

# Torah in Judith Dietary Laws, Purity and Other Torah Issues in the Book of Judith

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## Introduction

When reading the book of Judith, the text time and again urges the reader to refer back to the Torah. This phenomenon can be examined best by an intertextual, reader-oriented and text-centered method. From the observations made here one learns more about how the book of Judith interprets, teaches and propagates the written Torah, the Five Books of Moses. The following paper focuses especially on the Halakhic aspects that the book of Judith emphasizes, i.e., the normative passages that influence the deeds and behavior of Jewish daily life. The main points will cover the issue of food (dietary laws and the eating of *sacra*), the question of purity, and the sacrifices. Other topics that play a minor role (e.g., endogamy and the prohibition of putting God to the test) will be briefly addressed. There are many references within the book of Judith to narrative passages of the Torah, especially to the first part of the book of Exodus, but these intertextual connections go beyond the scope of this paper and deserve separate studies.<sup>1</sup>

## Food

The daily diet is always an issue of culture, religion and identity. Food as an identity marker separates oneself and one's own group from "the others," who eat certain things which "we" do not eat. The dietary laws in Leviticus, mainly formulated in chapter 11, have the function of separating Israel from the nations: "The dietary system is thus a reflec-

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1 See, e.g., VAN HENTEN, *Judith*, 33-48; RAKEL, *Judit*, 249-260, on Judith as Moses *redivivus* and the linguistic and structural relationship between Exod 15 and Jdt 16. See also ZENGER, *Das Buch Judit* (1981), 445-446; HELLMANN, *Judit*.

tion and reinforcement of Israel's election"<sup>2</sup>. This is stated explicitly in Lev 20:24-26: "I am the Lord your God who has separated you from all the nations. And you shall separate them: between the clean animals and between the unclean animals and between the clean birds and between the unclean; you shall not cause your souls to be loathsome by the animals and by the birds and by any of the creeping things of the earth, which I have set apart for you by uncleanness. And you shall be holy to me, for I the Lord your God am holy, who has separated you from all the nations to be mine."<sup>3</sup> The other issue concerning food refers to the eating of *sacra*, portions of sacrificed animals, as well as first fruits and tithes, which are reserved for the priests and forbidden for non-priests. Judith refers to that prohibition of the Torah in her speech to Olophernes (Jdt 11:13).

### Dietary Laws and Pure Bread

The separating function of the dietary laws plays an important role in the narrative of Judith's stay in the camp of the Assyrians and in her speech to Olophernes. Regarding her own behavior, Judith sees to it that she does not have to eat with foreigners. As she intends to spend several days in the camp of the Assyrians, she takes her own food with her (Jdt 10:5). There is no problematic food among these provisions, i.e., no meat which might come from an unclean animal or from portions of a sacrificed animal which may be eaten exclusively by the priests. With these provisions, Judith does not have to eat from the meals of the Assyrians (Jdt 12:2)<sup>4</sup>, and her food supplies last until the "last supper" she has with Olophernes on the fourth day (Jdt 12:19). (a) Within the logic of the narrative,

Judith's position ... fulfills a very specific purpose, namely, by scrupulously avoiding any prohibited foods, Judith was confirming for Holofer-

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2 MILGROM, *Leviticus 1-16*, 725.

3 Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from biblical texts stem from the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS). Since the book of Judith is part of the Greek bible, it makes sense to refer primarily to the Greek bible for intertextual references.

