
HOSPITALITY AND HOSTILITY IN GENESIS 19 AND JUDGES 19

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Abstract

Based upon the protocol of hospitality customs outlined in my study of Judges 4 (*BTB* 21:1 [Spring, 1991], 13–21; see CHART at end of this article), it seems evident that the writer(s) of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 has (have) deliberately created scenes in which the code of conduct is systematically violated. This may be part of a deliberate theme contrasting the “flawed,” but valiant ancestor with towns and their inhabitants whose violations of custom justify their destruction. It may also be part of an attempt, especially in the case of Judges 19, to portray a “topsy-turvy” world in which all customs are ignored or corrupted in an effort to justify the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. In the course of the study, an attempt is made to point out the violations of the hospitality code as they occur and to explain, where possible, the reasons, both within the text and in the context of anthropological research, why they occur.

The narratives in both Genesis 19 and Judges 19 center on the obligations of the visited community to provide hospitality. While the failure of the citizenry is highlighted, the narrative also contains a subplot in which a “righteous man” is saved despite his own violations of custom. Instead of a citizen of the town offering hospitality, in both cases it is a “resident alien” who, without the right to do so, brings the visitor(s) into his house. Although a customary pattern seems to be operating here, in fact from the moment when Lot and the Ephraimite invite the angels and the Levite, respectively, to share the comforts of their home, the audience certainly realizes that this narrative can only end in tragedy for the town and its inhabitants.

I will first examine the narrative in Gen 19:1–11, since it is my contention, shared with others (McKenzie: 165; Soggin, 1985: 183–84; Lasine: 38; against Jungling: 291 and Niditch: 375–78), that Judg 19:11–30 is dependent on this story for its plot line. I shall first sketch out the episode in detail and then, in the discussion of Judg 19, draw out significant parallels between the two narratives. It should also be noted that each narrative contains two separate but related episodes. Gen 19:1–11 is technically independent of 19:12–38 just as Judg 19:1–10 is, at least in tone, independent of 19:11–30. Yet, the different episodes feed off of each other and in both cases provide ironic contrasts. Because Gen 19:12–38 does not deal specifically with the code of hospitality, I will not discuss it in detail here, but Judg 19:1–10 will be examined.

Key Elements of Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19:1–11

Gen 19:1a: “The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.”

In this opening passage, clearly a parallel to Gen 18:1, the angels approach Sodom with the mission to investigate the city and its inhabitants. The narrative depends at this point on the bargaining session between Abraham and God in Gen 18:22–33 with regard to the number of “righteous” men necessary to save the city of Sodom. Lot, at evening, is sitting in the gate of the city—paralleling Abraham’s reclining “at the door of his tent during the heat of the day.” In each episode, the entrance way marks a path into a habitation, which must be guarded at all times. In addition, both gate and doorway function as legally significant sites in this and other narratives (Matthews 1987:25–35; Deut 21:19; 22:13–21; Num 16:27).

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The fact that Lot has a place in the gate suggests he has won a measure of acceptance from the citizens of Sodom since this is a place reserved for business and legal transactions. It is a place of honor for the elders of the city (Prov 31:23), marking them and the citizens as free men, able to pass without question in and out of the city (Gen 23:10, 18; Speiser, 22). As a resident alien, Lot had apparently obtained some of these rights, but not the ability to act on behalf of the city.

Gen 19:1b–2a: “When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed himself with his face to the earth, and said, ‘My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise up early and go on your way.’”

Except for a single respect, this is precisely the way the hospitality code is supposed to work. When a stranger enters the zone of obligation, that stranger, who has no legal status or rights other than those extended to him by a patron (i.e., host), must be transformed from a potential threat to the city into an ally (however temporary) by being offered hospitality (Pitt-Rivers: 15). Lot shows proper respect, bowing just as Abraham had done in Gen 18:2, and following correct protocol—offering the hospitality of his home for a specified period of time, and coupling this with the opportunity to wash their dusty, tired feet so that they would be fresh to continue their journey the next day. His statement also contains an assurance of release from the obligations of guest and host on the next day. This too is necessary since an open-ended invitation could be construed by the potential guest as detention rather than hospitality.

The only problem with this seemingly perfect example of the code is that Lot has no right to offer these strangers hospitality. It would be different if Lot was in his own encampment, in front of his own tent (as Abraham is in Gen 18:1; Van Nieuwenhuijze: 701). However, he is sitting in the gate of Sodom and he is not a citizen of that city. He is a resident alien (*ger*), and therefore cannot represent the city in this matter. The legal principle regarding the transient stranger is one of reciprocity between individuals and groups. When a town is involved, however, it is the obligation of a citizen of that town to offer these individuals hospitality (Van Nieuwenhuijze: 287). But this obligation has been usurped here by Lot.

