

Genealogy, Retribution and Identity: Re-Interpreting the Cause of Suffering in the Book of Judith

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of Judith's¹ genealogy (Jdt 8:1) in constituting the identity of YHWH's faithful community ca. 63 B.C.E.. It argues that Judith's author uses the heroine's genealogy to legitimate this community's rootedness in the major traditions of Israel and challenge them to act as Judith did in their time of crisis. The genealogy also legitimates the community's right to re-interpret the ultra-retributive view that suffering is proof of sin and so to see themselves as those sanctified to YHWH (6:19). Judith's author challenges YHWH's community to accept her/his views through Judith's speech to the elders (8:11-27) and her genealogy. The essay first deals with the dating of Judith and general genealogical theory before applying this theory to 8:1 and extrapolating the author's possible message/s to YHWH's community through it.

A INTRODUCTION

Judith has been studied from a variety of different perspectives throughout its reception history: historical-critical, literary, and a mixture of both. While there seems to have been a lull in *Judith* studies "between the second half of the 17th century and the second half of the 19th century,"² recent years have seen a proliferation of articles, essays and commentaries on this fascinating apocryphal book.³ Even so, Judith's genealogy (8:1) has received scant attention throughout the years. Bruns' 1956 publication⁴ remains the most comprehensive study of this

¹ "*Judith*" (italicised) refers to the Book of Judith, whereas "Judith" refers to the book's heroine. The same applies to other books which carry a person's name as their title.

² Helen Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within: A Jungian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Book of Judith* (BibInt 67; Boston: Brill, 2004), 1.

³ See, e.g., Benedikt Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (GAP; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Helen Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*; Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, eds., *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010); Géza G. Xeravits, ed., *A Pious Seductress: Studies in the Book of Judith* (DCLS 14; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). See also the following publications, which are unfortunately inaccessible to me at this point: Deborah L. Gera, *Judith* (CEJL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Barbara Schmitz and Helmut Engel, *Judit* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 2014). I am grateful to Barbara Schmitz for the last two references.

⁴ Edgar J. Bruns, "The Genealogy of Judith," *CBQ* 18 (1956): 19-22.

subject to date. In this article, I would like to revisit Judith's extensive genealogy (8:1) – the longest of any woman in the biblical tradition – in order to investigate its various functions. In so doing, I will apply recent biblical genealogical theory – particularly that of Wilson,⁵ Johnson,⁶ Levin⁷ and Löwisch⁸ – to this text. Since function is dependent on context as well as form, I begin by briefly reviewing *Judith's* date of composition.⁹ I then discuss genealogical theory in general and apply it to 8:1, taking into account the book's compositional context. Finally, I conclude on the functions of Judith's genealogy and the article as a whole.

B JUDITH'S DATE OF COMPOSITION¹⁰

Judith is replete with glaring historical and geographical inconsistencies.¹¹ The very first verse (1:1) is a case in point:

In the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh, in the days of Arphaxad, who ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana.¹²

As is well known, Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian king and Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.E., seven or eight years before the "real" Nebuchadnezzar became king. While Ecbatana was indeed a great city, it was conquered by

⁵ Robert R. Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *JBL* 94 (1975): 2 and Robert R. Wilson, "Between 'Azel' and 'Azel': Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies," *BA* 42 (1979): 1. Wilson's monograph, Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (NERes 7; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) was regrettably unavailable to me at this point.

⁶ Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies, With Special Reference To the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (2nd ed.; SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁷ Yigal Levin, "Understanding Biblical Genealogies," *CurBS* 9 (2001): 11-46.

⁸ Ingeborg Löwisch, "Genealogies, Gender, and the Politics of Memory: 1 Chronicles 1–9 and the Documentary Film *Mein Leben Teil 2*," in *Performing Memory in Biblical Narrative and Beyond* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak; BMW 25; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009). I am grateful to Athalya Brenner for a copy of this essay.

⁹ In this article, I do not wish to enter the debate whether or not *Judith* is a one-time composition or evolved in various stages. Spatio-temporal concerns prevent such an excursus. For a summary of theories regarding Judith's evolution, see Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 13. In my own study I concluded that *Judith* is a one-time composition as I found nothing to suggest otherwise, see Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 419.

¹⁰ This section is adopted and adapted from Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 6-23.

¹¹ I will only focus on the historical inconsistencies in this section, as it deals with the historical situation/s during which *Judith* was written.

¹² All scriptural quotations used in this article are taken from the RSV, unless otherwise indicated.

Cyrus in 550 B.C.E. and not by Nebuchadnezzar as 1:14 claims.¹³ There is also neither secular nor biblical record of a Median king named Arphaxad.¹⁴

Furthermore, *Judith* appears to contradict itself regarding its general historical setting. A number of factors suggest a general *pre-exilic* setting. For example, the LXX refers to the 12th,¹⁵ 17th, and 18th, years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (593, 588, and 587 B.C.E., respectively).¹⁶ By contrast, the book also reflects various *post-exilic* settings:

