the worlds of the stories. A rich and modern understanding of such contextualized facts does not prove or disprove historical fact, but cognitively adequate models of speakers' use of contextual resources can explain the language use and the discourse situations as real worlds that could

Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, "Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation." *SEE-J Hiphil* 2 [<http://www.see-j.net/hiphil>] (2005). Published August 8, 2005.

be true. Historical scrutiny of sources and archaeological evidence can not get us very far into the world of the Judges, but if we combine archaeological, textual, cultural and contextual evidence we may get much closer to the world narrated in the book.

References

- Ackermann, Susan. 2003. Digging Up Deborah. Recent Hebrew Bible Scholarship on Gender and the Contribution of Archaeology. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66/4:172-183
- Beaugrande, Robert de. 1997. *New Foundations for a Science of Text and Discourse: Cognition, communication, and the freedom of access to knowledge and society*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex
- Block, Daniel I. 1999. *Judges, Ruth. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth. 2004. Resurrecting the Iron I dead. *Israel Exploration Journal*. 54:77-91.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth and Nakhai, Beth Alpert. 1999. A Landscape Comes to Life. The Iron I Period. *Near Eastern Archaeology*. 62/2:63-92.101-127
- Bramlett, Kent. 2004. A Late Bronze Age Cultic Installation at Tall al-'Umayri, Jordan. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67/1:50-51.
- Bunimowitz, Shlomo & Faust, Avraham. 2002. Ideology in Stone: Understanding the Four Room House. *Biblical Archaeology Review*. 28/4:32-41, 59-60.
- Chafe, Wallace. 1997. Polyphonic Topic Development. In Givón, Talmy, ed. *Conversation: cognitive, communicative, and social perspectives*, 41-53. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Clark, Herbert. 1996. *Using language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, Douglas R. 2003. Bricks, Sweat and Tears: The Human Investment in Constructing a "Four-room" House. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66/1-2:35-43
- Davies, Philip. 2003. Final Comments on Minimalism. *The Bible and Interpretation* [http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Davies_Final_Comments.htm accessed 29.3.05]
- Deutsch, Robert. & Heltzer, M. 1994. *Forty new Ancient West Semitic inscriptions*. Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publications.
- Dever, William G. 2003. *Who were the early Israelites and where did they come from?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Faust, Avraham. 2003. Abandonment, Urbanization, Resettlement and the formation of the Israelite State. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66/4:147-161
- . 2004. Mortuary practices, society and ideology: The lack of Iron Age I burials in the Highlands in context. *Israel Exploration Journal*. 54/2:174-190
- Faust, Avraham & Bunimowitz, Shlomo. 2003. The Four Room House: Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society. *Near Eastern Archaeology*. 66:22-33
- Finkelstein, Israel. 1988. *The archaeology of the Israelite settlement*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
- Finkelstein, Israel & Na'aman, Nadav, eds. 1994. *From Nomadism to Monarchy. Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
- Finkelstein, Israel & Silberman, Neil Asher. 2001. *The Bible unearthed: Archaeology's new vision of Ancient Israel and the origins of its sacred texts*. New York: The Free Press
- Frankel, Rafael. 1994. Upper Galilee in the Late Bronze-Iron I Transition. In Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994:18-34)
- Fritz, Volkmar. 2002. Israelites & Canaanites: You Can Tell Them Apart. *Biblical Archaeology Review*. 28/4:28-33, 63.
- Gal, Zvi. 1994. Iron I in Lower Galilee and the Margins of the Jizreel Valley. In Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994:35-46)
- Givón, T 1995. *Functionalism and Grammar*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gitin, Seymour, Amihai Mazar & Ephraim Stern, ed. 1998. *Mediterranean peoples in transition: thirteenth to early tenth centuries BCE*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

- Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, "Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation." *SEE-J Hiphil* 2 [<http://www.see-j.net/hiphil>] (2005). Published August 8, 2005.
- Goffmann, Erving. 1981. Radio talk. In Erving Goffman, ed, *Forms of talk*, 197-327. Oxford: Blackwell
- Goodwin, Charles & Duranti, Alessandro. 1992. Rethinking context: an introduction. In Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin, ed, *Rethinking context: language as an interactive phenomenon*, 1-42. Cambridge: CUP
- Hallo, W.W. & K. Lawson Younger, eds. 2000. *The Context of Scripture, volume 2. Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hess, Richard S. 1993. Early Israel in Canaan: A Survey of Recent – Evidence and Interpretations. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 125:125 -142.
- . 2003. Israelite Identity and Personal Names in the Book of Judges. *Hebrew Studies*. 4:25-39
- . 2004. The Name Game: Dating the Book of Judges. *Biblical Archaeology Review*. 30/6:38-41
- Hesse, Brian & Wapnish, Paula. 1997. Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East? In Silberman, Neil Asher and David Small, ed. *The archaeology of Israel: Constructing the past, interpreting the present*, Journal for the study of the OT Testament supplement series, no. 237, 238-270. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press.
- Herr, Larry G. 1998. Tell et-'Umayri and the Madaba Plains Region During the Late Bronze-Iron Age I Transition. In Gitin, Mazar and Stern (1998:251-264).
- Hoffmeier, James K. 2004. *The North Sinai Archaeological Project's Excavations at Tell el-Borg (Sinai): An Example of the "New" Biblical Archaeology?* In Hoffmeier, James K. and Alan Millard, eds, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology. Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, 53-66. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
- . Forthcoming 2005. *Ancient Israel in Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hjelm, Ingrid & Thompson, Thomas L. 2002. The Victory Song of Merenptah, Israel and the People of Palestine. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 27.1:3-18
- Hudson, R. A. *Sociolinguistics*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- King, Philip J. & Stager, Lawrence E. 2001. *Life in Ancient Israel*. Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox
- Kitchen, Kenneth A. 1999. *Ramesside Inscriptions. Translated & Annotated Notes and Comments. Volume II*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
- . 2003a. *On the reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich, Cambridge, U.K
- . 2003b. The Victories of Merenptah, and the Nature of Their Record. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 28.3:259-272
- Kletter, R. 2002. People Without Burials? The Lack of Iron I Burials in the Central Highlands of Palestine. *Israel Exploration Journal* 52:28-48
- Kofoed, Jens Bruun. 2005. *Text and History. Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Lemche, N. P. *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society before the Monarchy*. Vetus Testamentum Supplements, 37. Leiden: Brill
- . 1998. *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Ideology*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers
- Levy, Thomas E. & Holl, Anthony F. C. 2002. Migrations, Ethnogenesis, and Settlement Dynamics: Israelites in Iron Age Canaan and Shuwa-Arads in the Chad Basin. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*. 21:83-118
- Levy, Thomas E; Adams, Russell B. & Muniz, Adolfo. 2004. Archaeology and the Shasu Nomads - Recent Excavations in the Jabal Hamrat Fidan, Jordan. In Propp, W.H. and Friedman, R.E. eds, *Festschrift for David Noel Freedman*. UCSD Judaic Studies Program. Available in electronic version at <http://weber.ucsd.edu/Depts/Anthro/classes/tlevy/Fidan/JHF/Shasu.pdf>
- Linell, Per. 1995. The Dynamics of Contexts in Discourse. In Sharon Millar and Jacob Mey, ed, *Form and Function in Language. Proceedings of the First Rasmus Rask Colloquium, Odense 1992*, 41-67. Odense: Odense University Press.

- Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, "Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation." *SEE-J Hiphil* 2 [http://www.see-j.net/hiphil] (2005). Published August 8, 2005.
- Linell, Per, and Natascha Karolija. 1997. Coherence in Multi-Party Conversation: Episodes and Contexts in Interaction. In Talmy Givón, ed, *Conversation: cognitive, communicative, and social perspectives*, . Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Marais, Jacobus. 1998. *Representation in Old Testament narrative texts*. Biblical interpretation series, 36. Leiden: Brill
- Matthews, Victor H. 2004. *Judges and Ruth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Miller, Cynthia L. 1996. *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs, 55. Atlanta: Scholars Press
- Millard, Alan. 2004. *Amorites and Israelites: Invisible Invaders*. In Hoffmeier, James K. and Alan Millard, eds, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology. Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, 148-160. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
- Noth, Martin. 1967. *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*. 3rd edition. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- O'Connell, Robert H. 1996. *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum). Leiden: E.J.Brill
- Renkema, Jan. 1993. *Discourse Studies: An Introductory Textbook*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins
- Revell, E. J. 1996. *The Designation of the Individual. Expressive Usage in Biblical Narrative*. (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 14). Kampen: Pharos
- Scham, Sandra. 2002. The Days of the Judges: When Men and Women Were Animals and Trees Were Kings. *Journal for the Society of the Old Testament*. 97:37-64
- Schiffrin, Deborah. 1994. *Approaches to Discourse*. Blackwell: Oxford UK and Cambridge USA
- Shimasaki, Katsuomi. 2002. *Focus Structure in Biblical Hebrew*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Stager, Lawrence E. 1991. When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon. *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 17/2:24-43
- Thompson, Thomas L. 1992. *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources*. Studies of the History of the Ancient Near East, 4. Leiden: Brill
- Vanhoozer, Kevin. 1998. *Is there a meaning in this text?: the Bible, the reader, and the morality of literary knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan
- Wagner, Andreas. 2000. The Archaeology of Oral Communication. In Search of Spoken Language in the Bible. *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*. 26/2:117-126.
- Winther-Nielsen, Nicolai. 2002. Fact, Fiction and Language Use: Can modern Pragmatics improve on Halpern's case for History in Judges? I V. Philips Long, David W. Baker & Gordon J. Wenham, *Windows into Old Testament History. Evidentiality, Argument, and the Crisis of "Biblical Israel"*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 44-81.
- Wood, Bryant G. 2003. From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus-Judges Period. In David M. Howard Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti, *Giving the Sense. Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, 256-282. Grand Rapids: Kregel
- Yee, Gale A. 1985. *Judges and method: new approaches to Biblical studies*. Minneapolis: Augsburg
- Younger, K. Lawson. 1999. Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship. In Baker, David W. and Bill T. Arnold, ed. *The Face of Old Testament Studies. A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* 176-206. Grand Rapids: Baker
- Yule, George. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: OUP
- Zertal, Adam. 1998. The Iron Age I Culture in the Hill-Country of Canaan – a Manasite Perspective. In Gitin, Mazar and Stern 1998:238-250.