4 The book of Judith shares this concern with the books of Daniel (Dan 1:8-16) and Tobit (Tob 1:10-12); see GROß, *Tobit. Judit*, 102; MOORE, *Judith*, 218, also points to AddEst C 28 (Est 4,17x/4,27[28]). The extreme concern for dietary laws and ritual purity even in a time of great personal crisis is somewhat reminiscent of Ezekiel's attitude in Ezek 4:12-14 (see *ibid.*, 225-226). See also ENSLIN/ZEITLIN, *The Book of Judith*, 128.

nes the sincerity of her offer. In other words, Holofernes would now believe that Judith felt so strongly about obeying dietary laws that she could actually betray her own people if they ignored such prohibitions (11:12-13 [see below]).<sup>5</sup>

(b) On the level of the pragmatics of the text, one must note the importance of *kashrut* for the text (and its implied author): This feature of the narrative makes Judith a shining example for observing the Torah even in a hostile and pagan environment<sup>6</sup>. It is not necessary to transgress the Torah, not even for the sake of fulfilling her stratagem. She can achieve all her aims *within* the limits of Torah observance.

Among Judith's food supplies is—according to Jdt 10:5—“pure bread” (πῆραν ... ἄρτων καθαρῶν)<sup>7</sup>. A search for the occurrences of the parts of this unique phrase<sup>8</sup> leads to the bread of the Presence (or presentation loaves) in Lev 24:6-7 (2Chr 13:11): twelve loaves of *bread* displayed on a *pure* table in order to represent the Israelites and their fidelity in the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary. Maybe the “pure bread” in Judith's food supplies is a distant echo of the representative function of the “presentation loaves:” Judith is neither going alone nor acts for her own sake, but whatever she does, she does in the name of the entire people of Israel. Her fate is tied to the fate of all Israel; in a sense, she carries all Israel—symbolized in the “pure bread” as an allusion to the bread of the Presence—in her bag.

The next allusion to the Torah concerning food is to be found in Judith's speech before Olophernes. Judith takes over the paradigm formulated earlier by Achior: God does not punish the Jews nor does a sword prevail against them, unless they sin against God (Jdt 11:10<sup>9</sup>). Given the truth of this axiom, Judith now constructs transgressions that will provoke God's wrath and anger, and as a consequence, God will give the Israelites into the hand of Olophernes. All the transgressions have to do with food<sup>10</sup>. Judith first argues in a kind of general statement that her fellow Israelites have resolved to set upon their livestock and

5 MOORE, Judith, 218.

6 See HELLMANN, Judit, 131.

7 MOORE, Judith, 201, states: “It is unclear whether the author meant that the bread was kosher... or that it was pure in quality.”

8 Several witnesses replace the difficult wording ἄρτων καθαρῶν with και τυρου/τυρον (and variations), “and cheese” (the O text, the Old Latin, the Syriac and Syro-hexaplaric version, the Lucianic recension); for details see HANHART, Judith, 110; ZENGER, Das Buch Judit (1981), 496. The Vulgate reads “panes et caseum.”

9 See also Jud 5:17-18; 7:28; MARCUS, Law, 21-22.

10 See MAYER, Lebensnorm, 290-291.

to use up<sup>11</sup> everything, including all that God in his laws enjoined them not to eat (Jdt 11:12). They will do that in order to overcome the famine that comes from the lack of regular and allowed food due to the siege by the Assyrians. Thus Judith insinuates that her people will (a) eat the sacred portions of a sacrificed animal that belong to the priests alone (see below, “eating sacra”); (b) trespass against the prohibition to eat the fat and the blood<sup>12</sup> of animals (see Lev 3:17; 17:10-14) and (c) that they will infringe upon the dietary laws of Lev 11 and Deut 14:3-21. Here, the Torah clearly tells Israel which animals are intended for food and which are unclean and forbidden to be eaten. It is not further explained, which animals will be eaten (pigs? camels?), and this is not necessary, either. The pragmatic message of this passage is clear: The dietary laws are not insignificant idiosyncrasies of the people of Israel that can be easily dropped in the case of an emergency, but they belong to the center of Israel’s identity. Israel’s entire relationship to the Lord depends on this item. The book of Judith shares this attitude and paraenetic message with the stories about the martyrs in 2Maccabees 6 and 7<sup>13</sup>. Eating food that God explicitly forbids in the Torah is not a harmless crime but the breaking of the covenant, the forsaking of the relationship to Israel’s God—and as a consequence, God will deliver the disobedient ones to destruction by the enemies.

