

A Message for Eglon: The Case of Ehud ben-Gera

"The perfect criminal is a superman. He must be meticulous in his techniques: unseen, unseeable, a Lone Wolf.

—ELLERY QUEEN

The Deuteronomistic history spans the centuries from the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile. The will of Yhwh is its unity, the string on which the historian threads treatments of individual episodes. To tease from events some earnest of Yhwh's abiding disposition, the historian sweeps with a gracious coquetry across the grounds of the ages, here passing quickly; here pausing, eyes wide, in rapt attention; here dallying in an eddying dialogue with the past. As a rule, from which are exempted those texts that make the most vivid impress on the popular imagination (Joshua's invasion, Absalom's revolt, the Elijah cycle), single events are proportioned on a diminutive scale, the better to show off the pattern of Yhwh's deeds.

To articulate his themes the Deuteronomist structures the eras of his history by applying ideological tools of explanation, and by selecting the episodes he represents partly with a view to their thematic integration. Broadly, the history is most contaminated when it exposes trends, themes, and causes that transcend limited periods. In individual episodes these larger trends are less germane; here, the historian is prone to appeal to causes directly pertinent to the action, more "scientific", less theological.

The following two chapters, therefore, explore the logic by which Israelite historians constructed short accounts. In neither instance can one warrant unconditionally that the Deuteronomist did not incorporate the text verbatim from elsewhere. Still, the texts in Judges 3 and 4 illustrate how *some* Israelite historians worked with sources; they are inside the corpus of the Deuteronomist. We begin with the story of Ehud, in Judges 3:12-30.¹

EHUD AT THE PALACE

EHUD CALLING

Eglon, the corpulent king of Moab, has occupied "the city of palms," probably Jericho, on the Israelite shore of the Dead Sea (3:13; cf. 2 Chron. 28:15; Deut. 34:3; Judg. 1:16). It is there, through Ehud's agency, that Israel sends him its tribute.² A "lefthanded" Benjaminite (lit., "son of the 'right'"), Ehud conceals on his right thigh a short, two-edged sword (vv. 15f.). He delivers the tribute, starts home with his Israelite porters, and then doubles back to the court. There he secures the dismissal of the king's courtiers, to confer privately with Eglon, who is sitting in the "upper chamber" (*ʿaliyyā*), "which was his alone" (vv. 17–20). In private, Ehud thrusts the dagger deep enough that the king's "fat closed over the blade"; Eglon expires, and his anal sphincter explodes (v. 22, *wys' hpršdnh*).³

Locking the doors of the upper chamber, Ehud leaves by way of the *misdārōn* (meaning unknown). Then Eglon's servants return. The locked doors create the impression that the king is defecating (lit. "covering his feet"),⁴ and they wait. When Eglon does not appear, they fetch the key and unlock the upper chamber, finding the king, alone, dead (v. 25). Meanwhile Ehud has had time to rally his troops from the hills, and seize the fords of the Jordan (vv. 26f.). They cut down the Moabites, who have fled homeward in panic (vv. 28f.). Victory and liberation are achieved.

Not every element is transparent. The terms having to do with excretion have caused difficulties; crowded into the space of a few verses is the highest concentration of rare and unique vocabulary in the literature of ancient Israel. The minute details of the killing tumble out one upon the other like the mops that the apprentice summoned up to do his swabbing. In the Hebrew Bible (HB), only Genesis 22 and 2 Samuel 18 lavish comparable detail on killings; and, these texts, less reticent about character development, concern the deaths of favorite sons. Why does the slaughter of a porcine Moabite command the appurtenances of so pregnant a theme? Why are the mechanics of the murder of such special interest? To answer these questions, we must refine our philological and archaeological suppositions.

EHUD'S CALLING

Ehud is not "lefthanded"; rather, "his right hand was *ʿiṭṭēr*". This adjective comes from a root meaning "to bind," and suggests that the use of the hand was somehow impeded (v. 15; cf. Ps. 69:16). The form of the adjective may imply a disability or deformity—*ʿiwwēr* means "blind," *gib-bēn* means "hunchbacked," and so on. But Judges 20:16 speaks of "seven hundred picked troops," their right hands *ʿiṭṭēr*, who "could sling a stone

at a hair and not miss." This excludes physical deformity: it would be comical to invent elite brigades organized on such a principle. But "his right hand was *ʿiṭṭēr*" is not the normal term for "lefthanded." 1 Chronicles 12:2 furnishes that lexeme, *masmīl* (lit., "to use the left hand"), used of lefthanded slingers.⁵

In all three texts the lefthanders are Benjaminites. In no other text does handedness figure. The logical inference is that Benjamin was known for producing southpaws. They could have done so as, until recently, the Maori did, by binding the right arms of young children—hence "bound as to his right hand"—and inculcating dexterity with the left. On this supposition Ehud was not, as the translations have it, "a man lefthanded." He was one of a breed of men schooled in the use of the left hand for war.

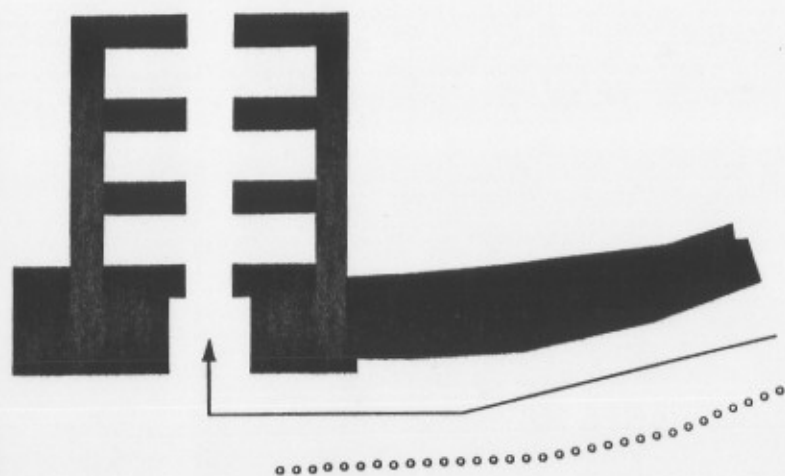
Why lefthanders? Foremost because their opponents train to fight righthanded men. The southpaw is practiced in the clash of blade on blade and shield on shield. The righthander learns to fight blade against shield, shield against blade; against the southpaw his whole tactical repertoire, and most of his martial experience, are irrelevant. Portside pugilists confound even the finest boxers. Lefthanders enjoy a similar advantage in line combat.

Two of the three texts that mention lefthanders associate them with the sling. This cannot be coincidental, and may reflect another Benjaminite specialty (cf. Thucydides 2.81 on regional specialization in the sling), the more so in that slings do not loom large in the literature of HB. Now, the sling was state-of-the-art weaponry in Iron Age warfare. Goliath, for example, never has the chance to close with David. He lumbers forward like a peasant with a pitchfork. David, who rejects wearing Saul's heavy armor, sends him lurching to earth with the ancient version of the thirty-ought-six.⁶ The story exemplifies the tactic of meeting heavily armored troops with mobile skirmishers, who withdraw in the face of a massed advance, exacting casualties as they go. These light infantry were perfectly suited to mountain terrain, where cavalry could not easily run them down, and their mobility made them immune to charges by heavy infantry. They were inexpensive to field, sparing the costs of armor, heavy weaponry, and close-order drill. The only drawback was that they could not stand in line combat without heavy infantry support.