- A *Persian* setting (6th to 4th centuries B.C.E.) is reflected, *inter alia*, by the following: A number of verses assume the Jews' return from the Babylonian exile in 538 B.C.E. (4:3; 5:18-19); Judith, Holofernes, Bagoas and Joakim are names commonly used during the Persian period;¹⁷ "preparing earth and water" (2:7) is a Persian submission practice;¹⁸ and 4:15, 5:2 and 13:6 contain Persian loan words for "turban," "sword," and "governor." In addition, Cyrus captured Ecbatana in 550 B.C.E. (as mentioned above);¹⁹ Holofernes and Bagoas are the names of a general of Artaxerxes III and his eunuch;²⁰ and the events of *Jdt* 1-7 find many parallels in Artaxerxes' campaigns against Phoenicia, Syria, and Egypt in 353 B.C.E. as well as the Revolt of the Satraps during the time of Artaxerxes II.²¹
- The main events of the book correspond strongly with events that occurred in the *Maccabean* period (163-135 B.C.E.) – particularly Judas Maccabeus' defeat of Nicanor in ca. 161 B.C.E..²² *Judith* is also deeply concerned with the re-consecration of the temple, its altar and vessels after their profanation (cf. 4:3, 12; 8:21; 9:8).²³ As is well known, the only profanation of the altar took place

¹³ Robert, H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1963), 293.

¹⁴ Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1985), 46.

¹⁵ According to Jer 32:1, the 12th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign would have coincided with the fourth year of Zedekiah, Judah's last pre-exilic king.

¹⁶ Moore, *Judith*, 47.

¹⁷ Moore, *Judith*, 50.

¹⁸ Morton S. Enslin, ed., *The Book of Judith: Greek Text With an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes: Edited With a General Introduction and Appendices By Solomon Zeitlin* (JAL; Leiden: E. J. Brill for Dropsie University, Philadelphia, 1972), 67, note 7.

¹⁹ Pfeiffer, *History*, 293.

²⁰ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 108.

²¹ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 108.

²² For a helpful tabulation of such similarities, see Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 10.

²³ Note, however, that *Judith's* main concern, namely the potential *deseccration* of the temple, is reflected in the heroine's prayer in *Jdt* 9 – on analogy with the defilement/rape

under Antiochus IV. Furthermore, 4:6-8 attests to the sweeping powers of the High Priest, who acts as both military and civil governor. Jonathan (160-142 B.C.E.) was the first High Priest to be officially appointed in both capacities.²⁴

- Then there are also details which reflect a *Hasmonean* (168-63 B.C.E.) setting. For example, as previously noted, the book showcases the sweeping military and civil powers of the High Priest, which also obtained during the Hasmonean period. Certain Palestinian cities (e.g. Azotus and Scythopolis) are regarded as part of Judaeen territory. These cities were independent of Israel until the reign of John Hyrcanus I.²⁵ Moreover, Judith's long lifespan – 105 years (16:23a-b) – corresponds precisely with the duration of the Hasmonean era (168-63 B.C.E.).

The above factors are part of the internal evidence that have led a number of modern scholars to reach a broad consensus that *Judith* was composed ca. 150-63 B.C.E.,²⁶ with some narrowing down the book's date of composition to the late Hasmonean or early Roman period, the end of John Hyrcanus' reign or the beginning of the reign of Alexander Jannaeus.²⁷

While the above proposals are certainly attractive, we also have to take account of a number of external factors when trying to determine the dating of *Judith*:

- (i) The many stylistic and content-based correspondences between *Judith* and I and II Maccabees²⁸ suggest that the author/s of *Judith* knew and utilised

of Dinah. In this prayer, the temple's desecration is presented as a current or immanent event. By contrast, the temple's destruction (5:18) and consecration in (9:13 and 4:3) are both referred to as past events.

²⁴ Peter Schäfer, *History of the Jews in Antiquity: Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (trans. D. Chowcat; Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 53. Note too the supremacy of the Jerusalem council over others in 4:6, 8; 11:14.

²⁵ Moore, *Judith*, 51.

²⁶ See Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 22-23 for a tabulation of dates suggested by various modern authors.

²⁷ Solomon Zeitlin, "The Books of Esther and Judith: A Parallel Introduction," in *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical notes: Edited with a General Introduction and Appendices by Solomon Zeitlin* (ed. Morton S. Enslin; JAL; Leiden: E.J. Brill for Dropsie University, Philadelphia, 1972), 28; Linda B. Elder, "Judith," in *A Feminist Commentary* (vol. 2 of *Searching the Scriptures*; ed. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 455; Moore, *Judith*, 67. Of all the scholars I have consulted, Harrington alone does not provide a date because of the fictitious nature of the book. He avers that *Judith* is set in the sixth century B.C.E. but does not reflect any known historical situation. See Daniel J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 28-29.

²⁸ For a detailed comparison between I and II Maccabees see Pfeiffer, *History*, 472-483.

both these works. I Maccabees details events from the rise of Antiochus IV to the end of John Hyrcanus' reign (175-104 B.C.E.) and is dated ca. 104-63 B.C.E..²⁹ II Maccabees, which details events from 176 B.C.E. to the second war between Judas Maccabeus and Nicanor (161 B.C.E.), has variously been dated from the time of Alexander Jannaeus,³⁰ to ca. 160-161 B.C.E., the early first century B.C.E.³¹ and 41-44 C.E..³²

- (ii) The first Christian allusion to *Judith* is Clement's first epistle to the Corinthians.³³ Clement died at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century C.E.,³⁴ *Judith* must therefore have been written before his death.