### Eating Sacra

The transgressions concerning food relate also to the common people eating sacra, holy things that belong to the temple and the priests only. Here, too, Judith insinuates that her fellow Israelites intend to transgress the prohibitions of the Torah because of the famine, by eating things to which they are not entitled. The phrase in Jdt 11:12, “to use up everything, all that God in his laws enjoined them not to eat,” includes implicitly the portions of a sacrificed animal that belong to the priests alone (see Lev 7:14; 7:31-36; 22:1-16). In Jdt 11:13, Judith mentions explicitly the first fruits of the grain (τὰς ἀπαρχὰς τοῦ σίτου) and the tithes of wine and oil (τὰς δεκάτας τοῦ οἴνου καὶ τοῦ ἐλαίου) that are conse-

11 The choice of the verb *δαπανᾶω*, to consume, to use up, “is deliberate to indicate vividly the entire consumption without regard for the portions not theirs to eat” (ENSLIN/ZETLIN, *Judith*, 139). This verb is paralleled with the verb *ἐξαναλίσκω*, to consume, to destroy utterly, in the next verse.

12 The Vulgate adds explicitly the drinking of the animals’ blood (“ut interficiant pecora sua et sanguinem eorum bibant”); see ZENGER, *Das Buch Judit* (1981), 501.

13 See, e.g., HELLMANN, *Judit*, 129.

crated for the priests at the sanctuary in Jerusalem. The following laws of the Torah are involved:

(1) ἀπαρχή, first fruits: Exod 22:28; 23:19; Lev 22:12; 23:10; Num 5:9; 15:20-21; 18:8-32; Deut 12:6.11.17; 18:4; 26:2.10. Especially the occurrences in Lev 22-23; Num 18; and Deut 18 stress that the Lord gave all the first fruits that Israel consecrated to him to the priests as a perpetual precept (Num 18:8): “Every first fruit of oil and every first fruit of wine and of grain, their first fruit, as much as they may give to the Lord, to you I have given them” (Num 18:12).

(2) δέκατος, tithes (see also ἐπιδέκατος): Lev 27:30-32; Num 18:21-28; Deut 14:22-23; 26:12.

Both tributes are due to the temple and the priesthood; hence, all these things, first fruits and tithes, are consecrated and thus holy. If a commoner uses and eats such things, he (or she) commits a sacrilege (Hebrew: *חֵטְא*). If he or she does so unintentionally, the person must offer a guilt offering (better: reparation offering), a ram from the sheep, and before that (!) he or she must compensate for the loss of the priest’s property (see Lev 5:14-26). In addition to the damages the person must add one fifth (20%) of the amount involved as a kind of penance—then he or she will get atonement. However, sins committed intentionally (“high-handedly,” see Num 15:30) cannot be atoned in a ritual exercised by human beings. The atonement for these sins will be achieved on Jom Kippur (the Day of Atonement, see Lev 16) once a year.

From the background of the Torah laws about first fruits and tithes one can estimate what an enormous sacrilege<sup>14</sup> it would be that Judith formulates in Jdt 11:13: The intention to eat as commoners the portions of first fruits and tithes that God commanded to give exclusively to the priests in the sanctuary is, even in an emergency, a transgression of an incredible dimension. The next verse, Jdt 11:14, extends the sin from Baityloua to Jerusalem by issuing a *carte blanche*<sup>15</sup> from the senate to

14 MOORE, Judith, 210, suggests the translation “sacrilege” for the *hapax legomenon* ἀτομία (literally “a being out of the way”) in Jdt 11:11 (NETS: deviance). See also OT-ZEN, Tobit and Judith, 104. See also MARCUS, Law, 108.