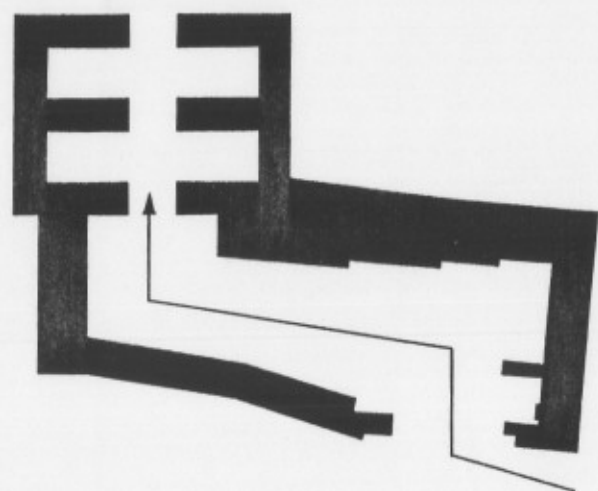
The sling's long range and high trajectory also made it invaluable in siege.⁷ Assyrian reliefs in the British Museum, for example, depicting the conquest of Lachish in 701 B.C.E., consistently place slingers to the rear of attacking columns. The sling functions as a sort of howitzer, furnishing long-range barrages and covering fire (cf. 2 Kings 3:25).

Lefthanded slingers and assault troops were specially valued. Iron Age fortifications often forced beleaguers to expose the right side to the walls when charging the gate (Fig. 1).⁸ The shield, on the left arm,

FIGURE 1: ISRAELITE GATES



Lachish Str. III (cf. Lachish V)



Beersheba Str. V

could not be used to fend off stones and other missiles from the walls. Thus, when the defenders launched sallies from the gate, their comrades on the parapets offered an effective crossfire. But southpaw assailants partly nullified the advantage. Their shields rested on their right arms, providing against fire from the wall; those assailants to the rear could face front, yet offer covering fire either toward the gate or against the parapets. The southpaw and the slinger were Israelite military specialists.

Early Israel's farmer-soldiers fought on foot in the hills. At first (ca. 1200–1030 B.C.E.) they rarely succeeded in storming fortresses frontally.⁹ Thus, Judges 1 lists a whole series of fortified towns the Israelites (Judah excepted) cannot take; the only one they do overcome is Bethel (1:22–26), and Bethel by a postern gate. Joshua captures Ai by decoying the defenders into an ambush in the open field (Josh. 8); Abimelek succeeds at Shechem by the same tactic (Judg. 9).

As the first kings (ca. 1030–974 B.C.E.) trained heavy infantry and won superiority in the uplands, the zone of battle moved from backwater hills to the lowlands, with their major forts. Starting in this era the modern tactics and field ordnance of the standing army outmoded older forms of drill. It is striking, thus, that all three texts about lefthanded warriors refer to this or an earlier age. In the society of the premonarchic era, such warriors must have enjoyed tremendous prestige among the armies of the tribes.

In sum, to say that Ehud's right arm was *'ittēr* is to say quite a bit. Ehud conveyed Israel's tribute to Eglon, guarding it against local bandits and kings. He was charged with this mission because he was the closest thing to a professional soldier that the Israel of his period produced. He was a seasoned samurai, or, to use a modern caricature, a sort of James Bond. Bred for combat, schooled to feats of sinister valor, Ehud was precisely the man to execute the operation that Judges 3 describes.

THE PROBLEM: EHÜD'S ESCAPE

EHUD VANISHES

To this point, every detail the narrator supplies is geared toward the climax, Israel's surprise deployment at the Jordan. Ehud's lefthandedness marks him as a professional killer. Medieval exegetes already observed that, repeatedly mentioned (vv. 15b, 16, 21), it entailed his strapping his dagger on his *right* thigh. There, the blade, normally a bulge on the *left* thigh, eluded the observation of Eglon's guards.¹⁰ The initial movement of the left hand in Eglon's presence would also have appeared innocuous,¹¹ as the similarly camouflaged murder in 2 Samuel 20:9–10 illustrates (cf. also 2 Sam. 2:23).

The sword, double-edged to slice cleanly into the flesh, is matched to the diameter of Eglon's belly. It is short enough for the folds of fat to

engulf it.¹² This is why the tale starts with the statement that Ehud frequented the court as a tribute-bearer: the role afforded him the chance to gauge Eglon's girth. Finally, the force of the killing blow leads the king to befoul himself: Mesudat Zion suggests the element adds to the concealment; the courtiers assume that the king is relieving himself behind the closed doors of the *'aliyyā* (v. 24), because they smell the excrement. The end result is a knife hidden in the corpse, and the corpse in a locked *'aliyyā*. And the climax: Israel's surreptitious deployment at the river.

Surprise and concealment, concealment and surprise: the narrator drums out a cloak-and-dagger tale. The whole covert operation is conceived to achieve a grip on the Jordan fords. Nothing is left to chance. Not a detail in the story is superfluous. Form and content correspond. Yet in standard treatments, detailed through the narrative is, one cannot say the same of Ehud's escape. The Greek states that Ehud's getaway confounded Moab (reading *htmhm* for MT *htmhmhm*, v. 26), and even in the Hebrew this is the sense of it. The Hebrew describes it intricately, insistently plumbing the Moabites' befuddlement (vv. 23–26). Its presentation demands coherent treatment.

The Moabites leave their king alone with an Israelite in verse 19. When they return (v. 24), the doors of the *'aliyyā* are locked. They surmise that Ehud is gone and that the king is relieving himself. They wait until "they blush" (v. 25). Of all things, this delay cannot be fortuitous: Ehud reckons on it for time to rally his troops. But how did he know what the courtiers would think? They had left Ehud and Eglon alone. What told them that Ehud had left? What indicated that the king had come to no harm during their absence?

The predictable nineteenth-century answer was the claim that two sources were involved: verse 20 originally had Ehud return *unnoticed* by the courtiers to the king's private suite; verse 19, in which Ehud requested a private audience in the servants' presence, was inserted from a parallel narrative.¹³ There are no other traces of such a parallel narrative; that the editor should have elected to include a small fragment of it here, and only here, is improbable.

But the alternatives are also unpalatable: Ehud was above suspicion, it is submitted, an absurd view *prima facie*, and unfounded in the text. Or Ehud's egress, the *misḏārōn*, was a rear exit of some sort. How, then, did the courtiers know he had left? Did they see him absconding out the back, and think him above suspicion? Even in the bovine breast of a Moabite, this sight would fan the embers of distrust. Yet the courtiers waited stoically. All this aside, why did the courtiers fetch a key and unlock doors the king had locked (v. 25)? Why did they not check the unlocked access Ehud had used?

Sensible of the difficulties, some exegetes suggest that Ehud left the way he entered, and used a key taken from the corpse to lock the *'aliyyā*

behind him.¹⁴ But this involves our inventing action not narrated. The otherwise scrupulous account does not say that Ehud "fetched a key," although the reader cannot be expected to realize this; yet when the courtiers unlocked the *'aliyyā*, it notes that *they* used a key, something we are apt to surmise. Did the narrator forget the key when the reader needs his guidance, and remember it when we *must* assume it was used? Too, it will be seen in this chapter's section entitled "Ehud's Iron Age Alibi" that Ehud locked himself inside the *'aliyyā*. This is what justified the courtiers' assumption that the *'aliyyā* had been locked from inside.

E. G. Kraeling concluded that Ehud bolted the *'aliyyā* by pulling a thong from outside, a recourse that runs afoul of the same considerations. It further fits with no bolting mechanism so far attested archaeologically: the locks known to the Israelites could not be manipulated without a key from the outside;¹⁵ certainly, demand for such a device would have been low, and the device itself unfamiliar to the reader.

We arrive, thus, at an impasse. Ehud does not lock the *'aliyyā* from the outside, with a key. But if he locks the *'aliyyā* from the inside, sinewy problems block the way: how did the courtiers know when to return? Why didn't they enter through Ehud's unlocked egress? And how did they know Ehud was gone? If they glimpsed Ehud's heels against the hills, why did they stand inactive? The solution lies in the architecture of the account.