It should be noted, however, that among the tests in this narrative is whether the communal responsibility of the citizens of Sodom is upheld. Lot improperly offers these strangers hospitality, but this could be because no citizen of the town rose to meet them and offer the hospitality of the city. Surely, Lot was not sitting in the gate alone and yet only he is mentioned as taking notice of the approach of the angels. The failure of a citizen of Sodom to carry out the communal responsibility of the

city is as much of a crime as Lot’s invitation and this heightens the irony of the situation. It ultimately serves as the necessary indictment of the people to justify the destruction of Sodom, and, ironically, it creates a situation in which the socially and politically weakest member of a community is the sole survivor.

Gen 19:2b–3: “They said, ‘No; we will spend the night in the street.’ But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.”

It is a curiosity of the narrative that the angels at first properly refuse Lot’s improper invitation, and then improperly accept the hospitality of his house. The possibility exists that the angels are exercising their right of refusal which all potential guests have in these situations. The acceptance of hospitality, after all, is a willingness to submit to “total subordination” to the host (Herzfeld, 1987:77). The text indicates that they had planned to go to the *rehob* (Matthews, 1987:29–30), the place where strangers were welcome to gather to receive an invitation such as Lot’s. This would go along with the idea of their testing the inhabitants of the city.

Strangers could also spend the night in the *rehob* (Van Nieuwenhuijze: 693), but this would reflect on the honor of a town whose inhabitants had failed to host a stranger (see Judg 19:15). Lot urges them not to go there, but rather to come to his house. This could be a veiled warning to the angels that they would not be safe in the *rehob*. It could also be an indication by the narrator (using Lot as his mouthpiece) that they could not be expected to receive an offer of hospitality if they did go there, thus foreshadowing the events that will lead to the destruction of the city. This is explicitly stated as the reason why the Levite, who had waited for some time in the *rehob* in Gibeah, accepts the invitation of the Ephraimite in Judg 19:18.

For whatever reason, the angels do accept Lot’s invitation. Their acceptance, while a violation of the code of hospitality, follows a certain logic found in the rest of the narrative—that the city and its citizens were unrighteous, but that there was one righteous man within the city, who must be saved from the coming destruction. Just as Noah is warned of a great catastrophe in Gen 6:5–18, Lot, whose actions do not follow custom, but do contain within them a right intent, must be saved.

Once they have accepted his invitation, the angels are treated to a feast, more than Lot had originally offered (again a characteristic of proper hospitality conduct—Pitt-Rivers, 28). However, another curiosity occurs. As part of the feast, Lot bakes cakes for them of unleavened bread. This is reminiscent of the unleavened bread baked by the Israelites prior to their departure from Egypt during the Passover (Ex 12:14–20). In both instances this baking presages a speedy departure.

Gen 19:4: "But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house."

Again, this passage is a play on the bargain struck by Abraham with God in Gen 18:22–33. Abraham had elicited a promise from God that if there were ten "righteous within the city" then it would not be destroyed. Here in 19:4 the narrator uses a set of carefully drawn legal phrases which leave no room for question or conjecture that every man in the city of Sodom (young and old, "to the last man") is outside Lot's house. Thus when they demand to see Lot's guests (19:5), there can be no question that there are no righteous men, much less ten, within that city.

Gen 19:5: "and they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.'"

The narrator assumes that the intelligence network which operates in every town apparently was at work here. Someone had overheard Lot's invitation and the news had inflamed the citizens of Sodom. The inexplicable aspect of the story, however, centers on why these men may have wished to sexually abuse the strangers staying in Lot's house. Is it possible that the angels, by accepting Lot's improper invitation, had dishonored the citizens of Sodom and thus were to be dealt with as enemies of the city? Certainly, when a stranger enters the hospitality zone of a city, he should recognize and respect the rights and obligations of the citizens of that place. To fail to do so is in direct violation of the code of conduct associated with the guest in the hospitality formula.

