

6

The Caleb-Achsah Episode: Judges 1:10–15

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Introduction

Joshua 15:13–19 and its parallel Judg 1:10–15 are remarkable in at least two ways.¹ First, neither one really fits its context. The story thus must have been regarded as significantly important to be included twice.² Second, the narrative course of events is interesting. Achsah is given away to Othniel by her father Caleb as a reward for the latter's capture of Debir.³ However, Othniel hardly plays any role in the narrative. The interaction is between Caleb and Achsah, and it is Achsah, the former object, who convinces her father to give her a blessing in the form of ponds or a body of water.

In this contribution, I will deal with the background, foreground, and function of the episode, highlighting some intertextual nodes and the narrative roles of Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah.

1. The Caleb-Achsah episode of Josh 15:13–19 reoccurs in Judg 1:10–15 with slight differences. In Judg 1, however, Caleb is introduced later, in verse 12, whereas in Josh 15, he enters the stage at the very beginning of the episode. So, the actual Caleb-Achsah episode in Judges is found in 1:12–15 (// Josh 15:16–19). Nevertheless, I adhere to Judg 1:10–15 for this essay. Determining the inner and outer delimitation of Judg 1 is complicated. Is Judg 1:1–36 a unit or Judg 1:1–2:5 or 6? See Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 36–37. Also, does Judg 1:12–15 belong to 1:10–15 or to 1:8–15? Jack M. Sasson (*Judges 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 6D [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014], 139) characterizes 1:8–11 as “to play Janus.”

2. See also Sasson, *Judges*, 145.

3. Judith McKinlay (“Meeting Achsah on Achsah’s land,” *Bible and Critical Theory* 5 [2009]: 1–11) characterizes this as “Achsah, a movable pawn of Israel’s myths of empire” (8).

“The authors of Judges 1 write as if Joshua 1–11 had not taken place. At the same time, they know the book of Joshua very well,” noted Ernst-Axel Knauf in his commentary on Judges.⁴ Not only this, they probably knew the whole book of Joshua as well as the Pentateuch, the books of Samuel and Kings, and the remainder of Judg 2:6–16:31, apart from 2:1–5 (it is commonly accepted that Judg 1:1–2:5 is a later introduction to the book of Judges).⁵ Chapter 1, with which I will deal now, is full of allusions to other texts of the Bible. It communicates with them and seeks to set events described elsewhere in a new light. We can only understand what Judg 1 wants to tell us when we read it together with the texts that are alluded to within it. The many allusions, however, make Judg 1 quite complicated. The chapter is already in itself full of tensions and contradictions, though I agree here with Serge Frolov and Knauf, that they are deliberate and part of the alleged “make Judah great again” strategy.⁶ It is, for example, no problem for the authors to write that Judah captured Jerusalem (v. 8) but that the Benjaminites were unable to expel the Jebusites from Jerusalem (v. 21).⁷ Was not King Saul from the tribe of Benjamin? And was it not David from the tribe of Judah who had captured Jerusalem?

Judges 1 is not only about Judah; it is, again taking from Frolov, about the Judahite David.⁸ But its pro-Judahite and pro-David stance is not universally accepted; Gregory T. K. Wong questions whether there is a pro-Judahite slant at all in Judg 1.⁹ There is also the matter of the

4. Knauf, *Richter*, ZBK (Zurich: TVZ, 2016), 41: “Die Verfasser von Ri 1 schreiben, als hätte Jos 1–11 nicht stattgefunden. Gleichzeitig kennen sie das Josua-Buch sehr gut.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

5. Whether or not Judg 17–21 or parts thereof belong to the same stage as Judg 1 is a matter of debate. It is commonly accepted that it is later than the bulk of Judg 2:6–16:31.