THE LOCKED ROOM

Eglon receives Ehud in his private room, *'aliyyat ham-meqērā* (v. 20). It is mentioned three times thereafter as the *'aliyyā* (vv. 23, 24, 25), and once as *ḥadar ham-meqērā* (v. 24). The word *'aliyyā* means "the room over." It was a normal feature of public architecture, and occurred also in private homes.¹⁶

The *'aliyyā* is ordinarily defined by what it is above (*ly*). The terms used to define it are always architectural: the room over the wall (2 Kings 4:10), the gate (2 Sam. 19:1), the corner (Neh. 3:31f.). Sometimes no more than a rooftop (2 Kings 23:12), it is most often an enclosed, upper-story space (1 Kings 17:19, 23; 2 Kings 4:10; Jer. 22:13f.; 2 Sam. 19:1 vs. 18:24 *gag*, "rooftop"). Except in Jeremiah 22:13f., where it appears in the plural, the noun never denotes more than a single room.¹⁷ This is the case also in Judges 3, where the courtiers call it a *heder*, "chamber." And this in turn explains why the servants assume that the king is evacuating himself: if the doors to this room are locked (v. 24), it can mean only one thing. There are no other rooms opening on it, and probably no rear exit.

Since antiquity the phrase *'aliyyat ham-meqērā* has been understood as "the upper chamber of cooling" (*meqērā*). But "cooling" is not an architectural term. And by the Dead Sea, where the account is situated, one does not take to upper stories to escape the heat; rather, one burrows

from it as far as possible. Psalm 104:3 suggests an alternative: Yhwh "beams (*mēqārēh*) his upper chambers (*ʿaliyyōtayw*)". Here, we have an architectural feature. The phrase *ʿaliyyat ham-mēqārā* can mean "the room over the beams."¹⁸

The room in Judges 3 is the king's *ʿaliyyā*—"which was his alone" (v. 20). 2 Kings 1:2 mentions a king who fell from his *ʿaliyyā*; again, the royal *ʿaliyyā* is in point. Like Judges 3, this text assumes a familiarity with the structure. Thus Ehud in verse 19 begged an audience. Then (v. 20), "Ehud 'entered unto him,' " which means that he crossed a threshold of some sort, not that he merely drew near to the king.¹⁹ Only here does the narrator interject, "Eglon was sitting in the chamber over the beams, which was his alone." Presumably it was the *ʿaliyyā* that Ehud entered.

The *ʿaliyyā* therefore verges on the audience hall. It is not another room to which the king and Ehud move:²⁰ hypothesizing such a transfer again leads us into the snare of supplying unnarrated action in an account distinguished by painstaking detail (cf. 2 Kings 9:5f). Further, the retinue has already left the scene (v. 19); there is no need to change rooms for privacy. And the sequence is plain: in verse 19 Ehud returns to address the king, which creates the presumption that the king remained where Ehud had left him, in the audience hall; the courtiers then are dismissed, again as though from a public hall. Finally in verse 20, the narrative is explicit: Eglon was *already* sitting in his *ʿaliyyā*; Ehud now enters it—which is why we first hear of it at this point. The notice is not belated, which would contrast with the author's technique of disbursing necessary particulars in advance of the crucial moment (the dagger, Ehud's lefthandedness, Eglon's girth). The information is timely: the reader must know at *this* juncture that Eglon was already sitting in his *ʿaliyyā*. Previously Ehud was in a different space; he enters the *ʿaliyyā* in order to kill the king. Thus before the retinue left, Ehud, standing outside the *ʿaliyyā*, addressed Eglon, who was seated in it.

These spatial relations are puzzling, because the narrator presumes the palace layout. He expects the reader to recognize the *ʿaliyyā* as an appurtenance of a reception hall. The notice about where Eglon sat, coming at the last possible moment, sharpens, rather than radically refocuses, the reader's conditioned imagination of the venue. To understand the role of the *ʿaliyyā*, therefore, an excursion into the palace is in order.

THE PALACE

THE FORM OF THE PALACE IN ISRAEL'S WORLD

Where did Israelite readers situate the Ehud account? The likeliest setting is a royal palace. Evidence concerning Israelite palaces is scant, and the archaeological data are controverted. Still, only here can we discover the possibilities for the location of the *ʿaliyyā*. If the following sur-

vey does less than justice to some complex questions, it is in order not to digress too far or too long from this relevant issue.

Assyrian sources testify that the most impressive palace in Israel's environs was called the *būt hīlāni* (É hi-[il]-la-ni). In the eighth century Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II boasted of building such structures from western (Syrian) models (*tamsil ekal māt Ḥatti*, Clay Tablet R 18, Display 161f.). Scholars trace the name to the Hittite *hīlammar*, "gate(house)." Some claim that the term *būt hīlāni*, relates only to a (palace) gate complex, and does not denote the palace type most often found in the ground.²¹ But the texts suggest that the Assyrians, at least, used the phrase to denominate such palaces as a whole, and we may retain the nomenclature here.

The Assyrian and contemporary Syrian palaces are known from single-story remains. They have in common a complex focused on two main rooms: a long, pillared portico, entered on the broad side; and, within, a throne room as long or longer, adjacent and parallel to it, entered on the long side from the portico (see Fig. 2). To one side of the portico, a stairway leads upward. This is not uniformly a feature of the Assyrian imitations, but is common in Syria during the Iron Age (ca. 1200–500 B.C.E.).

This complex formed the heart of Solomon's palace in Jerusalem.²² 1 Kings 7:6f. describe a "hall of pillars" (i.e., the portico), bordering on "the hall of the throne . . . the hall of judgment," behind which are the living quarters. Solomon's artisans, after all, came from the north, the home of the *būt hīlāni*, and built a temple of a variety associated with this palace type at Tell Tayanat. Too, Y. Yadin has identified Palace 6000 at Megiddo, and D. Ussishkin Palace 1723, as *būt hīlānis* (Fig. 2).²³ Both structures are Solomonic. Ussishkin has gone so far as to construe Palace 1723 as a diminished version of the Jerusalem model.

These suggestions have some defects.²⁴ V. Fritz interprets the Israelite remains not as a combined portico and throne room, but as the offspring of a central-court palace witnessed in LB (ca. 1600–1200 B.C.E.) in Syro-Palestine.²⁵ Showing that some Israelite specimens (ca. 900–700 B.C.E.) conformed to this pattern, Fritz takes the throne rooms in Megiddo 1723 and 6000 as such courtyards, along with that of the tenth-century *būt hīlāni* at ancient Jericho²⁶ (all Figure 2). Still, the throne rooms of the Syrian *būt hīlānis* are unmistakable. Though the Israelite structures are not identical to the Syrian, they are susceptible to the same functional interpretation. And the textual testimony, as we shall see, suggests that the use of the Israelite palace conformed more or less to what one would envision from the Syrian remains.

Pending a glance at the texts, we shall not stray too wide in engaging the *būt hīlāni* as a guide to the features the Israelite reader associated with palaces. The *būt hīlāni* had roots in the soil of LB Canaan.²⁷ And it exercised a hold over the imaginations of Assyrian architects.²⁸

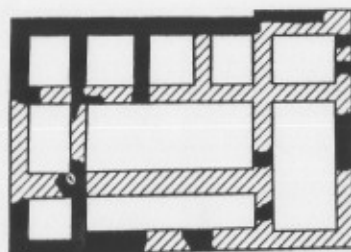
In the pre-Assyrian *būt hīlāni* the throne room is surrounded by other,

FIGURE 2: THE *BĪT HILĀNĪ*

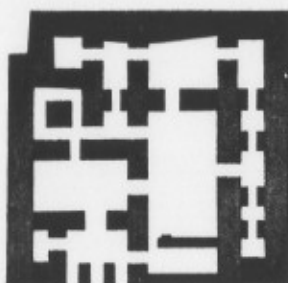
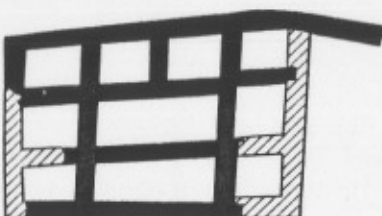
Tell Halaf



Tell Tayanat



Megiddo 6000

Megiddo 1723
(As reconstructed by
D. Ussishkin)

Jericho

smaller rooms. By definition the portico adjoins the throne room on one long side. Small rooms also run the length of the opposite side, though sometimes one of these rooms is interpreted as an open court (J6 or 7 at Zincirli); the only exception is the peculiar *bīt hilānī* I at Zincirli. Usually the small rooms continue around the throne room's short sides. At Halaf, Tayanat I, Zincirli Upper Palace (C) and K2, and Megiddo 6000 and Tell es-Sultan (Jericho), the throne room is abutted on all four sides.²⁹ The obvious question is, Did the king have to sit in the dark?