The particular form of punishment which the men of Sodom may be suggesting here seems quite extreme. However, it is not the only example of rape or sexual abuse documented in the legal annals as punishment for a crime. In a case involving improper sexual behavior, the Middle Assyrian Law Code (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts*: 181) #20, states that "If a citizen lay with his neighbor, when they have prosecuted him (and) convicted him, they shall lie with him (and) turn him into a eunuch." By ordering Lot to send the strangers out to them, the men of Sodom may be offering Lot the chance to correct his own improper behavior. They obviously do not, however, intend to offer the strangers a second chance. Their intent, like the Ammonite princes in 2 Sam 10:1–5 who shave and strip David's emissaries, appears to be to sexually degrade these "hostile" strangers.

R. Wright (1989) has suggested that Lot misunderstands the demand of the men of Sodom. According to her thesis, based on Speech Act Theory and the use of the word *yada'*, the citizens are exercising their right to "test" the visitors, specifically to have them questioned so that "we may get acquainted with them, that we may

see for ourselves that they pose no threat to our city, that we may take their measure" (p. 177). Wright asserts that, Lot, a foreigner, misunderstands their use of *yada'*, taking it in a sexual sense and therefore makes the offer of his daughters to assuage what he thinks is their desire.

Gen 19:6–7: "Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said 'I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.'"

The one sovereign space of a resident alien was his home. By standing in the doorway and then closing the door, Lot has symbolically asserted his right to protect his home and household, and at the same time may also be asserting his right to offer hospitality to strangers in Sodom. The doorway, like the city gate, was a conduit for trade and hospitality and could only be crossed with the permission of the owner. Lot endangers himself by facing the crowd alone (Van Nieuwenhuijze: 693), but he may be relying on the force of custom and law that would prevent the men of Sodom from crossing his threshold without permission. That could explain why they had called for him to send the angels out to them rather than barging in and taking them themselves.

Lot's plea reverses the charges of misconduct. He had been accused by the crowd of harboring strangers. Lot now turns this charge around accusing them of suggesting a "wicked" act be perpetrated against his guests. He also uses the familiar address "my brothers" in his appeal. This will subsequently only serve to further inflame the crowd, however, since he is not a citizen of Sodom.

Gen 19:8: "Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

This speech perfectly parallels the demand made by the men of Sodom. They demand that Lot "bring them [the men] out" just as Lot offers to "bring them [his daughters] out." The men in the crowd state that they want to "know them" while Lot assures them that his daughters "have not known man." The parallelism once again functions as a reversal while at the same time suggesting Lot may need to compensate for his improper actions in granting hospitality to these strangers.

Obviously, Lot's daughters are being used by their father—without any consideration for their rights as persons. They are "property" to be used for the benefit of their father and his household. The disregard for their rights is another parallel in the text with the angels, who are also without rights, having improperly accepted the invitation from Lot to enter his house.

Lot appears to be "throwing them a bone" with the offer of his daughters. He may hope this will satisfy the men's desire for violence/sexual gratification, but this is also part of his assertion that he has the legal right to grant

these strangers the protection of his home (Abou-Zeid: 252). His defense of his own actions and of the strangers hinges on his assertion to "brotherhood" (i.e., citizenship) and his right to offer hospitality in the name of the city.

Gen 19:9a: "But they said, 'Stand back!' And they said, 'This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.'"

The men of Sodom reject Lot's plea calling for him to stand aside—open his door to them and bring out the strangers. They seem more incensed now, however, over Lot's assertion that he has citizenship rights. They label Lot as one who does not have the same rights and privileges as full citizens (a sojourner) and then ridicule his attempt to assert these rights and reclassify them by mockingly labeling him a "judge." In fact, they threaten to do him greater harm than the strangers. Their anger reflects the means of identification used in the ancient world and in modern tribal societies—that is by place of birth. As a result, "an outsider can never become totally incorporated" (Pitt-Rivers 1968:16, n. 1). Lot's Mesopotamian origins would therefore have prevented him from ever being totally accepted into Sodom's citizenry. His foreign origins may, if Wright is correct, be at the heart of the problem, since neither side appears to realize that their intent is being misunderstood (1989:182).

Lasine (p. 52, n. 6) argues that the Sodomites' indignation is demonstrated in their use of a rhetorical question: "This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge!" He compares a similar rhetorical statement made by two struggling Hebrews to Moses (Ex 2:14): "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" His argument hinges on the indignation "of an evildoer resenting the interference of a 'righteous' person. . . ." This could not apply in Gen 19, however, because Lot is not, in the eyes of the men of Sodom at least, "righteous." Lot has failed to obey hospitality customs as they apply to their city. He has usurped privileges which no sojourner could ever claim, has styled himself as a citizen without official sanction, and has stood in judgment of the actions of men over whom he has no jurisdiction. In doing so Lot has forfeited his rights as sojourner, an accepted transient member of the city population, and, like the angels, has become a hostile stranger who must be summarily dealt with by the citizens of Sodom.