6. Frolov, *Judges*, FOTL 6B (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 44–53; Knauf, *Richter*, 41. See also the title of Mareike Rake’s third chapter: “Schreiende Widersprüche in Ri 1:1–21” in “*Juda wird aufsteigen!*” *Untersuchungen zum ersten Kapitel des Richterbuches*, BZAW 367 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 74. Niditch (*Judges*, 37, see also 11–13) evaluates Judg 1 as a compilation of partly old material, in which tensions and contradictions were not erased.

7. Before, they had already brought Adoni-bezek to Jerusalem (v. 7). For a composition-critical analysis, see Rake, “Schreiende Widersprüche,” 74–90.

8. Frolov, *Judges*, 50.

9. Wong, “Is There a Direct Pro-Judah Polemic in Judges,” *SJOT* 19 (2005): 84–110. Different is the unconvincing article of Philippe Guillaume (“An Anti-Judean Manifesto

Caleb-(Othniel-)Achsah episode in Judg 1:12–15, whereby the parties appear to be connected to Judah, but it is not clear whether they belong to this tribe.¹⁰ If not, this constitutes possibly the only positive representation of non-Judahite persons in Judg 1.¹¹ Can we, nevertheless, also connect this episode with David?

Judges 1:10–15

As already stated, Judg 1:10–15 has a parallel in Josh 15:13–19, where verses 11–15 in Judg 1 are almost identical to Josh 15:15–19:

Josh 15:13–19¹²

13 According to the command of YHWH to Joshua, he gave [נתן] to Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba, that is Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak).

14 And Caleb drove out [וירש] from there the three sons of Anak:

Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi,
the descendants of Anak.

15 From there he went up [ויעל] against the inhabitants of Debir [ישבי דביר] (the name of Debir [דבר] was formerly Kiriath-sepher).

16 Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, I will give him my daughter Achsah as wife.”

Judg 1:10–15

10 Judah went [וילך] against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron (the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba);

and they defeated [ויבו]

Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

11 From there he went [וילך] against the inhabitants of Debir [ישבי דביר] (the name of Debir [דביר] was formerly Kiriath-sepher).

12 Caleb said: “Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, I will give him my daughter Achsah as wife.”

in Judges 1?,” *BN* 95 [1998]: 12–17) who argues that Judg 1:1–18 is anti-Judaean, but not anti-Judah by distinguishing בני יהודה, “Judahites,” and יהודה, “Judah.”

10. In 1 Chr 2:46–50, the Calebites are even genealogically integrated into the tribe of Judah.

11. The tribe of Simeon is also referred to in a positive light as it fights on the side of the tribe of Judah in battle (Judg 1:3, 17). However, nothing more is said about Simeon.

12. Translations are mostly adapted from NRSV.

17 Othniel, son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.

18a When she came to him, she urged him by asking [ותסיתהו לשאול]¹³ her father for a field [שדה].

18b As she spit [ותצנח]¹⁴ from her donkey, Caleb said to her, “What’s with you?”¹⁵

19 She said to him, “Give [תנה] me a blessing/pool [ברכה];¹⁶ since you have given me away as Negeb-land [ארץ הנגב],¹⁷ give me ponds of water.”

So Caleb gave her the upper ponds [גלת עליות] and the lower ponds [גלת תחתיות].

13 Othniel, son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.

14a When she came to him, she urged him by asking [ותסיתהו לשאול] her father for the field [השדה].

14b As she spit [ותצנח] from her donkey, Caleb said to her, “What’s with you?”

15 She said to him, “Give [הבה] me a blessing/pool [ברכה]; since you have given me away as Negeb-land [ארץ הנגב], give me Gulloth-mayim.”

So Caleb gave her Upper Gulloth [גלת תחתיות] and Lower Gulloth [גלת עליות].