The throne rooms often contain large hearths. J, K, and Upper Palace C at Zincirli share this feature (cf. Building 1727 in Field VII at Shechem), and fire wagons were unearthed in the palace at Halaf. To forgo natural light is one thing, if fatal to lizards and flowers; but there is no effective substitute, when smoke rises from the coals, for natural respiration.

The nearest fund of light and air is above. To tap it the throne room must have risen higher than the surrounding rooms, permitting illumination and ventilation through upper-level windows. That is, the throne room rose two stories, and the other chambers only one. The layout is called clerestory, and explains why the *bīt hilānī* long sides uniformly face north and south:³⁰ the throne room windows in the upper story picked up steady sunlight, not the shifting illumination of an east-west exposure.

When, starting with Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.E.), Assyrian kings adopted the *bīt hilānī*, their architects wedded it to local types of suites. They eliminated the row of small rooms opposite the portico, so that the throne room bordered on a courtyard. This obviated the need for the clerestory. Still, Tiglath-Pileser describes his *bīt hilānī* as a *bīt appāte*, probably "a house with (distinctive) windows."³¹ A few decades later Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.E.), installed a *bīt hilānī* in the great temple of Asshur: his principal innovation, as J. Börker-Klähn has shown, was to insert a loggia "just under the roof" (*ina pān appāt uri*—KAV 42 r I 18).³² Apparently Assyrian architects preserved the clerestory arrangement even though they had attenuated its functional value.

I. J. Winter, in a synthetic reconsideration of the problem, has revived the discarded theory that in Assyria, a combination of features distinguished the *bīt hilānī* from local buildings.³³ She suggests—a view corroborated by Börker-Klähn—that fenestration from above was one. Her argument draws strength from a letter written in Sargon's reign (722–705 B.C.E.), concerning "the bronze bases of the lower story of the *bīt hilānīs*" (K 943:5–7): the upper stories, too, must have had bases and pillars, and thus a loggia. There may thus be some truth in the old suggestion that the Assyrians thought *bīt hilānī* meant "house of windows," Hebrew *bēt hallōnīm*.³⁴

The *bīt hilānī* joined a throne room at the palace core with enough air and light to make it pleasant. In Assyria, and in the West, the form was not restricted to royal halls, but was applied also to less formal settings.³⁵

Like medieval cathedrals, the Jerusalem temple was built on the same pattern. Surrounded on three sides by three stories of offices fifteen cubits high in total, its nave, or central hall, and adyton (holy of holies) rose thirty cubits. It was lighted, and the hearth before the adyton was ventilated, by clerestory.³⁶ The story of Samson's death also presupposes such a structure: Samson pulls down the bearing pillars of a Philistine temple (Judg. 16:25f.). Yet the spectators are standing on the roof (v. 27). How does one watch from a roof the pillars supporting the roof? Did the narrator toss the story off, oblivious to the inconsistency, carelessly installing spectators atop the building Samson was in? More likely, he had a concrete building in mind. The Philistines must be standing on surrounding roofs, atop the abutting chambers, peering through windows down into a central hall. Access to the roofs would be gained from the staircase next to the portico.

The place to reconstruct the Israelite royal *'aliyyā*, therefore, is at the level of the throne room clerestory (so the reading of the scroll in Jer. 36:21f.). Royal bedrooms were located on upper stories, sometimes, like the rear tiers of Megiddo Palaces 1723 and 6000 and the palace at Tell es-Sultan (and Lachish Palace A), sitting on the city wall (1 Sam. 19:11–15; cf. Josh. 2:5–7, 15; 2 Sam 6:16; Judg. 5:28),³⁷ or opening onto rooftops that commanded a view of the city (2 Sam. 11:2; 2 Kings 6:26, 30; 2 Sam. 16:21f.). The staircase by the portico of the *bū ḥilāni* shows that the upper reaches around the throne room were in use.³⁸ The suggestion is that it was at this level, inside the throne room, that the king's *'aliyyā* sat. The king could see out from his royal seat, as several texts indicate (Wen-Amun 1, 48; 2 Kings 1:2).³⁹

The elevation of the throne is a commonplace of architecture. In triple-segmented royal chapels, such as Solomon's, the adyton (holy of holies) was regularly raised.⁴⁰ This was the god's seat, or dais.⁴¹ Just so, Yhwh's adyton stood ten cubits above the nave floor: the temple rose thirty cubits, the adyton twenty (1 Kings 6:2, 20), so that from the nave, at a maximum remove of less than forty cubits, only the carrying poles of the ark projected far enough forward from the adyton to be visible (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9).⁴² Toward the rear of the adyton, the wings of two cherubs, ten cubits higher still, were imagined to constitute Yhwh's throne, probably at window level; the ark was his "footstool" (Ps. 99:5; 132:7; cf. 1 Chron. 28:1f.). That both were unseen from the nave means that the holy of holies stood atop a flight of stairs at the rear of the temple. Yhwh, Isaiah tells us, sat "high and exalted" over the nave (6:1). That his description reflects a vision of Yhwh enthroned in the adyton is corroborated by the description of the temple in 1 Kings 6–8.

Not every throne rested on an *'aliyyā*: Solomon's lion throne, atop six steps (1 Kings 10:18–20; 2 Chron. 9:17–19), may not have had one.⁴³ But Solomon's adyton, with its double doors (1 Kings 6:31f.; 7:50; 2 Chron. 4:22), was Yhwh's alone, as the double-doored *'aliyyā* (Judg.

3:23–25) was the king's.⁴⁴ In royal architecture only the throne is so private; its occupation by someone other than the king signals usurpation. The king's *'aliyyā* is the throne platform "high and exalted" in his judgment hall (cf. 1 Sam. 2:8; Jer. 17:12; 52:32//2 Kings 25:28; Esth. 3:1). Its elevation both expressed and concretized the idea that the king was magnified on enthronement (1 Kings 1:46–48; 1 Chron. 28:5; 29:23–25), an idea underlying the myth of the god too short for the throne (CTA 6.1:56–65, alluded to in Isa. 14:13f.).⁴⁵ Wen-Amun, too, in audience with the king of Byblos (ca. 1100 B.C.E.) in the royal *'aliyyā*, sees ocean waves breaking against the king's back. Thus, as in Israel, where a king sustains a mortal fall from it, and like the temple adyton, this throne platform probably sat high at the end of an audience chamber. At ground level, Assyrian thrones occupy the same position. Further, the hearth before the throne in the *bū ḥilāni* corresponds to the altar in front of the adyton. The architecture of royal exaltation is a general one.⁴⁶

These conclusions follow: the royal *'aliyyā*, or "upper room," was a throne platform overlooking and accessible from the audience chamber (as in the Ehud story); just as the temple adyton was placed inside the nave (and developed from the niche), it was formally inside the audience hall. Despite some evidence of wood, e.g., at Megiddo 6000, there is no archaeological reflex of it: possibly Syrian throne rooms lacked wooden platforms. But Eglon's platform rested on wooden joists, not on stone walls; and texts concerning audiences treat the *'aliyyā* as an integral component of the audience hall. So it probably stood inside the hall, a platform partitioned by a wood screen. It was not, in all likelihood, a separate room (IV on Fig. 3). In any event, windows offered access to the adjoining rooftops.⁴⁷ It was placed so as to benefit from the *bū ḥilāni*'s clerestory light and ventilation, and from the warmth of the hearth in winter. Assyrian kings used the *bū ḥilāni* both for residential and for state suites; Tiglath-Pileser III built one "for my recreation." In 1 Kings 7:8 the same usage is attested in Israel—the private suites of Solomon and of his Egyptian bride were patterned on his public reception halls (1 Kings 7:6f.). Evidently the form was both durable and adaptable.