15 The idea of such a general pardon and dispensation from the instructions of the Torah by a human decree sounds absurd, and this is the impression the text wants to evoke from its readers. The Torah can and must be observed even in the case of an emergency and imminent death, as the case of Judith teaches. The same position regarding the Sabbath observance can be found in 1Macc 2:29-38 (see GROß, Tobit. Jdt, 101). Attacked on a Sabbath, the righteous ones who hid in the wilderness did not defend themselves in order to keep the Sabbath, and they were killed by the enemies. The Maccabees learned of this and decided (without referring to the Council for its permission) to defend themselves even on Sabbaths lest they get annihilated

legitimate the intended acts, and Jdt 11:15 formulates the immediate consequence: As soon as the intended offense should be carried out, God would hand over the Israelites to Olophernes for destruction. The scenario Judith sketches here perfectly matches the traditional (biblical) view of history as it is described in the deuteronomistic historical books. It is true what Judith says, with the exception that she is convinced that the Israelites will never give up the Torah in the described way. Here the subtle pragmatic message comes to the fore: For Jewish identity, the observance of the dietary laws, as well as the laws concerning the tithes for the sanctuary and the priests, is an indispensable identity marker. Whoever thinks of disposing of these laws, will face utter destruction. Thus the activation of the intertextual links from the book of Judith to the Torah reveals the hidden paraenetic agenda that this story pursues.

### Purity

For a deeper understanding of the book of Judith it is also helpful to bring in the purity laws of the Torah. Purity is the regular status of an Israelite in which he or she is able to communicate with God in the cult. Impurity, on the other hand, is a status of weakness, caused by various reasons, that disables a person from participating in the cult. Most of the laws regarding purity are concentrated in Leviticus 11-15. A permanently recurring feature occurs in these chapters: an act that is necessary to regain the status of purity after the reason (or the source) for the impurity is gone: to wash one's body with water. It is not clear how this instruction was carried out at the time when Leviticus was written, however, there is archaeological evidence for the existence of ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) since the second century B.C.E.<sup>16</sup> Judith stresses the importance of washing by bathing every night in the spring of water in the ravine of Baityloua (Jdt 12:7)<sup>17</sup>. By observing the dietary laws and by bathing every night, Judith remains for certain in the status of cultic purity,<sup>18</sup> and thus she can utter her prayers to the Lord (Jdt 12:8)<sup>19</sup>. She

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(1Macc 2:39-41). Against that 2Macc 8:26-27 and 12:38 stress the observance of the Sabbath by the Maccabees.

16 See LAWRENCE, *Washing*, 190.

17 The literary function of Judith's nightly visits outside the camp is to establish her means of escape later on, see MOORE, *Judith*, 220.

18 Like the High Priest before the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:4.24), as MAYER, *Lebensnorm*, 291, points out. On the early date of the idea that contact with a gentile is a source for ritual impurity, see ALON, *Jews*, 146-189.

stays pure the whole day (Jdt 12:9). One can also say that Judith carries out her heroic deed, the decapitation of Olophernes, in a status of cultic purity. And only in this status she can legitimately claim that she acted as God's means<sup>20</sup>, that *the Lord* struck him [Olophernes] by the hand of a female (Jdt 13:15).

There is a sharp contrast to this stressing of the status of purity: When Judith struck at Olophernes' neck and took his head from him and rolled his body from the mattress and threw the bloody head into her bag of provisions (Jdt 13:8-10), she becomes utterly unclean and impure by the contact with the dead body! The Torah clearly states in Num 19:11 that the one who touches the dead of any human soul shall be unclean for seven days. The following verses in Num 19 explain the procedure in which one regains the status of purity after seven days and the performance of a ritual with the sprinkling of water that was prepared from the ashes of a red heifer. This instruction also holds true in the case of war, as Num 31:19 says<sup>21</sup>: "encamp outside the camp seven days; everyone who kills and who touches the wounded person shall be purified on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your body of captives." For the word "purify" Num 19:12 and Num 31:19 use the word ἀγνίζω (see also 2Macc 12:38), while Jdt 16:18 describes the same issue with the word καθαρίζω: "When they came into Ierousalem, they did obeisance to God, and when the people were purified, they offered up their whole burnt offerings and their voluntary offerings and the gifts." The purification mentioned here can be nothing other than the fulfilling of the commandment of Num 31:19<sup>22</sup>. Even in the case of war, even after experiences of an exceptional salvation and a completely unexpected victory, the Torah must be obeyed. The reader can infer from this verse that even Judith undergoes the seven-day process of purification that is necessary for everyone who touches a dead body.