If we take account of the internal and the external evidence, as well as the "fact" that Judith's lifespan (105 years) corresponds exactly to the chronological duration of the Hasmonean era (168-63 B.C.E.), we can posit a date for *Judith* during the first century B.C.E. just after Pompey's entry into Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E.. Such a dating would adequately reflect the book's main concern with the potential desecration of the temple as portrayed through Judith's prayer in ch. 9.³⁵ Even though Pompey commanded that temple worship should be resumed at once (after breaking Aristobulus' resistance), he nevertheless dared to enter the Most Holy Place, an act which pious Judaeans regarded as a terrible desecration of the temple.

A dating of ca. 63 B.C.E. would also account for the conflation of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic elements in the book – past epochs and events at the time of Pompey's entry into Jerusalem – as well as *Judith's* geographical and historical inconsistencies. To my mind, *Judith's* inconsistencies reflect the author's anxiety regarding the new world power (Rome) that was attacking Jerusalem.³⁶ This attack conjures up images of other people groups that had previously ravaged the Judaeans and their land, taken their people captive and/or led them astray by introducing new customs, religious beliefs and practices contrary to those received by means of tradition. This, in turn, stirred up the imagery of Cyrus allowing the people to return to their land, reconstitute themselves and rebuild their temple. Simi-

²⁹ Cf. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 117; Pfeiffer, *History*, 491; Harrington, *Invitation*, 123.

³⁰ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 121.

³¹ See Harrington, *Invitation*, 139.

³² Zeitlin, "Books of Esther and Judith," 30.

³³ Phillip Schaff, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus* (vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*; ed. Alexander Roberts and Janes Donaldson; CCEL, 1885), 20. Cited 2 September 2014. Online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ii.ii.lv.html>.

³⁴ Zeitlin, "Books of Esther and Judith," 30.

³⁵ As indicated in note 23, *Jdt* 9 presents the temple's desecration as an immanent or current event, whereas the book portrays the consecration and re-dedication of the temple as past events. I believe that this too supports my dating of ca. 63 B.C.E..

³⁶ Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 402-403 and 406.

larly, the desire for a redeemer in the wake of Roman domination invoked the image of Judith, who is clearly presented as a Judas Maccabeus and Moses *redivivus*, amongst others (see below).

C JUDITH'S GENEALOGY

In this section, I will briefly discuss genealogical theory, apply it to *Judith* and conclude on the function of Judith's genealogy within the socio-political circumstances alluded to in section B. Before I start, it is worth noting that the theories of Wilson, Johnson and others, which are based on the genealogies of the HB, are equally applicable to NT genealogies that are historically closer to my proposed dating of *Judith* – ca. 63 B.C.E. – than the genealogies of the HB. For example, in the first part of his monograph, Johnson presents a detailed discussion of HB genealogies from which he extrapolates their nine functions as indicated below (C.1b).³⁷ He then discusses the genealogies of later Judaism³⁸ and the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke³⁹ against the insights he has gained. He examines, amongst others, the interaction of Jesus' genealogies with extant Jewish beliefs on the Messiah's descent as well as their relation to the theology/theologies of each gospel. While he shows that the NT genealogies have a decidedly apologetic, socio-theological function, Johnson notes that:

[The genealogies] of later Judaism and the NT reveal a marked transition to literary functions. The genealogical form was made to serve the interpretation of history and, as such, illumines the author's view of historical relationships more than the actual course of historical events itself.⁴⁰

As will become evident below (C.2), Judith's genealogy straddles both the broader socio-political functions of HB genealogies and the more literary functions of NT genealogies. The theory discussed below is thus applicable to *Judith* within the ca. 63 B.C.E. context from which I believe it stems.

³⁷ Johnson, *Purpose*, 3-76, 77-82.

³⁸ Johnson, *Purpose*, 85-138.

³⁹ Johnson, *Purpose*, 139-252. For another insightful application of HB genealogical theory to Jesus' genealogies in Matthew and Luke, see Jeremy Punt, "Politics of Genealogies in the New Testament," *Neot* 47/2 (2013): 373-398.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Purpose*, 256.

1 Genealogical Theory

1a Characteristics of Oral/Tribal and Biblical Genealogies

First, as is well known from research on oral and tribal cultures – cultures akin to those in biblical times – genealogies come in two forms: *linear* and *segmented*.⁴¹

Second, while these forms may be combined, linear genealogies have *depth* in terms of the number of generations listed,⁴² while segmented genealogies have *breadth*,⁴³ that is, they express two or more lines of descent from a particular ancestor.⁴⁴

A third characteristic – common to both linear and segmented genealogies – is *fluidity*, a feature which is often directly related to their function:

Genealogies emerge in interplay between deliberate constructions on the basis of actual needs and choices on the one hand, and commitments to previous generations and particular legacies and stories on the other hand. They are fluid, changeable, and flexible. Genealogies' *fluidity* facilitates their ability to chart fluctuations and reconstitute identity over periods of change. This capacity also brings about the need to actualize and (re)create genealogies in order to keep them functioning and relevant.⁴⁵

Such fluidity may, therefore, reflect "actual or desired changes in the domestic, political, or religious ties between individuals and groups."⁴⁶

Fourth, in relation to the preceding points, different genealogies of a particular ancestor may occur simultaneously in any given society, with all being

⁴¹ Levin, "Understanding," 12; Yigal Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience? A Hint from his Genealogies," *JBL* 122/2 (2003): 31; Löwisch, "Genealogies," 229; Punt, "Politics," 377.

⁴² Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 232.

⁴³ Punt, "Politics," 378.