THE ISRAELITE PALACE IN ACTION: SPATIAL AND STATUS DIVISIONS

The foregoing discussion trisects the royal reception suite into a portico just outside the throne room proper, the throne room or audience chamber itself, and an enclosed throne platform, or *'aliyyā*. These are labeled A, B, and C of Figure 3. The complex figures in several texts.

Indications of court protocol provide the background. In 2 Samuel 17 Absalom deliberates with the elders. Ahitophel's advice sways them (vv. 1–4); and then they summon Hushai. Absalom reviews Ahitophel's report (v. 6), and Hushai successfully rebuts it (vv. 7–14). But Hushai cannot gauge his success—after trying to win time for David, he urges the

old bear to flee headlong (vv. 15ff.). Evidently he is absent from the final deliberations, and knows only what alternatives are under discussion. Nor is Ahitophel better informed. Much action intervenes before Ahitophel sees "that his counsel was not being executed" and rides home to hang himself (v. 23). Hushai and Ahitophel, thus, are present in the throne room only when arguing briefs.

1 Kings 1 correlates this usage to the tripartite layout of the court. David sits with a concubine in the *'aliyyā* (Fig. 3C). Into this chamber comes Bathsheba (v. 15). While she is there the attendants (Fig. 3B) announce Nathan (Fig. 3A; v. 23), who enters David's presence (Fig. 3B). But when he finishes, Bathsheba must be called back—she has gone to the portico (3A) to wait. Bathsheba reenters the audience chamber (Fig. 3B; v. 28). But then Nathan must be recalled (v. 32): he has gone out during Bathsheba's audience. Nathan and Bathsheba are on the Hushai-Ahitophel merry-go-round. The contrast is to Abishag, who remains in the *'aliyyā*.

Three classes are in point: the king, with special retainers (in 1 Kings 1, the wife and the consort), on the dais; the entourage, who stand in the audience hall and regulate admission to it (*hā-ōmēdim 'al ham-melek*); and those the attendants admit (see Fig. 3). Members of the last class wait in an antechamber (Fig. 3A) and enter singly: to this custom, not to arbitrary redaction, we owe the complexities of 2 Samuel 17 and 1 Kings 1. Starting with Solomon (1 Kings 2:19), the queen mother ranks among the premier class: she has a throne of her own to the right of the king's.⁴⁸ The division of the reception suite mirrors gradations of prestige.

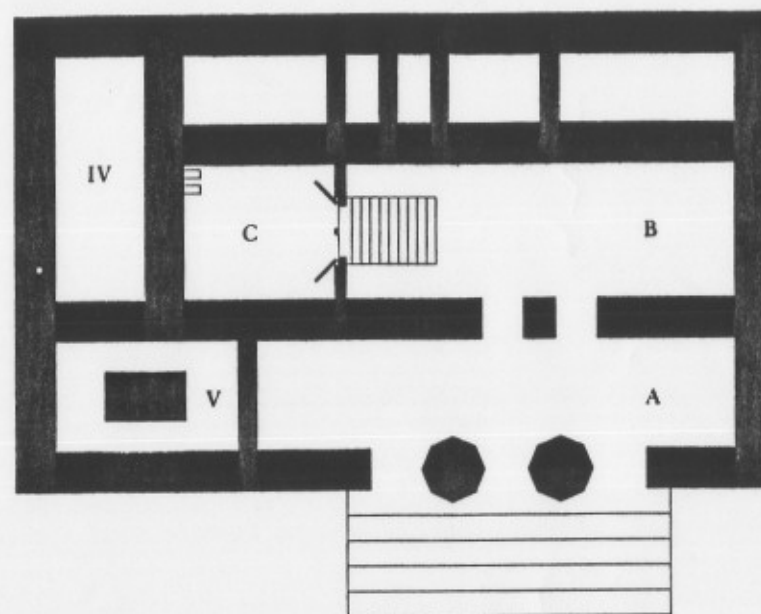
The same social distinctions appear, implicitly, in other texts. But the most striking confirmation comes from 2 Samuel 13.

In this text Amnon, David's son, feigns illness, to lure his sister Tamar to his home. She kneads dough and seethes it, on a hearth, before his eyes (v. 8). Amnon dismisses his servants, who leave him with Tamar (v. 9). He now tells Tamar, "Bring the dish into the room" (v. 10). Tamar had prepared the food in Amnon's sight and hearing, but in a room adjoining that in which he reclined. In the palace of Figure 3, Tamar was in Area B, and Amnon was in C.

When Tamar approaches, Amnon ravishes her. This suggests that the servants are out of sight, not in the area where Tamar had simmered the dough. But the retinue are within earshot, for after the rape, Amnon calls his aide, who expels Tamar from the house (vv. 17f.). Three spaces are in use: 1) the room in which Amnon lies, equivalent to the royal station overlooking the audience hall; 2) the hall itself, equipped with hearth, from which Tamar enters Amnon's chamber; and, 3) the space outside the complex, which is out of view, but within earshot. In this third space the servants waited.

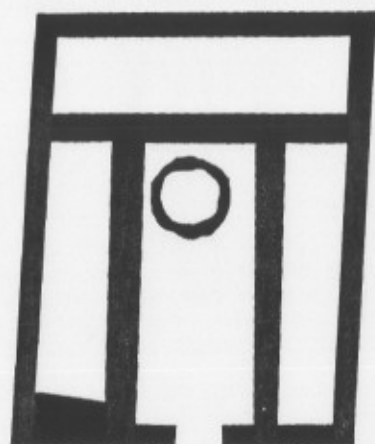
Any complex with three such spaces would satisfy the demands of the narrative. Thus one could locate Amnon above the rear chamber of a four-room house (Fig. 4), where ovens sometimes appear in the central

FIGURE 3: EGLON'S PALACE (MOCK-UP)



- A. Porticoed antechamber
- B. Audience hall
- C. *'aliyyā*
- IV. Casemate room behind the audience hall
- V. Stairway to upper story

FIGURE 4: A FOUR-ROOM HOUSE



(8th century, Tell en-Nasbeh)

courtyard. The palace is a more likely setting, because that is where informed readers would be likely to place a prince. Further, situating the account in a four-room house implies that the courtyard was unroofed, and that Amnon's courtiers stood in the open, waiting out the rape on the street.⁴⁹ But the functional principle is identical in any case: the royal station commands a view of a hall separate from it; in the latter stand the courtiers. The spatial and class relations in the texts about the palace make the *būt hīlāni* a serviceable model on which to proceed. They indicate that the palatial structures at Megiddo and Tell es-Sultan should be interpreted as fully roofed complexes with large audience halls.

Using the *būt hīlāni*, with an *'aliyyā*, as a model, coordinates the Ehud story with the assumptions shared between the narrator and his ancient audience. As the next section shows, all evidence converges on the conclusion that the Israelite narrator had some such model in mind.

EHUD'S IRON AGE ALIBI

Locating Eglon on a podium opening on an audience hall resolves the basic difficulties in the Ehud account. It invites an interpretation not dependent on an elaborate apparatus of reader-supplied action, one that assumes only the reader's familiarity with the architecture. The narrator provides all the necessary spatial orientation in Judges 3:18–20.