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19 Washing in preparation for prayer was a new ritual use of washing in the Second Temple period; see LAWRENCE, *Washing*, 56-64. Washing before prayer is unknown in the Hebrew Bible (*ibid.*, 17). The idea of non-priestly purity in the Second Temple period is examined by REGEV, *Non-Priestly Purity*, 223-244a.

20 See HAAG, *Studien*, 50; MOORE, *Judith*, 62-63.

21 See, e.g., HAAG, *Studien*, 110-111; GROß, *Tobit. Judit*, 119.

22 See, e.g., HAAG, *Judit*, 146-147.

## Sacrifices

The purification of Judith and the people after the war against the Assyrians was a necessary act before the sacrifices mentioned in Jdt 16:18 could be offered. The terms of these sacrifices also point back to the Torah and Jdt 4:14<sup>23</sup>. This verse mentions three types of sacrifices: (1) the perpetual whole burnt offering (τὴν ὀλοκαύτωσιν τοῦ ἐνδελειχισμοῦ), (2) voluntary offerings (τὰ ἐκούσια δόματα) and (3) the vows (τὰς εὐχάς). (1) The perpetual whole burnt offering refers to the daily sacrifice of two one-year-old lambs in the temple. The sacrifice is described in Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:6, and its Hebrew name is *tamid*. (2) The voluntary offerings (Hebrew: *nʿdabah*) are a subtype of the sacrifice of deliverance (θεοσία σωτηρίου, main description in Lev 3, Hebrew: *zebach shelamim*). The details are described in Lev 7:16. Its main characteristic features are the gathering of a celebrating community, the burning of the fat of the animal on the altar, and the eating of the animal's meat by the community, while certain portions need to be given to the officiating priest. This type of sacrifice is mentioned in Jdt 16:18, too; however, the expression is split up into two terms (see below). (3) The vows are sacrifices of animals pledged in a certain situation (Hebrew: *neder*) and form another subtype of the sacrifice of deliverance (Lev 3; see Lev 7:16).

Jdt 16:18 lists again three types of sacrifices: (1) whole burnt offerings (τὰ ὀλοκαυτώματα), (2) voluntary offerings (τὰ ἐκούσια), (3) gifts (τὰ δόματα). (1) The main description of the whole burnt offering can be found in Lev 1 (Hebrew: *'olah*); its main characteristic feature is the burning of the entire animal (except for the hide) in the fire on the altar. (2) The voluntary offerings are the same as in Jdt 4:14 (see above), but the term τὰ ἐκούσια δόματα is split by καί, and thus δόματα forms a third term. (3) The word "gifts" is an unspecific term and does not stand for a certain type or subtype of sacrifice. Maybe "gifts" here refer to all donations to the temple, whatever they may be, not only animals but also precious things from the spoils of war. Then this term would be a transition to Judith's dedications in Jdt 16:19.