It is beyond doubt here that the authors of Judges knew the story in (if not from) Joshua and not vice versa. (1) Kiriath-arba seems to be an older name for the place referred to here as “Hebron” (Josh 15:13); in Judg 1:10 it is the opposite: Hebron is referred to as Kiriath-arba; (2) it is likely that the author of Judg 1 avoided mentioning the mythical Anakites as well as the syntactically awkward “Kiriath-arba ... Arba was the father of Anak” (Josh 15:13–14); (3) It is more likely that Judah replaced Caleb in defeating Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi than the reverse (Josh 15:14 // Judg 1:10);¹⁸ (4) the author of Judg 1 might not have understood that גלת means “pools” and struck the plural *vav* in the *nomina recta* עליות and תחתיות, thereby making the combinations toponyms. Although it is possible to read them as plurals, it is far more likely that the authors made place names out of

13. See below for this translation.

14. See below for this translation.

15. See Sasson, *Judges*, 147–48.

16. ברכה is a word play; vocalized as בִּרְכָה it means “blessing” and as בְּרִכָּה it means “pool.”

17. See below for possible translations of נתחני הנגב.

18. The sudden plural as subject of ויכו in 1:10b is awkward whereas יהודה was the subject of 1:10a; maybe this is a way to refer to Caleb as the original victor of the three Anakites (thus in Josh 15:14); see also Rake, “Schreiende Widersprüche,” 80.

them because in other cases they inserted *matres lectionis* (1:11);¹⁹ (5) the form השדה (Judg 1:14) instead of שדה (Josh 15:17) could mean that *the* field is now known to author and addressees; (6) Judg 1:11 has three forms in *plene* writing whereas Josh 1:15 has no *plene* there; this, as well as the Aramaic verb יהב in Judg 1:15 (נתן in Josh 15:19) seem to point to a later, probably postexilic stage of Biblical Hebrew.²⁰

Adaptations of the Joshua-*Vorlage* are thus very important to understanding the function of the pericope in Judges. Most adaptations occur in Judg 1:10 and 11a. They can easily be explained. In Josh 15:13–14 a portion of the land is *given* to Caleb because it appears within chapters 14–19 in Joshua about the allotment of the land, not about the conquest;²¹ the conquest is depicted in the first half of the book of Joshua (chs. 1–12). Only after land has been given to Caleb does he drive the three sons of Anak out of Hebron. In Judg 1:10, it seems to be Judah who goes to Hebron and smites Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, the sons of Anak.²² Judah does not *receive* Hebron to capture it but *conquers* it on his own initiative. The unimposing verb “to go” (הלך) is important in this context.²³ In verse 2, we can read: “YHWH said: ‘Judah shall go up. I hereby give the land into his hand.’” This reminds us of Josh 2:24 where the spies report what Rahab explained to them to Joshua.²⁴ It reminds us also of Josh 1:3 where YHWH says to Joshua: “Every place that the sole of your feet will tread upon I have given to you.” And—now Caleb is on the stage—it reminds us of Josh 14:9 where Caleb tells Joshua,

19. Niditch (*Judges*, 30) translates “ponds of water” as well as “the upper and the lower ponds,” however, without discussing this.

20. Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose*, HSM 12 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), passim; Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 90 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), passim. For a methodology on using Aramaisms for dating, see Avi Hurvitz, “The Chronological Significance of ‘Aramaisms’ in Biblical Hebrew,” *IEJ* 18 (1968): 234–40.

21. By the way, the verb נתן occurs seven times in Josh 15:13–19 as against five times in Judg 1:10–15.

22. See, however, note 18.

23. Frolov (*Judges*, 34–36) even structures the whole chapter according to movement.

24. See J. Cornelis de Vos, “Violence in the Book of Joshua,” in *Violence in the Hebrew Bible: Between Text and Reception*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten, OTS 79 (Brill: Leiden, 2020), 161–76.

Moses swore...., saying [to Caleb], “Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the LORD my God.” (NRSV)

In Judg 1, it is Judah who goes and receives the land, and we must understand this as “the whole land.” He receives it from YHWH, as Judg 1 begins by questioning YHWH, who gave the answer just quoted. Reading Judg 1:10 in light of David, on the authority of YHWH it is David himself who captures Hebron, the city where he was crowned. However, Judg 1:20 is more like Josh 15:13–14a, which sees Caleb as the one who receives Hebron and drives out the three sons of Anak. This, again, is an obvious contradiction. It might also be an indication of historical circumstances.