When Ehud returns to the court, in verse 19, there is no notice that Eglon has left the state room in which he earlier received his tribute. He is still holding court and still receiving Israelites. The narrator therefore must have expected the reader to situate Eglon on the throne. The behavior of the courtiers, and the subsequent action, corroborate this inference.

Ehud addresses the king: "I have a secret word for you, o king!" This places the assassin in the audience hall (B in Fig. 3). The retinue, then, leave Eglon and Ehud alone (v. 19), which suggests they have been in attendance in the public chambers. But they *do not* go wandering aimlessly about town. As protocol demands, they remain on call, on duty, now, in the portico (Fig. 3A), like Absalom's retinue during the rape of Tamar.

Verse 20 begins, "Ehud entered unto him," to describe his crossing from one space to another (n. 19). Here the usage is normal: just at this juncture comes the remark that Eglon "was sitting in the chamber atop the beams, which was his alone." Had this notice come earlier or later, it might imply that the whole conversation between Ehud and Eglon took place inside the *'aliyyā*. The notice comes exactly at this point, just after the notice that Ehud crossed a threshold, to differentiate between the area in which Ehud and the courtiers had stood, and the chamber that Ehud now entered. Ehud has crossed from Area B to Area C on Figure 3.

Verse 23 carries the spatial argument further. Ehud escapes the locked *'aliyyā*. The assumption that this takes him from C to B (Fig. 3) explains why the servants return: in verse 24, Ehud emerges from Area B and enters Area A, signaling the end of the audience. After all, had they not seen Ehud leave, they could not know when to return; and the locked doors of the throne platform should have suggested that Ehud was within. Nor is an unconventional egress a possibility:⁵⁰ as noted earlier, it would raise the specter of foul play. Rather, everything is normal: Ehud has left by the usual egress.

The courtiers waited outside the throne room: on their return (v. 24), "Behold! the doors of the *'aliyyā* were locked!" They have resumed their posts in the audience hall, but the king's throne chamber, inside the hall, is closed. It follows that during Ehud's audience, they must have stood at a remove of two doors from the king: those of the *'aliyyā*, locked by Ehud, and those of the room they entered to find the *'aliyyā* locked. They have come from the portico, their station during private audiences, to Area B.

The whole account revolves around this presupposition. The king sat in the *'aliyyā* (Area C); the courtiers left Ehud in the hall Eglon overlooked (Area B). Ehud somehow locked the murdered king in the *'aliyyā*, and made his way from the audience hall (Area B) to the portico (Area A), where the servants waited. The same logic calls for one further step:

Ehud must have locked the *'aliyyā* from inside, before negotiating a passage into the audience hall.

Several considerations converge on this point. That the meticulous narrator mentions no device by which Ehud could have locked the doors from outside has been noted. Moreover, the courtiers, on their return to the audience hall, suspect nothing. The locked doors of the *'aliyyā* suggest that the king is defecating (v. 24). This is an act Israelites performed in private (n. 4), and the inference was that Eglon had himself locked the doors: the doors appeared from without as though locked from within, and it wanted a key to work the lock from without (v. 25).

The narrator implies that there was no obvious means of egress from the *'aliyyā* to the audience hall (Area B). The courtiers had left Ehud in Area B and Eglon in Area C. On their return there was every indication that Eglon had locked the *'aliyyā* only after Ehud left. Were there grounds for suspicion, the concealment of the dagger in the corpse (hiding all traces of the murder, v. 25) would have no narrative function. In fact, suspicion arises only because Eglon takes too long about his private business.⁵¹

The Hebrew, *wys' 'hwd hmsdrwnh wysgr dltwt h'lyh b'dw wn'l whw' ys' w'bdyw b'w* (vv. 23f.), seems repetitive: "Ehud went out through the *mis-dārōn*. He [had?] closed the doors of the *'aliyyā* upon him and bolted [them]. Now, he went out, and [Eglon's] servants entered." The second notice of Ehud's exit coordinates his departure with the retinue's return; Ehud's emergence onto the portico signals the end of the private audience. But the first statement, "Ehud went out," cannot simply duplicate the action. It would be redundant and would violate the pattern of verbal forms in the narrative.⁵² On any reasonable reading, the statement that Ehud "went out through the *mis-dārōn*" must describe his passage from the locked *'aliyyā* to the audience hall. This is the one element of his escape that is otherwise shrouded in mystery.

If a rear exit is excluded, two possibilities come to mind. The *mis-dārōn* could be the audience hall itself, or even the portico. The verse, then, would say that Ehud left through the normal exit, arousing no suspicion. But if this is all it says, how did Ehud get out of the chamber into which he had locked himself? Assuming that Ehud locked the *'aliyyā* from without, again, the narrator will have mentioned what he need not (the passage from *'aliyyā* to audience hall) without describing what he should (the means by which Ehud locked the *'aliyyā* from without). Further, *mis-dārōn* is a *hapax legomenon*—an expression that in all of HB occurs only here. It probably denotes an unusual feature of palace architecture.⁵³ For the audience hall and the portico, more workaday terms were available: an example is *'ūlām*, or reception area: the *'ūlām* of justice, or of the throne (1 Kings 7:7); and the *'ūlām* of the pillars (1 Kings 7:6). Thus the diction would be awkward at best.

The other obvious recourse is better: the *mis-dārōn* could be the loggia stretching around the upper part of the throne hall. Ehud would have stepped out from the king's *'aliyyā* to the adjoining rooftop, walked a few paces toward the other end of the hall, and jumped down to the floor of the audience hall, Area B. This would still leave him the opportunity to waltz through the door of Area B into Area A, as though everything were normal. He could not, of course, simply leave through the loggia: in that case, the courtiers could not know Eglon was left alone.

The argument that this course would risk detection is not debilitating. But the lexical problems are again discouraging. The biblical word for palace or temple loggia is consistently "window," *hallōn*. Nor could *mis-dārōn* refer to the rooftop: this is always called the "roof" (*gag*). Finally, on this reading, the narrator mentions that Ehud went out through the loggia, but forgets to say that he jumped back into the audience hall. Again, the interpretation satisfies the demands of the story's plot. But it asks, again, that the reader supply action that the narrator, for no reason, forgets.

These alternatives suggest on literary and lexical grounds that Ehud locked the *'aliyyā* from within. This means that the action between "Ehud went out" and "Now, he went out" (vv. 23f.) is related out of sequence: the rhetorical resumption, or epanalepsis, frames explication that breaks the temporal continuum; here, the first member of the epanalepsis refers to an earlier, the second to a later event.⁵⁴ Thus, "Ehud went out of the *'aliyyā*. He had closed the doors of the *'aliyyā* b'dw (upon him) and bolted them" (v. 23f.). Ehud locked himself inside the *'aliyyā*.

This interpretation is enhanced by the formulation, "he had closed the doors b'dw" (v. 23). In every instance in which the verb "to close" occurs in association with the preposition *b'd*, the object of the preposition is shut inside the structure being closed.⁵⁵ Commentators alive to this fact have, since Qimhi, taken Eglon as the preposition's object. Again, stylistic considerations confute them: Ehud is long since the last subject mentioned, and the reader naturally assumes that he is the object of the preposition here. He "had closed the doors of the *'aliyyā* upon him."⁵⁶ The logic of the account and the style of the narrative thus triangulate on this reading.

At first glance the notice that Ehud had locked himself in with the corpse may seem awkwardly placed. But if the *mis-dārōn* is, as seems likely, an unexpected exit from the king's special chamber to the audience hall, then the narrator has simply followed the course he adopted when mentioning that Eglon was already seated there (v. 20). Instead of retarding the flow of the action with a circumstantial element whose relevance lies further on, he incorporates the information in a telegraphic aside when it becomes necessary. Ehud left through the *mis-dārōn* be-

cause "he had closed the doors of the *'aliyyā* upon him and bolted them," from the inside: one needs to know this in verse 23 to understand both his unusual egress and the subsequent action. This accounts for the use of the *hapax*, for the other stylistic peculiarities, and for the courtiers' befuddlement.⁵⁷ Ehud locked himself in with the king.