According to Jdt 16:19, Judith dedicates to the temple all the baggage of Olophernes that the people had given her. Even the mosquito netting she had taken from his bedroom (Jdt 13:9) Judith gives to God as a dedication (εἰς ἀνάθημα). This term refers to the concept of *cherem* in Deuteronomy and Joshua (see also Lev 27:28 and Num 21:3)<sup>24</sup>. It is the

23 For both passages see MARCUS, Law, 106.

24 See, e.g., HAAG, Studien, 109-110; HAAG, Judit, 148.



vow to give a person or a thing entirely to the realm of God; thus the devoted person or thing becomes “holy of holies to the Lord.” The person or thing cannot be redeemed to secular use, and the only way to fulfill the vow and to avoid a profanation of the “most holy” (ἅγιον ἅγιον) is to put the person to death (Lev 27:29) or to destroy the devoted thing completely. This is an archaic way to express that the victory was achieved by God alone<sup>25</sup> and that one does not want to gain any economic profit from it. In the wars of Yahweh in Deuteronomy and Joshua all spoils of war are completely destroyed as a vow to Yahweh. Already the reports in Deuteronomy and Joshua describe this idea as a concept of the past, never to be exercised again. But maybe Judith’s dedication of Olophernes’ precious mosquito netting is again a distant echo of this old concept, and maybe the reader has to supply by imagination a scenario in which Judith solemnly destroys the precious canopy of the enemy for the Lord. Thus again Judith emerges as a shining example of a woman of integrity who does not exploit for her own profit the victory of the Lord over the enemy.<sup>26</sup>

## Other Torah Issues in the Book of Judith

### Endogamy

There are some other minor Torah issues in the book of Judith that fit into the same pattern: The intertextual allusions to the relevant Torah passages activate an admonition to remember and observe these instructions. This holds also true for a rather marginal but not unimportant feature: the issue of endogamy. Jdt 8:2 clearly states that Judith’s husband Manasses stems from her tribe and her clan (τῆς φυλῆς αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς πατριᾶς αὐτῆς). From Jdt 9:2, it becomes obvious that it is the tribe of Symeon from which they both descend. Thus Judith and Manasses fulfill the ideal of endogamy. The book of Judith shares this ideal with the book of Tobit (see Tob 1:9; 4:12-13; 6:12-13; 7:10-11).<sup>27</sup> Especially the admonition Tobit gives to his son Tobias in his farewell speech in chapter 4 sounds quite similar to Jdt 8:2:

Beware, my child, of all immorality. And first of all take a wife from among the descendants of your ancestors, and do not take a foreign woman, who

25 See, e.g., HAAG, Studien, 59.

26 See ZENGER, Das Buch Judit (2004), 860; HAAG, Studien, 109.

27 For details see HIEKE, Endogamy, 103-120.

is not of the tribe of your father (ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς τοῦ πατρός σου), for we are the children of the prophets. Remember, my child, Noe, Abraam, Isaak, Iakob, our fathers from old. These all took wives from among their kindred (ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτῶν), and they were blessed in their children, and their descendants will inherit land. So now, my child, love your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, in taking for yourself a wife from among them (Tob 4:12<sup>28</sup>).

Both deuterocanonical writings refer back to the narrative concept of the book of Genesis which clearly shows a tendency to favor endogamy: The patriarchs all take wives from their own family (Gen 20:12: Abraam; Gen 24: Isaac; Gen 27:46; 28:1-2: Iakob). The prohibition of exogamous marriages can be found in the legislative parts of the Torah: Exod 34:16 and Deut 7:3-4. Deut 7:2-3 reads:

You shall not establish a covenant with them [the foreign nations], neither shall you have mercy on them. Neither shall you intermarry with them. You shall not give your daughter to his son, and you shall not take his daughter for your son...

The rationale for this order is the fear that the foreign spouses will lead the Israelites astray and cause them to follow other gods (idolatry). As the ideal of endogamy is reiterated in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (see Ezra 9-10 and Neh 13:23-29), it becomes obvious that endogamy was an important issue in the post-exilic community. Without any need from the logic of the narrative, this feature occurs also in the book of Judith—independently from the book of Tobit. This multiple testimony shows that endogamy was a recurring motive in the late post-exilic literature and hence one can cautiously conclude that the topic had an enormous significance in the everyday life of the very small Jewish community in and around Jerusalem: It probably was one of the keys for the survival of the people and the preservation of their identity. Judith, “the Jewess,” invites the readers to identify with her<sup>29</sup>, and thus her positive character and shining example also transmit the subtle message that Jews should marry within their own tribe and clan, as she did herself.