Gen 19:9b-11: "Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door. But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves groping for the door."

Lot's survival now depends on the intervention of his guests. This ironic reversal of the roles of guest and host is made necessary by the actions of the crowd and the

recognition of Lot's status, like the angels, as a hostile stranger. The doorway and the door once again function as a sort of sanctuary and a protected pathway beyond which the men, due to their blinding, cannot pass. What is also suggested is a legitimization of Lot's role as host. Since the citizens of Sodom have shown no hospitable nature while the resident alien among them has, Lot's house becomes the only legal residence where hospitality can justifiably be offered or accepted. Lot's desire to follow custom pays dividends as the theme becomes clear: "only the hospitable survive."

The angels' action, for by it they are shown to be more than simple strangers at last, can also be seen as a part of the hospitality protocol since it is expected that the guest will reciprocate in some way for his host's generosity. Thus Lot's extravagance in offering his daughters (an asset of his household in terms of the bride price they could command and of the children they would produce) is matched by the extravagant gesture of the angels in blinding the mob and saving Lot's family as Sodom is destroyed.

Parallel Elements of Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 19

Judges 19 contains two examples of the use of the hospitality code. However, they are in stark contrast with each other and thus serve, in their polarity, to heighten the outrage of the audience which will recognize the systematic violations of hospitality as they occur in the text. I will first outline and discuss the correct hosting procedures found at the beginning of Judg 19 and then describe in detail the outrageous behavior of the characters in vv. 10–30. Since it is also my contention that this latter section of Judg 19 is dependent for its framework on Gen 19, I will attempt to make numerous comparisons between these two chapters as well. The narrative in Judg 19 begins with the phrase "In those days, when there was no king in Israel. . . ." This will form an *inclusio* with the final phrase which concludes the set of episodes found in Judges 19–21: "In those days there was no king in Israel. . . ." (21:25). There is, however, a further ironic phrase added to this latter verse: "every man did what was right in his own eyes." This serves to pass judgment on the story and in a way provide some small justification for the lawlessness found there. It is also, of course, the principal rationalization for the establishment of the monarchy, setting an anarchic tone which can only be varied when Samuel and Yahweh accede to the wishes of the tribes and agree to appoint a king over them (1 Sam 8:5–22). With the basic lawlessness of the times established, the audience is introduced to a Levite from the Ephraimite hill country and

his Bethlehemite concubine. The issue of the code of hospitality begins when the Levite travels to Bethlehem to retrieve this woman who has fled from his house and returned to her father. The Masoretic Text suggests she has "played the harlot" while the Septuagint and Vulgate translations simply state she "became angry" with him. I tend to follow this latter translation (see Soggin 1981:284) since a woman who had played the harlot would hardly be welcomed back to her father's house. Such a woman, in Deut 22:13–21, would be stoned at her father's door or would go to live, as Hosea's wife Gomer did, with her lovers (Hos 2:5).

Judg 19:3c: "And he came to her father's house; and when the girl's father saw him, he came with joy to meet him."

The translations once again vary here, and the Masoretic Text is preferable, saying "she brought him to her father's house." This would parallel the statement at the beginning of the verse that the Levite's intent was "to speak kindly to her and bring her back." Reconciliation appears therefore to be the order of the day between them. Note she has not offered him the hospitality of her father's home, simply directed him to it (cf. Gen 24:23–28 and 29:12–14). The father, as head of the household, then fulfills his proper role by approaching the Levite in preparation for making his invitation of hospitality. The father's joy may be due to the putting on of a "host's face" in anticipation of a regime of hospitality. It may also reflect a father concerned over the break in relations between his daughter and the Levite. A bride price may have been paid or at least gifts exchanged—neither of which the father would wish to return to the Levite. Furthermore, his hospitable actions stand in stark contrast to those of the citizens of Gibeah later in the narrative (Niditch: 366–7). They will also delay the Levite's departure (in what Lasine, p. 56–7, n. 34, refers to as an example of "comic repetition"), forcing him into the stop at Gibeah on the way home. For three days (19:4) the Levite lodged with his father-in-law. On the fourth day he prepared to depart, but was convinced to eat first before they left, and then as the day waned to spend the night (vv. 5–7). The fifth day began like the fourth with an offer of food before departure. Once again it is accepted, but this time when the father states "now the day has waned toward evening; pray tarry all night," the Levite refuses further hospitality and departs with his concubine and servant in the late afternoon (vv. 8–9). This is his right since the host, after the initial period of hospitality, can not force his guest to remain. He may request an extension, but it is up to the guest to decide whether to stay or not. In this case, the Levite may have grown tired of the continual delays, or he may have felt that he would not be able to match the generosity of his host if the stay was extended any longer (Cole: 67).