⁴⁴ Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 179.

⁴⁵ Löwisch, "Genealogies," 230. Similarly, Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 232: "As. . . genealogies reflect familial and social ties between people and their status in society, they must adjust to shifts in those relationships. The lists can change in accordance with the narrator's memory or interest in emphasizing a certain component's ties or status." While Levin is referring to oral genealogies in the quotation above, it has been demonstrated that fluidity is also a feature of written, biblical genealogies. See, e.g. Punt, "Politics," on the genealogies of Jesus and Levin's article (Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?") on the genealogies in Chronicles.

⁴⁶ Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 180. Alternatively, names may "fall out" of a particular genealogy when they lose their meaning or the people concerned are no longer part of the group's living memory. In such cases, fluidity has no function. See Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 180.

regarded as correct because of their different functions.⁴⁷

Fifth, the position of names in the genealogy also seems important, although this is not always the case.⁴⁸ While the first and last positions are generally important, at times "Hebrew chronographers" made "minimal alterations. . . in inherited lists of ancestors in order to place individuals deemed worthy of attention in the seventh, and, to a much lesser extent, fifth position of a genealogical tree."⁴⁹ Ron⁵⁰ indicates that ten and multiples of ten are equally important in genealogies.

Sixth, as Löwisch⁵¹ has pointed out, genealogies may be either patrilinear or matrilinear – tracing descent either from the (perceived) father or mother. Given the androcentric nature of ancient Israelite society, most of the biblical genealogies are patrilinear. Even so, patrilinear genealogies may be described as "gender modified," "woman-centered," or "female gendered"⁵² due to the presence of women/stories about women in them. Such woman-centered elements may then be said to work against the grain of the genealogy's main gender scope.⁵³

Seventh, an author's choice to use genealogy to convey her/his message shows that this form "was obviously especially well suited"⁵⁴ to this message. Likewise, it shows that the intended readers would have been "familiar with [this] form in their daily lives,"⁵⁵ or else the author would not have used it to convey her/his message.

Finally, genealogies were never "intended purely for the purpose of transmitting historical information. . . [They] will *always* have a domestic, political, or religious function for which [they were] composed and for which [they are] recited."⁵⁶

1b The Function of Biblical Genealogies

With regard to the function of biblical genealogies, various proposals have been made, the most extensive of which being that of Johnson:⁵⁷

- (i) Demonstrating existing relations between Israel and neighbouring tribes, with the purpose of establishing both kinship and distinction;

⁴⁷ Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 12.

⁴⁸ Jack M. Sasson, "A Genealogical 'Convention' in Biblical Chronography?" *ZAW* 90 (1978): 172.

⁴⁹ Sasson, "Genealogical 'Convention,'" 172-173.

⁵⁰ Zvi Ron, "The Genealogical List in the Book of Ruth: A Symbolic Approach," *JBQ* 38/2 (2010): 85-86.

⁵¹ Löwisch, "Genealogies," 228 and 232.

⁵² Löwisch, "Genealogies," 232 and 233.

⁵³ Löwisch, "Genealogies," 232.

⁵⁴ Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 234.

⁵⁵ Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 234.

⁵⁶ Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 233.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Purpose*, 77-82.

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- (ii) Interrelating previously isolated traditions about Israel's origins;
 - (iii) Establishing continuity over periods of time not covered by the tradition;
 - (iv) Providing a vehicle for speculation regarding the "Great Year" or world cycles;
 - (v) Performing a particular military or political function, for example, taking a census or showing hereditary nature (biological or otherwise) of military leadership;
 - (vi) Legitimising an individual/family in an office or enhancing the status of such an individual by linkage to an important clan or individual of the past. This is particularly relevant in cultic circles, especially for the priesthood;
 - (vii) Establishing and preserving the homogeneity of the race;
 - (viii) Asserting the continuity of YHWH's people after a period of national disruption; and
 - (ix) Establishing a sense of movement towards a divine goal. This is particularly the case in priestly narratives.

A simpler scheme locates the function of biblical genealogies within the following spheres:

- (i) *Social/Domestic* – the genealogy reflects a person's place and standing in the society/community, her/his rights and responsibilities,⁵⁸ and "foster[s] socio-political, including gender-political, goals."⁵⁹ It may change as the person's status and relation to society/community changes⁶⁰ or when socio-political/gender-political goals change;
- (ii) *Political* – a genealogy may justify/legitimate a person in a particular office or rank, whether or not the office/rank is hereditary.⁶¹ This is particularly true of linear genealogies;⁶²
- (iii) *Religious* – as part of an ancestor cult, genealogies are used to determine membership of and/or eligibility for the leadership of the cult, and to "invoke ancestral intervention with the deity";⁶³ and
- (iv) *Geographical* – genealogies may represent the "geographic diffusion,"⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Levin, "Understanding," 19; Punt, "Politics," 378-379.

⁵⁹ Punt, "Politics," 379.

⁶⁰ Levin, "Understanding," 19.

⁶¹ Levin, "Understanding," 19.

⁶² Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 232.

⁶³ Levin, "Understanding," 19.

⁶⁴ Levin, "Who was the Chronicler's Audience?" 231.

movement or settlement of a particular clans or groups.⁶⁵

In what follows, I will be using the simpler scheme of genealogical function, interlacing it with that of Johnson as necessary.