As Caleb is omitted in 1:10–11 compared to Joshua, his appearance in verse 12 seems somewhat out of the blue. It would have been easy for the authors of Judg 1 to have replaced Caleb with Judah. However, for some reason they wanted to retain this part of the Caleb-Achsah episode, although one can only guess what their motivations were. Maybe there were, again, historical reasons: Debir is connected to Othniel, the later judge (3:9–11), or better, to the Othnielites. The Othnielites were originally a non-Israelite, maybe Edomite clan residing in the area of Debir.²⁵ Besides, Debir is not the town where David was crowned; this would be an ideological motive for leaving out this part of the story. Maybe it is an old folktale that people liked to tell, and the authors wanted to include it. It could, additionally, be an ironic tale. The context speaks in favor of this postulate. How large, for example, must the table of King Adoni-bezek of the little village of Bezek (probably *ḥirbet ibziq*) have been that seventy kings could pick up scraps under his table (1:7)?²⁶ Maybe it was not

25. Alexander Sima, “Nochmals zur Deutung des hebräischen Namens ‘Oṯnī’ēl,” *BN* 106 (2001): 47–51: in the southeastern Canaanite dialect to which the Edomite and Ammonite dialects belong, the name Othniel could mean “God has helped me”; for other translations, see Michael Streck and Stefan Weninger, “Zur Deutung des hebräischen Namens ‘Oṯnī’ēl,” *BN* 96 (1999): 21–29.

26. For the place name, see Erasmus Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuchs in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive*, ADPV 35 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 9–11. It is highly doubtful that the reference was to the real site of Bezeq. The reference was on an intertextual level to Saul who gathered Israel in Bezek. So, this might also be a pun against the Benjaminite Saul. Probably, the reference is also to the king of Jerusalem as the similarity between the names Adoni-bezek and Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem (Josh 10:1) suggests. Adoni-bezek flees but is caught and brought captive to

only ironical but also full of humor.²⁷ Unfortunately, it is hard to discover what exactly constituted the humor. Is it the assertive way Achsah acts and can persuade her father Caleb? Was this humorous for males, females, or both?²⁸

The answer is complicated by two *cruces interpretationis* in the text. First, who is the subject and who the object of ותסיתרהו in verse 14, and what exactly does it mean? Second, what does the verb צנה in verse 14b mean? And back to the initial question: Is there a connection to David in verses 12–15?

Following Paul G. Mosca, I regard Achsah as the subject of סות *hiphil*, rather than Othniel, as some versions do, and Caleb as the object, not Othniel, as many modern translations do.²⁹ This view is also shaped by how the first verbal construction of Josh 15:18 // Judg 1:12: בבואה is understood. If the suffix ה- is an object, then it could mean “as he came into her” with a clear sexual connotation. Achsah then used the heat of the moment to arouse her spouse Othniel to have him ask for a/the field from her father. However attractive this understanding might be because of its ironical setting, in my mind, it is not the correct view. First, Othniel is not mentioned in verses 15:18 // 1:12. So, the suffix ה- in ותסיתרהו is at least ambivalent—besides, the meaning of סות *hiphil*, is not certain at all. Second, in the same verse, it is Caleb who is mentioned explicitly and reacts to something Achsah did. Third, Othniel also does not appear in

Jerusalem where he dies (Judg 1:4–7). This could be connected to the inability of the Benjaminites to capture Jerusalem as described in Judg 1:21.

27. Or even satirical; see Adrien J. Bledstein, “Is Judges a Woman’s Satire of Men Who Play God?,” in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner, FCB 4 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 34–54.