This can be compared to Gen 24:54–61 in which

Abraham's servant requests leave of Laban in order to depart for Canaan. His request may be part of a ritual, but may also reflect a break in protocol in which a certain number of days was expected in which the betrothed was allowed to make her preparations and goodbyes. That could then explain why Rebekah was consulted since it was her schedule which was being disrupted. In the Judges narrative only the Levite is involved. His concubine is never consulted. I do not agree with Tribble (pp. 69–70) that she is being "neglected" here. She is his wife and is expected to depart with him when he chooses to go. Rebekah was consulted (1) because of her status as a newly betrothed woman, and (2) in the hope that she would wish to extend the time before departure, thus requiring the servant to continue to make gifts to Laban and her family. There is some merit in Tribble's suggestion (p. 66) that a "rivalry between males" can be found in these repeated requests to stay. However, the statement by the father which makes an "unfavorable comparison" between his house and the Levite's home/tent (19:9e) can be construed as part of the hospitality ritual. Host and guest are never to be equal for this in fact breeds rivalry and endangers the hospitality situation (Pitt-Rivers: 21). For example, the disparaging statement by the Levite in 19:19, in which he claims to need nothing from Gibeah other than shelter, having all the provisions he requires, places the guest above his host, setting the stage for a deadly rivalry to come.

The second episode now begins with the departure of the Levite and his concubine. However, because they have started out late in the day, they will have to seek shelter for the night along the way. They reach the vicinity of Jebus (Jerusalem) and are faced with a choice of either staying in that Canaanite city or traveling on to the nearby villages of Gibeah and Ramah, which were in the tribal territory of Benjamin. The irony of this decision will become evident soon, since the Levite's explanation for rejecting his servant's suggestion that they stay in Jebus (19:11) was that it is a "city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel. . . ." (19:12). When they reach an Israelite village the Levite and his company will be treated like hostile "foreigners" (Tribble: 71) and will be hosted by a "sojourner."

Judg 19:15: "and they turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. And he went in and sat down in the open square of the city; for no man took them into his house to spend the night."

What is implied here is that no one met them as they entered the village, unlike in Gen 19:1, and they were forced to seek shelter in the *rehob*. This is an interesting twist on the narrative in Genesis 19. There Lot meets the strangers in the gate and invites them to his home, but at first they refuse saying they will spend the night in the *rehob* (19:2b). This place is a poor refuge for travelers. Having to spend the night there would be their

last choice and it would reflect on the poor hospitality of the town that strangers would have to shelter there. In Genesis 19, the angels' intention to go to the *rehob* suggests a testing of the community. The fact that the Levite in Judges 19 is forced to go to the *rehob* demonstrates a basic failure on the part of the citizens of Gibeah.

Judg 19:16: "And behold, an old man was coming from his work in the field at evening; the man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and was sojourning in Gibeah; the men of the place were Benjaminites."

This passage sets the stage for the parallel with Gen 19. The narrator is very careful to define the old man as a "sojourner" from the hill country of Ephraim and then to explain once again that the city of Gibeah was inhabited by Benjaminites. Such attention to detail suggests a legal strategy found in both of these narrators to show that the invitation of hospitality is made improperly by the one person in the city who had no legal right to make it (Van Nieuwenhuijze: 287). It also indicts a town which fails to honor its obligation (Ex 23:9) not to "oppress a stranger" (see also Heb 13:2).

Judg 19:17: "And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the wayfarer in the open square of the city; and the old man said, 'Where are you going? and whence do you come?'" The label "wayfarer" (*haorehah*) in referring to the Levite is also a legal term. In Jer 14:9 the "helpless stranger and wayfarer" who must "turn aside to tarry for a night," gives himself up to the hospitality of the people—guested optimally with both safe lodging and a meal. For instance, in 2 Sam 12:4 the "wayfarer" was given a lamb for dinner by the rich man, at the expense of his poor neighbor. Perhaps it is surprise that is being expressed in the story when the Ephraimite approaches the stranger and asks his questions. It may have been unusual for a visitor to be found in the *rehob* after dark. Whatever the case, the systematic violation of the hospitality code now begins with these questions. It is totally inappropriate for the potential or actual host to ask questions of his guest (Fares: 95). To do so is to demonstrate a lack of tack within the ritual of hospitality (Cole: 67).