2 Judith's Genealogy

Irrespective of whether or not Judith's genealogy (8:1) reflects that of an actual woman,⁶⁶ or is missing a middle section between Salamiel and Nathanael as Bruns avers,⁶⁷ this genealogy has a number of characteristics and functions:

First, it is clearly a linear and patrilinear genealogy, in that it displays depth rather than breadth and traces Judith's descent through her father. Given its depth of sixteen generations (including Judith), it is by far the longest genealogy of any woman in the biblical material – the OT Apocrypha included.⁶⁸ By the same token, it is longer than the only other genealogies in *Judith*, namely those of Uzziah, Charbis and Charmis - Bethuliah's - leaders which are all single-tiered (6:15). Judith's genealogical ascendancy underlines her supremacy not only over the other women in the story - who are neither named nor have a genealogy - but also over its men. Moreover, her genealogy is placed at the very outset of the second section of *Judith* (8-16), immediately after the Bethulians' dire circumstances reach a crescendo in the first section (1-7).⁶⁹ In this way, Judith's genealogy serves to introduce her as the main character of the book. More importantly, it foreshadows her role as Israel's redeemer as well as her courage, faith and fortitude over and against the ineptness of the male characters in the book: her husband is dead, has no genealogy, and is associated with Judah's evil king Manasseh by virtue of his name (8:2-3); Bethuliah's male leaders are fearful and ready to capitulate to Holofernes if YHWH does not intervene within five days (7:19-32); Holofernes, Bagoas and the entire Assyrian army allow themselves to be deceived by Judith's beauty and fine words with the result that Judith decapitates Holofernes (13:8) and leaves the Assyrian camp undetected (13:9-10); it is not the male leadership but Judith who directs the armies of Israel in defeat of the Assyrians (14:1-4; 14:11-15:1-7; 15:11); and Achior faints at the sight of Holofernes' severed head (14:6).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 177.

⁶⁶ Bruns, "The Genealogy of Judith," 18 and 21-22.

⁶⁷ Bruns, "Genealogy," 20.

⁶⁸ So too John C. Dancy, *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 95.

⁶⁹ Holofernes cuts off the Bethulians' water supply (7:8-17) and the Bethulian leaders conclude a five-day ultimatum with God in response to the people's thirst and desperation (7:19-32).

⁷⁰ Similarly Levine: "The men are weak, stupid, or impaired: Manasseh dies ignominiously; Holofernes is inept; Bagoas is a eunuch; Achior faints at the sight of Holofernes' head. Uzziah. . . is the biggest disappointment. Judith must correct his naive theology, and she stands firm while he wavers in his faith." See Amy-Jill Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith," in *A Feminist Companion*

Judith's genealogical ascendancy also foreshadows her triumphal procession into Jerusalem in which she leads Israelite men and women in praise to YHWH for his deliverance (15:12-13). These are some of the *literary* functions of Judith's genealogy, more of which will be addressed below.

Second, in terms of its *social* function and by means of its intertextual allusions, Judith's genealogy roots her within all the major traditions of Israel – the Judges (Gideon), the prophets (Elijah), the patriarchs (Joseph), and the priesthood (Merari) – going right back to Israel, the founder of the Jewish nation.⁷¹ It thus establishes that Judith is a person of great honour and status in the community, a fact that is corroborated by the way she is described (8:2-8), the sway she holds over the Bethulian leaders (8:9-11), her leadership of the final battle (14:1-5) and the praise she receives for her deeds – which is not only extremely high (13:18-20; 15:8-10) but also reflects the women's praise of David with his victory over the Philistines (15:12; 1 Sam 18:7). "It was this act of adulation that first provoked Saul's ire and jealousy towards David (1 Sam 18:6-9. Cf. also 1 Sam 21:11 and 29:5). Here, however, there is no jealousy and the Judaeans leadership and men freely acknowledge Judith's . . . ascendancy over them"⁷² by means of the praises and blessings they heap on her. These insights reveal more of the *literary* functions of Judith's genealogy and show how they reflect its *social* functions.

Third, because of Judith's rootedness in the main traditions of Israel (above), her genealogy not only identifies her potential to act as judge, prophet, ambassador and priest⁷³ but legitimates her *right* to do so. At the same time, it establishes her authority to act in these positions and also outlines her responsibilities with respect to the community and YHWH.⁷⁴ This *political* function is also reflected *literarily* through Judith's actions: Judith acts as judge, priest, mediatrix and prophetess in her speech to the elders (8:11-27, 32-34: a) She calls the elders to book and rules that their ultimatum amounts to a manipulation of YHWH; b) she offers the correct interpretation of the events and the elders' ultimatum as a priest or teacher might

to Esther, Judith and Susanna (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 214.

⁷¹ "[A]s the connection to Israel (that is, Jacob) signals Judith's talents for deception and for crossing boundaries, so names like Gideon, Elijah, Joseph, Nathanael and Merari portend her abilities to function in such roles as judge, prophet, ambassador and priest," Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation," 214-215. See also Jan-Willem van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader: A Rereading of Judith 7-13," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 241-242; Luis S. J. Alonso-Schökel, "Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith," in *Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith: Protocol of the Eleventh Colloquy: 27 January 1975* (ed. Luis S. J. Alonso-Schökel; Berkeley, Calif.: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 10.

⁷² Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 290.

⁷³ Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation," 215.