28 According to G<sup>f</sup>; Sinaiticus is not extant here; G<sup>II</sup> seems to have almost the same text which is reconstructed according to Ms. 319, see WAGNER, Tobit-Synopse, *sub loco*.

29 See ZENGER, Das Buch Judit (2004), 847: “Auch ihr Eigenname Judit = die Jüdin ist ein Programm-Name: Sie ist die Personifikation des Judentums bzw. der jüdischen Existenz.” For the discussion of this issue, see RAKEL, Judit, 78-81; HAAG, Studien, 38; OTZEN, Tobit and Judith, 102; HELLMANN, Judit, 114. On gender issues regarding the character of Judith see LEVINE, Sacrifice, 17-30.

## You shall not tempt the Lord your God

The beginning of Jdt 8 thus introduces Judith with her endogamous marriage and her fasting as a person who perfectly fulfills the Torah<sup>30</sup>. So she has every right to admonish the rulers of the inhabitants of Baityloua. In her speech she accuses the rulers of putting God to the test: "And who now are you, you on this very day have tried God (οἱ ἐπειράσατε τὸν θεόν), and stand on God's behalf amongst the sons of men? And now you question the omnipotent Lord (κύριον παντοκράτορα ἐξετάζετε), and you will never know anything at all" (Jdt 8:12-13). The verb (ἐκ-)πειράζω recalls the Torah narratives in which the Israelites put the Lord to the test in the wilderness (see Exod 17:2.7<sup>31</sup>; Num 14:22; Num 20:2-13), but also the direct commandment in Deut 6:16: "You shall not tempt the Lord your God (οὐκ ἐπειράσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου), as you tempted in the Temptation" (i.e., the place called Massah, see Exod 17). Hence, Judith's speech in the narrative is not only a dramatic element, but also a direct commandment to the readers, namely, not to put God to the test. All readers familiar with a regular reading from the Torah will remember the important instruction of Deut 6:16, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," when they read (or hear) Judith's reproach against the rulers of Baityloua.

## God is God, Not a Man

The rationale behind the Torah's and Judith's command not to put God to the test comes from the idea about God that stands behind these texts. When Judith argues: "God is not to be threatened like a man, nor is he to be put upon like a son of man" (Jdt 8:16), she (the text!) takes that wording from Num 23:19. Balaam, the seer, has to make clear to Balak, king of Moab that his plans against the people of Israel will fail, because "God is not to be put upon like man, nor is he to be threatened like a son of man." Again, an intertextual allusion (here an almost ver-

30 See ZENGER, *Das Buch Judit* (2004), 834: "eine junge, tora-observante Witwe." See also MOORE, *Judith*, 61: "Judith was a saint." Regarding the continuation of Moore's qualification ("who murdered for her people"), the word "murdered" is—despite of Moore's justifications—too strong a term. Judith is—together with her people—at war with Olophernes and his troops, and in this context it seems to be inappropriate to call Judith's deed "murder." Hence, one cannot blame Judith for transgressing the commandment from the Decalogue "You shall not murder."

31 See VAN HENTEN, *Judith*, 41-43.

batim quotation)<sup>32</sup> recalls an important teaching of the Torah: Judith reminds the rulers of Baityloua *and* the readers of the book of Judith, who God is and who they are in relation to God.