Judg 19:18–19: "And he said to him, 'We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah; and I am going to my home; and nobody takes me into his house. We have straw and provender for our asses, with bread and wine for me and your maidservant and the young man with your servants; there is no lack of anything.'"

The obvious frustration of the Levite comes out in this speech. He is feeling neglected and scorned by the people of Gibeah. He may also be insulted at being questioned, since that clearly is not proper protocol. In the heat of his anger, this violation breeds another—his statement of self-sufficiency. Rivalry is created here (Pitt-Rivers: 21) as the Levite asserts his equality with any potential host in that city. This in and of itself violates the spirit

and the law of hospitality. Plus there is a certain irony in the statement that granting him hospitality will cost his host nothing. As the story is played out, hosting the Levite nearly costs the Ephraimite his life and the virginity of his daughter and it does cost the life of the Levite's concubine.

The whole scene is reminiscent of Gen 24:23–25. In that passage Abraham's servant questions Rebekah about her family and asks about possible lodging. This is proper questioning since Rebekah will not be his host, she simply is a source of information. Her response includes an abbreviated version of the Levite's speech: "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." In this case, however, this places the servant in the position of one who will be the recipient of this bounty, not one who boasts of possessing it himself.

Once again, I can only partially agree with Tribble's comment on this verse. She suggests (p. 72) that the Levite deliberately describes himself and his concubine as servants of the host either to flatter the old man or to use the woman "as bait" in order to obtain lodging for the night. This sort of bribe has no place in the hospitality ritual. A stranger, whether wealthy or poor, does not have to demean himself or offer payment for hospitality—it is to be freely given, bringing honor to the host for his generosity (Pitt-Rivers: 23). I consider the Levite to be using sarcasm in 19:19, mixed with the polite speech expected of the stranger to his potential host. Yet there is irony here since the naming of the concubine as the "maidservant" of his host may eventually explain the offer made by the Ephraimite to the crowd when they threaten his guest (see the comment below on 19:24).

Judg 19:20–21: "And the old man said, 'Peace be to you; I will be to you; I will care for all your wants; only do not spend the night in the square.' So he brought him into his house, and gave the asses provender; and they washed their feet, and ate and drank."

Following the boastful speech of the Levite, the Ephraimite humbly offers himself as host, promising to "care for all your wants," and, like Lot, pleading that the stranger "not spend the night in the square" (compare Gen 19:3). His concern appears to be genuine, but his invitation is of course a violation of custom since he is a "sojourner" and not a citizen of Gibeah. Since the pattern of violation began with the failure of the men of Gibeah to offer the Levite hospitality, it does not seem odd that the Levite would accept this improper invitation. As he had said he would, the Ephraimite provides for the needs of the Levite and his animals. All the conventions of hospitality are followed including the footwashing ritual prior to the meal. The use of such strict adherence to custom by the writer thereby heightens the irony associated with the improper invitation and with the inhospitable events to come.

Judg 19:22: "As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, base fellows, beset the house round about, beating on the door; and they said to the old man, the master of the house, 'Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.'"

There are some exact parallels between this scene and Gen 19:4–5. In both cases a meal is interrupted by the knock on the door and the demand to send out the stranger to be abused by the crowd. In Gen 19:4, however, a legal formula is used to show that the entire citizenry of Sodom was assembled outside Lot's house. The legal character of that statement makes it sound like an official town council meeting in which the actions of Lot and his guests will be judged. In Judg 19:22, the situation reads more like a gang of hooligans (Soggin, 1985: 183; Boling: 276), left unchecked by the citizens of Gibeah, who plan to prey on a weak old man and his guests.

Clearly in the scene in Judges the legal ramifications of the situation are not as well defined. If these are simply ruffians, then the direct parallels with Gen 19 are weakened, but the ironic reversal is heightened. It can thus be compared to the step by the Levite of thrusting his concubine out to the crowd in 19:25. The parallel between this and the actions of the angels in Gen 19:10–11 to save Lot is also weak. But it works in a literary sense as a way of heightening the impression of a lawless world in the Judges period. These men in Judges 19 are therefore not representing the legal rights of the town of Gibeah, as are the men in Gen 19. However, the failure of the town to control this irresponsible element compounds their initial failure to offer the Levite hospitality. A case could be made, as it was in Gen 19, that the Levite was open to attack from any group in Gibeah once he accepted the improper invitation from the Ephraimite. However, the circumstances, as is so often the case in the Judges material, lend themselves to a sense of lawlessness which breeds the sort of outrage which is about to occur in this narrative.