⁷⁴ See further note 68.

do; c) she mediates between YHWH and his people by explaining the situation to them and "prophesying" his deliverance through her hand; d) this in turn prevents ("mediates") their potential judgment for trying to manipulate YHWH and thus provoke him to anger. Strangely, she also acts as mediatrix, ambassador and prophetess in her speech to Holofernes (11:5-9. Cf. also 10:12-13): a) she claims to have been sent by God to tell Holofernes how to defeat the Bethulians/Judaeans; and b) she "prophecies" his certain victory.

Fourth, with regard to its *religious* function, 8:1 identifies Judith's right and responsibility to act as mediatrix (prophet and priest) between YHWH and her people (see the third point, above). It also invokes "ancestral intervention" with YHWH by linking her to most of the religio-political positions which traditionally carried YHWH'S anointing, apart from kingship. The omission of kingship may be accounted for by the fact that YHWH is celebrated as king over all creation (9:12)⁷⁵ and that *Judith's* author may regard YHWH'S kingship as superseding all others and/or opposed to them (Judaeans inclusive).⁷⁶

Fifth, given that Judith's "father," Merari, is directly descended from Levi,⁷⁷ Judith's genealogy connects her with Aaron by virtue of the priesthood and so with Moses, Aaron's brother. Similarly, she is connected to the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt and the subsequent exodus through Joseph. This gives her genealogy a *political-religious* and *social* function which identifies her as liberatrix of her people. As the story illustrates, Judith fulfils this function by decapitating Holofernes (13:6-8) and directing her people to rout the Assyrian army (14:1-4). Furthermore, as Van Henten⁷⁸ has clearly demonstrated, Judith may be seen as an alternative leader to Moses, with the positive and negative aspects of his leadership split between her and the elders.⁷⁹ Judith may thus be regarded as a Moses *redivivus*: she delivers her people from certain slavery to Nebuchadnezzar-Holofernes

⁷⁵ See also Holofernes' question regarding the Judaeans, "Who rules over them as king, leading their army?" (5:3). Any pious Judaeans would have answered "The LORD" which, I believe, would have been the author's "intention."

⁷⁶ It is clear, throughout *Judith*, that Nebuchadnezzar's strength and kingship are diametrically opposed to that of YHWH. See also point 6, below, in which Van Henten's work is referred to. If Judith exhibits Moses' positive leadership traits versus the negative "Moses" traits of the elders, then it may be that the author of *Judith* was not in favor of Hasmonean and other Jewish kings/leaders of the historical periods reflected in this book.

⁷⁷ "The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari," (Gen 46:11). So too Exod 6:16; Num 3:17.

⁷⁸ Van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader," 238-245.

⁷⁹ Noting the intertextual links between Exodus and *Judith* as Van Henten does, Patrick, W. Skehan, "By the Hand of Judith," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 103-110, draws a clear line of comparison between the "hand" of YHWH, the "hand" of Moses, and the "hand" of Judith, concluding that in both the poetic and the prose sections of *Judith*, "what is done by Judith's hand is . . . a revival in some sense of what was done by God's at the Exodus." See Skehan, "By the Hand," 103.

(7:27; 8:23) and so ensures that the covenant and exodus experience/return from exile remain intact.⁸⁰

Sixth, in view of Judith being representative of YHWH's people,⁸¹ I believe that her genealogy has a further function: it ascribes to the people of YHWH all that it ascribes to Judith.

Finally, Judith's genealogy gives the faithful community of YHWH the following message/s:

This community is the main actor or "hero" in the current crisis. If it does not act, all of Judea will be lost, the covenant between YHWH and his people will be abrogated and the exodus/return from exile will be reversed. Moreover, the community is not weak and lowly. Rather, it has the honour of stemming from a bold line of judges, prophets, patriarchs and priests going right back to Jacob/Israel. As such, it is the *real* community of YHWH. While community kinship is established within this community, distinction is achieved between it and the Judaeen leadership/"kings" – the only office missing from Judith's genealogy.

Owing to its rootedness in all the main traditions of Israel, this community demonstrates that all the various troubles that the nation has gone through have not been able to break the continuity of YHWH'S people. *Vis-à-vis* Israel's status as YHWH'S chosen people and elect vehicle amongst the nations, this means that the movement of history towards a divine goal has remained unbroken. It also means that YHWH will fight for them and that they will emerge victorious from their current suffering.

Because of the above, the community is not only legitimated in its identity as the people of YHWH, but is also mandated to perform the functions of mediator, liberator, judge and priest in the current situation.⁸²

Moreover, because of its bond with the foundational traditions of Israel, the nation's founding father, the tribe of Levi and so ultimately Moses, Aaron's brother, this community has both the right and the mandate to re-interpret the traditions it has

⁸⁰ *Judith* 9:13 makes it clear that the author saw the "Assyrian" attack as an attack against the covenant. Had the Bethulians given in to Holofernes, they and all their fellow Judeans would have been taken into slavery and dispersed (7:27; 8:21-23), thus reversing the exodus, in which they were freed from slavery, as well as their return from the exile, which may be regarded as a second exodus.

⁸¹ So too Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation," 215.