How did Ehud escape? The clue is the character of the *'aliyyā*. This was a room atop wooden joists. It was further a room in which Eglon evacuated himself (v. 24). It stands to reason that below was an area under the beams.

The indoor toilet characterizes palaces from the middle of the second millennium onward. It is well attested in the *būt hīlāni*.⁵⁸ At Fort Shalmaneser one stands just to the left of the royal dais in T1, which two post holes divide from the tracks of a wheeled fire wagon.⁵⁹ Three stone objects that look like toilets have been unearthed at the City of David.⁶⁰ There is also evidence of drainage from a second-story installation at Iron Age Taanach.

Here, then, is an inconspicuous—an unthinkable—avenue from the privy chamber to the audience hall. The courtiers infer that Eglon has locked his doors to use one; it follows that the *'aliyyā* contained a commode. What the king deposited from above can only have fallen through the floor. And to this nether region, which will hardly have been kept locked, janitors must have had access, from a room opening onto the audience hall. Thus the term *misḏārōn* should be linked not, as usual, to the Hebrew *seder* (root *s-d-r*, "order"; hence "portico, row of pillars"),⁶¹ but, after the suggestion of David Golomb,⁶² to the Hebrew, Targumic, and Arabic root *sadira*, denoting "to be blinded, puzzled." The expression mirrors the attitude that produced the euphemism "to cover one's feet," for excretion—the motif of concealment is the same. *Misḏārōn*, then, means something on the order of "the hidden place," an appropriate designation for the area under the beams. There is a philological parallel in the Yehawmilk inscription from Persian-period Byblos. There the *misṭarim*, "the hidden," is the recess under a temple floor or, conceivable, its contents.⁶³ It denotes a hollow, untraveled space. In the probable absence of any other access into the audience hall from the locked *'aliyyā*, the opening leading through this cellar presents the most probable avenue of Ehud's escape.⁶⁴

This explains why the word *misḏārōn* is so recondite: the region in question otherwise plays no part in Hebrew narrative. It further explains why the narrator lays such stress on the escape: the movement through the "hidden place" completes the killing's concealment, and leads to the preemptive grip on the fords. Ehud's exit, and his complicity in a crime that is not seen to be a crime, is camouflaged from the Moabites' consciousness. Eglon's killing is a "perfect murder." A recapitulation of the account is in order.

EHUD'S ADVENTURE

Ehud ben-Gera was a lefthanded combat ace, a hardened professional warrior. Commander, for this reason, of the detachment that escorted Israel's tribute to Eglon, the corpulent Moabite king, he was a grizzled colonel, Moab's vassal-in-chief. One day he strapped a diminutive dagger, double-edged for cleaner cutting, onto his right thigh, not his left. Ehud did his obeisance, and then marched his detachment back to its point of dispersal, out of sight of the court, by the enigmatic *pesilim* at Gilgal. Only afterward did he double back to the court, seeming thereby to keep his second assignment with Eglon a secret from his countrymen.

At the court Ehud secured a private audience by the subterfuge of promising a sensitive disclosure (*debar seter*)—by implication a denunciation of some fellow vassal.⁶⁵ His dirk, on the right thigh, went unnoticed; and he had just before abased himself in the submissive role of a tributary. The retinue withdrew from the audience hall (Fig. 3B) to wait in the porticoed antechamber (Area A). They left Ehud in the audience hall, and Eglon on his *'aliyyā* (Area C). Once the doors to the hall had shut, Ehud sprang up the stairs of the royal podium, imparting an air of urgency to his mission. Perhaps he even bolted the doors at this point, as a final precaution against eavesdroppers. In a modern adaptation the assassin would examine the chamber for listening devices, or turn on the water taps to confound them.

Inside the *'aliyyā* Ehud confronted the crapulous monarch: "It is a word of God (*debar 'elohim*) I have for you!" he cried. In a single dextrous motion, innocuous at first blush, his left hand crossed his body and plucked from his right thigh a sinister shaft. The king struggled to stand in bewildered horror,⁶⁶ but the Israelite's right hand restrained him, half-bent. All his practiced strength focused in the blow, Ehud stabbed the dagger skyward from his knees, and punched it into Eglon's ample belly, driving it home deep with the heel of his palm. The uncrossed hilt buried itself in a sea of paunch.

Death was instantaneous; no blood seeped out. The sole sign of violence was the unsavory release of Eglon's anal sphincter, which expelled the contents of his intestines onto the floor. Meanwhile Ehud, having fastened the doors of the *'aliyyā* from inside, swung down through the floor to the level below. He emerged, from an adjoining room, into the audience chamber (Area B) and crossed deliberately to the door. His audience finished, he appeared on the portico (Area A), and strode unchallenged out the courtyard.

Filing back into the throne room (from Area A to Area B), the Moabite courtiers looked, "and behold! the doors of the *'aliyyā* were barred!" (v. 24). Possibly the odor of Eglon's final deposit wafted to the retainers through the air. In any event, the courtiers satisfied themselves he must

be relieving himself, and had locked the *'aliyyā* doors to that end.

The courtiers waited. We may imagine them whiling away their time with quips on quotidian reality—the inferior Israelites, cuisine at the court, the king's constipation. As moments mounted into embarrassing minutes, the delicate matter of disturbing their liege pressed ever more on their minds. The minutes elapsed—an hour, at a guess—"and behold! he did not open the doors of the *'aliyyā*!" (v. 25). They called, then knocked, first demurely, then louder. Sure now of something amiss, they fetched the key. One of them undid the door: "Behold! There was their lord, fallen dead on the floor" (v. 25), his load dropped beside him. No blood; dagger enveloped; no sign of fiddling with the lock. Ehud's "secret word" (v. 19) remained a secret, but Eglon's "hidden things" were now exposed. To all appearances, Eglon had come a cropper during a marathon bout on the "throne."

The Moabites dallied, with their head cut off; Ehud rallied his troops from the hills. They seized the Jordan fords and then engaged the Moabites. The latter, cut off from home, retired in disorder, to be cut down at the river. The consecutive concealment of intent, weapon, assassination, body, and signs of violence issued in tactical and strategic surprise.

THE GENRE OF THE STORY

In this story Ehud bewilders the Moabites with what amounts to a locked room "howdunnit."⁶⁷ Logically, the act was impossible: the assassin must have left before the killing was done. The tale bears some similarity to the episode in which Odysseus blinds Polyphemos. Odysseus identifies himself to his victim as "No one," and, when the Cyclops' brothers inquire who was the culprit, their one eyewitness repeats, "No one." In this respect the story resembles other premodern fiction about an actor unlocking a riddle already solved for the audience.⁶⁸ A locked room murder in an archetypal locked room, among people who do not dream of murder—this is a picaresque.

Because of this Alter has asserted that the story's author enjoyed the latitude to write "an imaginative reenactment of the historical event . . . fictionalized history—history in which the feeling and meaning of events are concretely realized through the technical resources of prose fiction."⁶⁹ Because all premodern historical narrative is fictional in this sense (Chapter 1), the observation is a truism. But Alter means that the author of the account did not have it in mind to write history, but rather to write a story, a historical romance. Against this position should therefore be posed the question, What changes would make the account history?