Judg 19:23: "And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, 'No, my brethren, do not act so wickedly; seeing that this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing.'"

Like Lot, the Ephraimite endangers himself (contra Lasine: 39), as is required by custom, to protect his guest (Van Nieuwenhuijze: 693). Once again, however, it must be noted that a person's identity originates with his birth site and he can never totally be incorporated into a new social identity (Pitt-Rivers: 16, n. 1). As a resident alien the Ephraimite had no legal right to offer the Levite hospitality. He is now asserting that he does have the right to protect his guest, judging their actions, and calling the men assembled outside his house his "brethren."

One curiosity in the text is the repeated use of the phrase "the master of the house." While the Ephraimite

is a sojourner and not a permanent resident of Gibeah, he, like all heads of households, is master of his own house. Lot asserts his right as a householder by closing his door behind him in Gen 19:6. This marks the boundary between the domain of the home owner and the outside world (Trible: 73). The door is not used as a symbol, at this point, in Judg 19, and the phrase describing him as "master" may only serve to increase the irony of a "master" without "mastery" over the situation.

Judg 19:24: "Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do with them what seems good to you; but against this man do not do so vile a thing."

It is possible that the writer felt constrained to provide symmetry between this narrative and its original form in Gen 19. Since Lot offered two women to the mob in Sodom, the mechanics of the framework story demanded that the Ephraimite offer two women to the mob in Gibeah (Lasine: 39). The symmetry is broken, however, since the concubine is probably not a virgin like both of Lot's daughters (her earlier flight, however, may have prevented the consummation of the marriage). The parallel continues with the invitation to "ravish them" and thus assuage their violent desires. The situation here may therefore be intended to portray a skewed world in which no man or woman is safe from harm. The Ephraimite's invitation that the men do "what seems good to you" is suggestive of the final phrase in this narrative: Judg 21:25b—"... every man did what was right in his own eyes." The creed for this period is summed up in that statement and seems to explain everything that happens, no matter how incongruous with normal custom or action (Jungling: 279).

Trible (p. 75) uses this passage to claim that "the rules of hospitality in Israel protect only males." However, women are legal extensions of their husbands and thus would come under the same legal protections guaranteed to their husbands—as long as their husbands identified them as such. Lasine (p. 39) points to verse 24 as the key to the reversal in the story. He believes that the Ephraimite has shifted his role from hospitable to inhospitable host by "callously" offering the Levite's concubine to the crowd in order to save his honor, and perhaps his own life. This could certainly be interpreted as another violation of the hospitality code since the concubine could not be legally separated from the Levite and thus was protected by the customs of hospitality to the same degree (contra Trible: 75). I would at this point, however, recall the statement in v. 19 in which the Levite describes her as the Ephraimite's "maidservant." The old man may now be taking the Levite at his word and offering what he has been offered to the crowd. This could simply be a further reflection of the principle that the guest is placed completely at the mercy of his host (Herzfeld 1987:79).

Judg 19:25: "But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them; and they knew her, and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go."

This interchange is less dramatic than that in Gen 19:9. The citizens of Gibeah simply ignore the Ephraimite's offer without accusing him of "playing the judge." There is a sense of urgency in the text, brought on by a lack of reasoning in the actions of the mob, which may explain the Levite's action of thrusting his concubine out the door and into the hands of the crowd. Lasine (p. 52, n. 5) points to this passage as evidence of the attempt by the author to generate "outrage" among his audience when they compare the actions of the angels in Gen 19:10–11 with the Levite's act. In both cases the life of the host is saved by his guest(s), but clearly the solution provided by Lot's guests is preferable to the Levite's. As noted above, it also suggests an attempt on the part of the author to create skewed parallels between Gen 19 and Judg 19 (see comment on Judg 19:22) as a way of reinforcing the sense of lawlessness in the Judges era.

What is clear in both narratives is that the guest is forced to save his own life and that of his host. The irony of this reversal climaxes the narrative, although a sense of disgust lingers over the violence done to the Levite's concubine. She is a victim whose only attempt to assert her independence was thwarted by her father, her husband, and the failure of the citizens of Gibeah to carry out their proper role as host (Niditch: 371). The Levite chooses to sacrifice her to save himself. He has taken literally the Ephraimite's invitation to do what is "good in your eyes." This callous act might be compared to Abram's statement to Sarai with regard to Hagar in Gen 16:6: "Do to her as you please."