⁸² Note Judith's emphasis on the effect that the Bethulians' proposed capitulation would have on the rest of the nation: "Now therefore, brethren, let us set an example to our brethren, for their lives depend upon us, and the sanctuary and the temple and the altar rest upon us. In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our forefathers" (8:24-25).

received and so to forge its own identity within the present crisis.⁸³ This is particularly true of what I have come to call "the ultra-retribitional view" that paints Israel as a sinner at the mercy of an angry God. This view is clearly represented in the Bethulians' complaints against their elders (7:24-28). In their accusatory speech, the Bethulians interpret their perilous situation as follows: "God has sold us into their hands, to strew us on the ground before them with thirst and utter destruction" (7:25). Adjuring their elders by "our God, the Lord of our fathers, who punishes us according to our sins and the sins of our fathers" (7:28), they command them to submit to Holofernes so that their lives and the lives would be spared and they would not have to witness the death of their wives and children (7:27). The Bethulians' complaint typifies the ultra-retribitional view that regards suffering as *proof* of sin and blessing as *proof* of right standing with YHWH.⁸⁴

Judith's speech to the Bethulian leaders in which she upbraids them for their five-day ultimatum to YHWH also contains certain retribitional elements (8:18-20):

¹⁸ For never in our generation, nor in these present days, has there been any tribe or family or people or city of ours which worshiped gods made with hands, as was done in days gone by -- ¹⁹ and that was why our fathers were handed over to the sword, and to be plundered, and so they suffered a great catastrophe before our enemies. ²⁰ But we know no other god but him, and therefore we hope that he will not disdain us or any of our nation. . . .

However, her point is precisely that the people have *not* committed idolatry (sinned) whereas their predecessors had and had, therefore, suffered the consequences for it.⁸⁵ If Judith imputes any sin at all, then it is that the Bethulian elders had erroneously sworn an oath to surrender their city to Holofernes should YHWH fail to deliver them in five days (8:11). She characterises their oath as testing YHWH (8:12, 13), setting themselves up "in the place of God" amongst their people (8:12) and (potentially?) provoking YHWH to anger (8:14) by attempting to "bind the purposes of the Lord our God" (8:16).⁸⁶ However, she does not describe their actions

⁸³ The arguments made concerning Judith's challenge to the ultra-retribitional view are adopted and adapted from Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 216-219.

⁸⁴ Voitila correctly reads the people's perspective on their suffering against the imprecations in Deut 28, particularly vv. 49-53 and 32:20. See Anssi Voitila, "Judith and Deuteronomistic Heritage," in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (ed. Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala and Marko Marttila; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 380.

⁸⁵ Contra Voitila, "Judith," 373: "[T]he exact nature of the sin Israel has committed is not given in [Judith] . . . But when the nature of the sin is explicitly stated by Judith herself in the speech to the town leaders, it is idolatry (Jdt 8:18)." What follows in this section is adopted and adapted from Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 216-219.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Judith*, 177, translates "μη ἐνεχυράζετε τὰς βουλὰς κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν" (8:16) as "do not impose conditions on the Lord our God." Literally, as Efthimiais-Keith

as *sin per se*. In fact, she encourages them to realize that they had *not* committed sin (8:18, 20), and so to call upon YHWH for help *while* they wait on his deliverance (8:17). She counsels them to hope in YHWH (8:20) and thank him "in spite of everything" (8:25) so as to serve as an example to the rest of the nation (8:24). There is clearly nothing retribitional in any of her exhortations regarding the present situation.

To my mind, *Judith's* author uses the retribitional statements made in 8:18-20 to connect with her/his audience's retribitional mind-set so that she/he can counter their perspective with what she/he regards as the correct one. My reading is borne out by the following: Judith explicitly states that the people had not sinned (8:18, 20); she is positive that YHWH's deliverance *will* come (8:17, 20) – and that through her hand (8:32-33); she regards the Bethulians' current suffering as a *test* born out of YHWH's *love* for his people rather than a punishment born of his vengeance (8:26-27). Furthermore, Judith's retribitional statements (8:18-20) are located towards the middle of her speech and are surrounded by statements regarding the Judeans' innocence (8:18, 20); hope in YHWH's deliverance (8:17, 20); a re-interpretation of the effect of their oath on the rest of the nation / the nation as a whole (8:21-24); the testing motif (8:26-27); and she regards YHWH's anger and wrath (9:8, 9) – key divine responses to Israelite sin in Deuteronomy,⁸⁷ as reserved for the Assyrians⁸⁸ who, in their pride (9:7, 9, 10) intend to defile YHWH's sanctuary (9:8; see also v. 13).

Moreover, "Judith is quick to ground God's actions (or lack thereof. . .) within his sovereign *freedom* to act or not to act on behalf of his people in the way that they envisage (cf. especially 8:15 and 17)."⁸⁹ By contrast, the Bethulians' ultimatum represents the people's desire to manipulate YHWH (8:16)⁹⁰ into meeting their need for deliverance within a certain time. In so doing, Judith avers, they are regarding YHWH "like [a] man, to be threatened," or "like a human being, to be won over by pleading" (8:16). For her, YHWH is a free agent, the Sovereign, Omnipotent Lord: "For if he does not *choose* to help us within these five days, he has power to protect us within *any time he pleases*, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies . . . Therefore, while we wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us, and he will hear our voice, *if it pleases him*" (8:15, 17, my italics).

Judith's words in 8:15-17 are perhaps the most un-retribitional of all, as they grant YHWH the radical freedom to be God in any situation. In other words, her understanding of YHWH and of the Bethulians' suffering does not bind God

states, the phrase would mean "do not take the will/counsels of our Lord God in pledge" (Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 216, note 32).