28. Bledstein, (“Is Judges a Woman’s Satire?”) postulates a female author for the whole book of Judges.

29. Mosca, “Who Seduced Whom? A Note on Joshua 15,18 // Judges 1,14,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 18–22. Judg 1:14 LXX (Codices A and B): και ἐγένετο ἐν Ἀτῶ εἰσπορεύεσθαι αὐτήν^A / ^Bτῇ εἰσόδῃ αὐτῆς^B και ἐπέσεισεν αὐτήν ^BΓοθονιηλ τοῦ^B αἰτήσαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς τὸν^A ἀγρόν; VL: *et factum est cum ingrederetur ipse, monuit eam Gothonieli ut peteret a patre suo agrum*; Vulg.: *quam pergentem in itinere monuit vir suus ut peteret a patre suo agrum*. Slightly different: Josh 15:18 LXX: και ἐγένετο ἐν τῶ εἰσπορεύεσθαι αὐτήν και συνεβουλεύσατο αὐτῶ λέγουσα Αἰτήσομαι τὸν πατέρα μου ἀγρόν; Syr.: *wkd hwt lh 'trgrgt dts'l mn 'bwh yrtwt' dhql'*; Vulg.: *et factum est, cum ingrederetur ipsa, et consilium habuit cum eo, dicens: Petam patrem meum agrum*; and Judg 1:18 Syr.: *wkd 'l' 'trgrgt lms'l mn 'bwh h hql'*.

the verses that follow. Thus, Othniel did *not* ask Achsah's father, Caleb, for a field. Instead, it is Achsah who takes the initiative, and asks for a ברכה, "blessing/pool"; and it is Caleb who reacts to Achsah.

If this is the correct understanding, then, again with Mosca, לשאול cannot mean "to ask" in a final way because then Achsah would instigate her father to ask for a field from her father, but like לאמר, "by saying," as a gerund, "by asking."³⁰

The meaning of צנח is not ascertained because it only occurs thrice in the Hebrew Bible, of which two instances are in our parallel verses.³¹ Accordingly, there are many translations.³² The most common is "to dismount," found in most modern translations. I have argued elsewhere that צנח means "to spit."³³ First, the act of spitting can be done from upon the donkey (מעל החמור); second, verses 15:19 // 1:15 play with the scope of opposites: dry-wet. Dry is the ארץ הנגב. But what does it mean within the context? The phrase כי נתתני ארץ הנגב can have various meanings: (1) "You have put me in the land of Negeb"; (2) "You have given me Negeb/arid land"; (3) "You have given me away as Negeb land" (our translation); (4) "You have treated me as Negeb land."³⁴ In any case, it has to do with something dry. In the third case, it might serve as a pun in relation to verses 12–13. There we read that Caleb gives Achsah away as a wife ונתתי לאשה לו את עכסה בתי לאשה resp. ויתן לו את עכסה בתי לאשה).³⁵ Did Achsah interpret this as "you gave me away as Negeb land" instead of "as a wife"? This might very well be and makes the tale even more humorous. As yet we have the

30. Mosca, "Who Seduced Whom?," 18–22. Cf. the double translation λεγοῦσα Αιζησομαι of Josh 15:18 LXX (see note 29).

31. The other occurrence is in Judg 4:21.

32. G. R. Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch," in *Mélanges bibliques: Rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert*, Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris 4 (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1957), 66–76; M. H. Gottstein, "A Note on צנח," VT 6 (1956): 99–100; Arthur Gibson, "ṣanaḥ in Judges i 14: NEB and AV Translations," VT 26 (1976): 275–83; E. W. Nicholson, "The Problem of צנח," ZAW 89 (1977): 259–66.

33. J. Cornelis de Vos, *Das Los Judas: Über Entstehung und Ziele der Landbeschreibung in Josua 15*, VTSup 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 122–24.

34. See Richard D. Nelson, "What Is Achsah Doing in Judges?," in *The Impartial God: Essays in Biblical Studies in Honor of Jouette M. Bassler*, ed. C. J. Roetzel, New Testament Monographs 22 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 19–20.