Judg 19:26–27: "And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light. And her master rose up in the morning, and when he opened the door of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold."

Although it did not come into play when the Ephraimite spoke to the mob, the door now functions as a significant symbol in the narrative. The "base fellows" had beat upon the door (v. 22a) and now the dying concubine crawls back to what should have been a place of sanctuary. Note that the text is careful not to mention the doorway prior to this. It simply says the Ephraimite "went out to them" (v. 23) and the Levite "put her out to them" (v. 25), but in neither case does it say the doorway was crossed or that the door was opened or closed.

This could be a way to remove the legal ramifications associated with the entrance to the house from the episode and once again differentiate this version of the framework story from that in Gen 19. In that episode,

the crowd did not beat on the door, "they called to Lot" (v. 5). Lot "went out the door to the men, [and] shut the door after him" (v. 6). Incensed by Lot's refusal to give up his guests, the mob "drew near to break the door" (v. 9b), and the angels pulled Lot back into the house "and shut the door" (v. 10). Throughout this narrative, the door is used repeatedly as a symbol of ownership and personal space. At first the men of Sodom seem reluctant to violate this custom, even by knocking, and it is only after they become infuriated by Lot's "judging" them that they attack the door. In the Judges version, however, the confrontation begins with a blatant attack on personal privacy as the mob "beat on the door." The lack of safety in this place, often associated with justice in village custom (Ex 21:6; Deut 22:13–21), is thereafter exemplified by the omission of any mention of the door. It then becomes the height of irony that the concubine should, with her last bit of strength stumble back to "the door of the man's house," perhaps in a final attempt to elicit justice from her husband and the community (Matthews 1987:34).

The manner in which her arms stretched out upon the threshold of the doorway is suggestive of another broken body. In 1 Sam 5:4, the "head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold" of his temple in Ashdod. In both cases the hands upon the threshold suggest submission to a fate they could not control, but it may also be an indictment of the Levite's action toward his concubine (Niditch: 270–71).

The remainder of the narrative in Judges 19 deals with the aftermath of the crime committed at Gibeah. The Levite will perpetrate one last indignity on his concubine's body by carving her up into twelve pieces and then using them as grisly invitations to a general assembly of the tribes. There are clear parallels between this action and Saul's call to arms in 1 Sam 11:7 (Lasine: 41–43). They are, however, beyond the scope of the present study.

Conclusion

Based upon the parallels drawn and the elements of the framework described above, it can be concluded that the narrative in Judges 19 is in large part dependent on the narrative found in Genesis 19. In both cases the code of hospitality functions as the legal background of the story and in both instances the author telegraphs the tragedy to come by having a resident alien make an improper invitation of hospitality to a stranger. From there on there are several divergences between the stories. It seems clear that in Genesis 19 the theme is the survival of the ancestor Lot. However, with the author on numerous occasions reversing the intent of parallels (in Judges 19 the theme), as it is in much of the book of Judges, this further demonstrates the lawless

character of an era prior to the establishment of the monarchy.

CHART

Protocol of Hospitality

(See *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21:1 [Spring, 1991], 13–21.)

- (1) There is a sphere of hospitality which comprises a zone of obligation for both the individual and the village or town within which they have the responsibility to offer hospitality to strangers. The size of the zone is of course smaller for the individual than for the urban center.
- (2) The stranger must be transformed from potential threat to ally by the offer of hospitality.
- (3) The invitation can only be offered by the male head of household or a male citizen of a town or village.
- (4) The invitation may include a time span statement for the period of hospitality, but this can then be extended, if agreeable to both parties, on the renewed invitation of the host.
- (5) The stranger has the right of refusal, but this could be considered an affront to the honor of the host and could be a cause for immediate hostilities or conflict.
- (6) Once the invitation is accepted, the roles of the host and the guest are set by the rules of custom.
 - (a) The guest must not ask for anything.
 - (b) The host provides the best he has available—despite what may be modestly offered in the initial invitation of hospitality.
 - (c) The guest is expected to reciprocate with news, predictions of good fortune, or gracious responses based on what he has been given.
 - (d) The host must not ask personal questions of the guest.
- (7) The guest remains under the protection of the host until he/she has left the zone of obligation of the host.

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