### Achior the Ammanite – The Exception from the Rule

There is one significant contradiction in the book of Judith against a commandment of the Torah: According to Jdt 14:10, Achior the Ammanite converts to the God of Israel “and he has been added to the house of Israel until this day.”<sup>33</sup> But according to Deut 23:4-5, no Ammanite and Moabite shall enter into the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation he shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord, even forever. The biblical tradition, however, knows of exceptions from this rule:<sup>34</sup> Achior the Ammanite is the one, Ruth the Moabite, who becomes the great-grandmother of King David, the other. The circumstances in both cases are exceptional and very dramatic. Hence, one must admit that the exception proves the rule. If the circumstances are as remarkable and breathtaking as with Achior or Ruth, an exception may be possible.<sup>35</sup> In all other cases the rule of Deut 23:4-5 applies.

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32 See SCHMITZ, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 167; MOORE, *Judith*, 182.

33 On Achior the proselyte see SCHMITZ, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 145-150; HAAG, *Studien*, 54.

34 See also MOORE, *Judith*, 235-236, following an unpublished advice from FREEDMAN/ROITMAN, Achior, 31-45, who point to the interesting fact that the phrase for the description of Achior's faith is borrowed from the central verse about Abraham's belief in Gen 15:6: ἐπίστευεν τῷ θεῷ. The same phrase occurs significantly after the exodus describing Israel's faith (Exod 14:31) and also in Dan 6:24 (Aramaic and θ').

35 ZENGER, *Das Buch Judit* (2004), 857, assumes an oral Halakha that grants exceptions from the rule of Deut 23:4-5; see also MAYER, *Lebensnorm*, 291. Other passages that speak about the conversion of the nations to the Lord Almighty are Zeph 2:11; Zech 2:15 (LXX: 2:11); Mal 1:11. For CRAVEN, *Artistry*, 103.117, “Achior simply remains a mystery.” The contradiction with Deut 23:4-5 keeps the idea alive that in the end it is God who decides about salvation and damnation. However, this contradiction might have been one of the reasons why the book of Judith was never admitted to the Palestinian (Jewish) canon; see MOORE, *Judith*, 86-90, who mentions some additional considerations; see also ID., *Why*, 61-71. ROITMAN, Achior, offers the following solution to the problem of Achior's conversion: According to Roitman, Achior is a very skillfully crafted character, presented as a kind of double or “alter ego” to the character of Judith. He is the righteous masculine/pagan version of the feminine/Jewish Judith, and he is able to perfect his condition by believing in God and joining the people of Israel through conversion. His conversion might be understood as a result of the ideology of proselytism and proves the main thesis of the book: the superiority of the Jews and their beliefs over the world of the pagans (see p. 39). Granted that Roitman is right, one must ask which intention lies behind this expression of superi-

## Conclusion

It becomes more and more clear that the book of Judith is full of “links” to the written Torah, and when the reader activates these intertextual connections, a concept of subtle paraenesis emerges. The Halakha that the book of Judith teaches can be summarized in the following abstracted list: One should always follow the dietary laws and observe them even in the case of an emergency; a commoner is never allowed to eat anything from the sacra that belong exclusively to the priests; ritual purity has to be observed even in the case of war: after contact with a dead body one must undergo the seven-day purification ritual; one should take a wife from one’s own clan or tribe, or at least from one’s own people; one shall never tempt God; one shall fear God who is not to be put upon like man and who is not to be threatened like a son of man. This list looks not very attractive; however, all these admonitions emerge subtly from the reading of the book of Judith. And this book is by far not a boring sermon listing commandment after commandment. The book of Judith activates so many important instructions of the Torah, that in fact, it teaches Torah<sup>36</sup>, and at the same time it remains a fascinating and thrilling story—it is an ingenious piece of narrative theology!

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ority: It is not a claim *ad extra* for world supremacy, but a message of consolation *ad intra* for the Jewish community that is still suppressed by foreign rule.

36 Having said this, it does not imply that teaching Torah is the only or even main purpose of the book, but it is certainly one of the major side effects of this intriguing story. For a list of suggestions about the purpose of the book of Judith see Moore, *Judith*, 76-78.

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