35. On the status of wife for a woman, see Tammi J. Schneider, "Achsah, the Raped Pilegeš, and the Book of Judges," in *Women in the Biblical World: A Survey of Old and New Testament Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth A. McCabe (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), 45–46.

מים, גלת עלי[ו]ת, גלת תחתי[ו]ת, גלת ת, and the blessing, the ברכה, that means “pool” when vocalized as בְּרֶכָה;³⁶ third, the spitting is a sign of contempt that is a good means to provoke the reaction of Achsah’s father: “What is with you?” In contrast, dismounting from a donkey after arriving on one is not quite unexpected and can hardly have been responsible for Caleb’s reaction as described in verses 15:18 // 1:14; fourth and finally, the translation also fits the third occasion of צנח in Judg 4:21. After Jael had killed Sisera, she spat on the ground (וּתְצַנַח בְּאַרְצָא) as a sign of contempt for Sisera.³⁷

Presumably, the authors of Judg 1 used the episode from Josh 15 within the new Judah-David context of Judg 1 so it would, among others, allude to the story of Nabal and Abigail in 1 Sam 25.³⁸ Although it is a bit hypothetical, and it might only be one way to read this multileveled story, as Danna Nolan Fewell labeled it, I presume that Achsah also functions as a type of Abigail.³⁹ The connection of Achsah to Abigail in 1 Sam 25 was

36. See above note 16.

37. Tsila Ratner (“Playing Fathers’ Games: The Story of Achsah, Daughter of Caleb, and the Princess’s Blank Sheet,” *JMS* 3 [2004]: 147–61) writes: “By falling off the donkey Achsah expresses both the prostration and respect befitting a ‘good daughter’ as well as subversive sexual implications. These in turn expand to include ‘springs of water,’ which is part of the territorial discourse but also alludes to women’s fertility/sexuality.” This interpretation is allegorizing and far-fetched, and it stands, as argued, on shaky ground. The same applies to the article of Heidi Szpek, “Achsah’s Story: A Metaphor for Societal Transition,” *AUSS* 40 (2002): 245–56; she maintains that “Achsah’s existence is intertwined with Caleb’s and then Othniel’s. Caleb represents the old ways of society and marriage—the patriarchal dynasty, the time of Wandering and Conquest; Othniel represents Conquest to Settlement—the new ways of society and marriage. Achsah’s passage from Caleb’s household to Othniel’s may metaphorically represent the progression of society from Wandering to Conquest to Settlement” (256). The other extreme is the biblicism of Joseph Fleishman in his “A Daughter’s Demand and a Father’s Compliance: The Legal Background to Achsah’s Claim and Caleb’s Agreement (Joshua 15,16–19; Judges 1,12–15),” *ZAW* 118 (2006): 354–73. Fleishman does not critically and diachronically distinguish between 1 Chron and Judg 1. According to 1 Chr 2:42–49 and 4:15, Caleb also has sons. Therefore, for Fleishman, it is an exception that Achsah receives an inheritance. However, there is no mention of sons of Caleb in Judg 1.

38. There is also a clear intertextual nexus to Judg 18–21 and, among others, via the venue of Bezek (Judg 1:4) to 1 Sam 11 (v. 8) as Schneider (“Achsah, the Raped *Pilegeš*, and the Book of Judges,” 43–55) argued convincingly.

39. Fewell, “Deconstructive Criticism: Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing,” in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 115–37.

already put forward by Richard D. Nelson.⁴⁰ I go further in connecting the story in Judg 1 also to David. My arguments are:

1. The Calebite connection: Abigail was married to Nabal, and Nabal was a Calebite (1 Sam 25:3) just like Othniel in Judg 1. This, however, does not mean that Othniel is a type of David. Othniel is, according to Wong, necessary because in the older book of Judges there was no judge from the south at the time, which is why he was inserted as a judge in Judg 3:9–11.⁴¹ The story of Josh 15:13–19 offers a welcome opportunity to introduce him earlier, in Judg 1.
2. The Judahite connection: Whether Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah belong to Judah in Judg 1 is ambivalent, and it would appear, deliberately so. In any case, they are connected to Judah in some way, just like Abigail, probably a Calebite.
3. The personal connection: Abigail is as assertive as Achsah. It is by her actions that David asks her to become his wife. The difference, of course, is that in Judges she receives two villages. According to Frolov, the latter could point to the royal prerogative to offer towns to people of the court.⁴² If we translate “the upper” and “lower ponds,” or “reservoirs,” than there could even be an allusion to the water system in Jerusalem, and the name “Debir” would have, or *also* have the meaning “sanctuary,” scilicet in Jerusalem.⁴³
4. The donkey connection:⁴⁴ Both Abigail and Achsah are riding a donkey, although the action from the donkey is different. In Samuel Abigail dismounts, in Judg 1:14b, in my opinion, Achsah spits (cf. Gen 24). This would have provoked the question of her father Caleb, and it might have been humorous for the contemporary readers.

40. Nelson, “What Is Achsah Doing?,” 12–22.

41. Wong, “Direct Pro-Judah Polemic?,” 105–6.

42. Frolov, *Judges*, 50.

43. For reference to the water system in Jerusalem, see Renate Jost, “Achsah Quellen: Feministisch-sozialgeschichtliche Überlegungen in Jos 15, 15–20/Ri 1, 12–15,” in *„Ihr Völker alle, klatscht in die Hände!“: Festschrift für Erhard S. Gerstenberger zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Rainer Kessler, *Exegese in unserer Zeit* 3 (Münster: LIT, 1997), 110–25. She refers to Isa 22:9–11 for the lower pool (הַבְּרִכָּה הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה); and to Isa 7:3 and 36:2 for the upper pool (הַבְּרִכָּה הָעֵלְיוֹנָה).

44. See also Sasson, *Judges*, 148.

5. The ברכה-connection. Achsah asks for a ברכה from Caleb, Abigail brings a ברכה to David. The verbs used for this sound very similar (הביא/הבה). This could have been deliberate since different verbs are demanded by the different contexts.
6. The geographical connection: The story of 1 Sam 25 is set in the village of Maon and the village and/or field of Karmel. Both Maon (*tell ma'in*) and Karmel (*ḥirbet el-kirmil*) are not far from Debir, which is probably to be found in *ḥirbet rabūd*.⁴⁵ Debir in turn is not far from Hebron. In Judg 1:11, it is still Judah, scilicet David, who goes from Hebron to Debir.⁴⁶

Cumulatively, the arguments present a connection from Achsah to Abigail, through Abigail to David as very likely. As argued above, in Judg 1 there might be puns involved in the relationship between David and Saul. By reading the Achsah story through the lens of this relationship, the story gains depth and is provided intertextual meaning that contemporary addressees might have grasped.

Conclusion

Judges 1 is awkward because it uses material from other biblical texts within new contexts that simultaneously, by allusion, evokes narratives on multiple levels: within Judg 1, within the older parts of Judges, and within a wider context. This makes it full of tensions and contradictions. We do not know what the historical background and the original meaning of the Caleb-Achsah episode might have been, nor do we know how the story's contemporary audience reacted to it. However, in its present state it opens a window to a story about other assertive women, in particular to the story about Abigail (1 Sam 25; see also Gen 24, esp. vv. 64–67). The ancient audience might have thought about the relation of Judah to the Calebites, of David to Saul and the Benjaminites, and of David to women; and about assertive women, either positively or negatively. We also do not know whether Judah and David are alluded to positively in the Caleb-Achsah episode. In any case, it must have been fun for the ancient audience.

45. On Maon and Karmel, see de Vos, *Los Judas*, 440–41, 443; on Debir see 427–28, 431; and Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen*, 29–30.

46. A further connection could be that twice “field” is mentioned: “she asked her father for the field” (Judg 1:14); “as we were in the field” (1 Sam 25:15).