⁸⁷ See e.g. Deut 4:25, 6:15, 9:19, 11:17, 29:20, 31:17, 32:16 and 22.

⁸⁸ The same applies to YHWH's vengeance upon the Assyrians, as per their association with the Shechemites (9:2, contrast 8:27) in Judith's prayer.

⁸⁹ Eftimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within*, 216 (my italics).

⁹⁰ See note 86 regarding the possible meaning of this phrase.

into behaving in a certain way in response to human action/need. By the same token, it does not define the people's identity within ultra-retribitional confines.

On the flip side, Judith's perspective does not allow for an extreme interpretation of YHWH'S freedom as gratuitous and completely unmoved by human need.⁹¹ This interpretation would devalue humanity by regarding humans as puppets in the hands of an omnipotent, uncaring God. It would also fly directly in the face of YHWH'S nature and demonstrated acts of love towards his people. Furthermore, it would bind YHWH into human categories; it would make him a mere *man* – just as much as it would force humanity into utter hopelessness. Judith's/the author's concept of divine testing (8:25-27) mediates skilfully between these conflicting concepts by allowing for a symbiosis between the correct appraisal of human action – the people *are* sinless and they are *not* being punished but they *are* being admonished – and the freedom of YHWH to do what he wills, as and when he wills on behalf of his people and to his glory. Moreover, the balanced mediation of Judith's approach becomes a source of encouragement and hope: YHWH *will help us as he wills* (8:15). This assertion maintains both YHWH'S beneficence towards his people and his freedom in respect of himself.

As a result, Judith's interpretation of events provides a counter-retribitional perspective that significantly challenges the Bethulians' negative outlook on themselves (and the situation). It vitiates their ultra-retribitional assumption that they are suffering as a result of their and their forefathers' sinfulness (cf. 7:28, 8:27), and redirects their attention to their erstwhile positive view of themselves, that is, as those sanctified to the Lord (cf. 6:19). Judith's "theology of divine testing" replaces punishment with "trial" and sinfulness with righteousness as it locates the origin of this trial in the *righteous* action of those affected, namely, in the fact that they have drawn near to YHWH, and in YHWH'S desire to admonish his people to greater maturity / strength of character.

In fact, by allowing for the blameless to suffer and for YHWH to act outside the retribitional paradigm, Judith's theology frees both the human characters and YHWH from the (human) constraints that the rigid application of retribitional principles imposes upon them. In my opinion, Judith's appraisal of the situation and her understanding of the nature/role of YHWH in it accommodate the Bethulians' righteousness, YHWH'S freedom, and the Assyrian attack in the kind of tension which is very conducive to growth and character formation, be it of an individual or a nation.

Given the above, we may say that Judith's genealogy serves yet another *literary* function in combination with its various socio-religious-political functions: it gives the author "permission" to overturn the ultra-retribitional view which painted Israel in the role of sinner at the mercy of an angry YHWH, and re-inscribe its identity

⁹¹ This is the distressing conclusion that Ecclesiastes comes to, see e.g. Ecclesiastes 7:12-15, 23-29 and 8:6-7, 17.

as those who are sanctified of YHWH and blameless. In this way, suffering is re-interpreted as a test rather than a punishment and the community's self-image/identity and YHWH's love for his people are restored. As a result, the people are given the necessary boost – freedom from captivity to an ultra-retributitional view of themselves, YHWH and their situation – to stand against the might of the Roman Empire and bring about deliverance for themselves.

D CONCLUSION

In this article, I have considered the dating of *Judith* in order to establish the context in which the heroine's genealogy is to be interpreted. I then discussed general genealogical theory and applied it to *Judith* within the ca. 63 B.C.E. context of its dating. In this way, I have shown that Judith's genealogy shares not only the social-religious-political functions of HB genealogies but also the more literary functions of NT genealogies.

I have further shown that Judith's genealogy plays a role in overturning the ultra-retributitional view which holds that "suffering is divine punishment for certain sin." To this end, I have argued that, while there certainly are retributitional aspects in Judith's speech to the Beththulian elders, these aspects are vitiated by her insistence on the people's innocence and her "theology of testing." This insight has enabled me to use my findings to expound on the author's possible message to YHWH's community at the time of *Judith's* composition. I concluded that the author used Judith's genealogy to re-inscribe the people's positive identity *vis-à-vis* their relation to YHWH and their present suffering, to re-interpret this suffering, and legitimate their standing and continuity with all of Israel's main anointed institutions. Moreover, I have argued that the author used this genealogy to help the faithful see that they had both the right and the responsibility to alter the ultra-retributitional tradition and lead their people into victory, namely, to be Judith in their present suffering and not allow the Roman threat to overcome them.

Finally, the insights gained in this essay regarding *Judith's* counter-retributitional stance may easily be extrapolated to my South African context. In this context, many Christian people sadly relate HIV and AIDS, rape, unemployment, disability and other forms of human suffering to the sufferers' sinfulness before God. In other words, many Christians hold fast to the ultra-retributitional view, thus adding to the suffering of those to whom it is applied. Judith's challenge to ultra-retributitionalism offers a very important corrective to this stance and may be used to educate the Christian public towards alleviating the suffering of its members and of the community at large. By adopting Judith's approach, the Christian community can affirm the dignity of suffering humanity and enable human beings better to fight against the ills that afflict them.

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