A salient property of the Ehud story is its narrative economy. Until one comes to the playful notice in verse 29 that all the Moabites were obese, virtually no detail is superfluous. The author furnishes details not

to elaborate, thus, but only to actualize his reconstruction: his interest centers on the crucial events that enabled Ehud to sever the head of the Moabite hegemony, or to deprive the Moabites of their chief warrior, and to win surprise at the fords. Indeed, the terse notices about Ehud's lefthandedness and Eglon's palace layout provide a minimum of information, just enough to follow the plot. Ehud's doubling back, as though he were double-dealing with his compatriots, realistically communicates the secretive undertones of his approach, and averts the question as to why the king was not suspicious of him. Ehud's declaration to the king maneuvers the monarch into position to be struck, and dissipates the impression of the unctuous, dark man that assassins so often create. It differentiates Ehud's daring from deceit, repudiating intimations of insinuation (cf. Joab in 2 Sam. 20:9f.). This far, the author goes. No other detail is remotely unnecessary to the plot.

Narrative economy alone cannot sustain the verdict that an account is historical literature. This can be proved only through a comparison of the account with its sources. If the narrative conforms to the data in the sources, if it digests and represents them chiefly with a view to conveying the central historical data they provide, then we may claim that the account is historical. The reconstruction and presentation in Judges 3 are driven by an inexorable logic, which furnishes grounds for suspecting an underlying antiquarian impulse. But, in contrast to those of the text examined in Chapter 4, the sources of Judges 3 are no longer extant, except within the story itself. This is the case for most of the reports in the Former Prophets, and it is as a representative of this situation that the Ehud episode is considered here. Proof that the narrative is historical cannot be adduced. But evidence that it is historical can (chapters 1 and 2). The evidence derives from the contrast between the nature of the pericope as we have it and the probable nature of the sources.

The Ehud story is not part of a continuous narrative, such as the Court History. It is a short note, integrated probably with little reworking into an episodic framework.⁷⁰ Internally it is not a vehicle for thematic or for literary development, but a relation of events. This is not to gainsay its artistry. The historian who produced the account was a masterful narrator. In the hands of a professional storyteller, however, Ehud's exploits would have spilled over the present fifteen verses of prose, and furnished the stuff of an evening's entertainment, a drama.⁷¹ This is the source on which the author in Judges 3:15–29 drew: from the oral tradition, the evidence suggests, he extracted a reconstruction of events. What we have in Judges 3 is a boiled-down version of a long-transmitted escapade.

The nature of the oral recension is important. Ehud's is a story of daring and cleverness, which made its protagonist an object of popular accolade. The same genre of oral entertainment underlies notices in the lists of David's heroes: 2 Samuel 21:15–22; 23:8–12 record victories in single

combat against champions and accomplishments in generalized battle. More vivid notices in 2 Samuel 23:14–17, 20–23 commemorate especially striking feats. In each case, the text distills drastically what must have been a colorful narrative celebration.

Treatments of such incidents are fuller when integrated with an ongoing literary context. Jonathan's rout of the Philistines, for example, is the linchpin of the account in 1 Samuel 13:2–14:45. Various Davidic adventures are strung onto the romance of his early career (1 Sam. 17; 19:11–18; 21:10–16).

One group of texts will illustrate the principle. In 2 Samuel 23:14–17, three of David's champions raid a Philistine garrison in Bethlehem. They return with water from its well. But David pours it out, exclaiming, *hālilā li (mē-)yhw̄h mē-āšōtī zō't* ("Yhw̄h forfend that I should do this"). This exploit probably inspired 1 Samuel 24; 26. Here Saul falls unwittingly into David's power—in Chapter 26 David raids the king's camp. In each case David appropriates a token, like the water from Bethlehem. Indeed, in 26:12, he removes Saul's water jug, along with his spear (the spear signifying the threat to Saul, the water jug perhaps from 2 Samuel 23:14–17, in oral tradition). In both chapters David refuses to kill his adversary, though urged on by his underling(s) (24:4, 6f.; 26:8–11; cf. 2 Sam. 23:16f.); his words are *hālilā li mē-yhw̄h* (24:6; 26:11; "Yhw̄h forfend") *im 'ešeh 'et had-dābār haz-zeh* (24:6; "that I should do this thing"). Only in these passages and 1 Kings 21:3 is *hālilā* followed by *mē-yhw̄h*. Saul next recognizes that David is destined for great things, and leaves off campaigning against him (24:8–22; 26:13–25).

1 Samuel 24; 26 composes a doublet. Each text is constructed around the sort of exploit enshrined in 2 Samuel 23:14–17 (see Fig. 5), and each was inherited by the Deuteronomist with an ongoing source about Saul and David (Chapter 8). Both elements of the doublet are preserved, because differences between them implied that two separate events were involved. Yet the texts serve the same literary function: they describe the resolution of the conflict between Saul and David, and they complement traditions dissociating David from Saul's death (1 Sam. 21:11–16; 29–30; 2 Sam. 1; 1 Chron. 12:20f.). Their parallel development, and their parallel incorporation into the historiography, testify to their place in the Israelite storytelling tradition. These oral variants illustrate the sort of tradition from which the Ehud story was probably drawn.

The embellishment in characterization and in detail that marks 1 Samuel 24//26 reflects their central role in the cycle of tales about David's rise. They are integral to an evolving thematic sequence, and have the marks of romance as a result. These adventure stories establish that the feat of valor, turning on a stratagem, had a secure position in the early storytelling of the Israelites. With the arguable exception of Jehu's putsch, there are no instances of them in Kings—the genre belonged to the heroic age, and to an oral context; in the dusty records of the chan-

FIGURE 5: 1 Samuel 23–24//26//2 Samuel 23

2 Samuel 23:13–17	1 Samuel 26	1 Samuel 23:19–24:22
David in מצודה (1 Sam. 23:19; 24:22)	יבאו הזפים אל שאול הנבעתה לאמר הלא דוד מסתתר (עמנו) בנבעת החכילה על פני הישימן	ועלו זפים אל שאול הנבעתה לאמר הלא דוד מסתתר עמנו במצודות בחרשה בנבעת החכילה אשר מימן הישימן אזה, cf. 2 Samuel 23:15; סגר, 26:8 conversation, unsuccessful pursuit follow; in 24:1, Saul learns that David is in the cave of Ein Gedi
	ויקם שאול וירד אל מדבר ויף וחתו שלש אלפים איש בחורי ישראל לבקש את דוד במדבר ויף	24:2 ויקם שאול שלש אלפים איש בחור מכל ישראל וילך לבקש את דוד על פני צורי יעלים
13 Philistines camp David and men in cave	3–6 Saul camps; David reconnoitres	3 Saul enters cave to defecate David and men present in cave
15 David calls for volunteers ("Who will . . . ?" cf. 1 Sam. 26:6)	David calls on Ahimelek and Abishai for volunteers to enter Saul's camp	
15 "Heroes" enter (unguarded?) garrison (v. 18) Abishai associated (?)	Saul sleeping (night) (v. 7) David and Abishai enter camp	Saul squats in dark cave
	8 Abishai advocates killing Saul: (cf. 1 Sam. 23:20; 24:18) סגר היום אלהים את איביך בידך	4 David's men urge him to kill Saul: הנה היום אשר אמר ה' אליך הנה אנכי נתן את איביך בידך נתן ביד, cf. 26:23
16 "Heroes" retrieve water from Philistine camp (on water, cf. 26:12)	See no. 11f., this column	4 David cuts off edge of Saul's robe
		5 David regrets clipping robe!
16f. David refuses to drink ("did not allow"; cf. 26:23 on Messiah) חלילה לי (מ) מעשתי זאת	9–11 David precludes killing Saul: חלילה לי מה' משלח ידי במשיח ה'	6f. David precludes killing Saul: חלילה לי מה' אם אעשה את הדבר הזה לאדוני למשיח ה' לשלח ידי בו משיח ה' הוא

2 Samuel 23:13-17	1 Samuel 26	1 Samuel 23:19-24:22
See no. 16, this column	11f. David takes water flask and spear from Saul	See no. 4, this column
	12f. David and Abishai distance themselves from camp	7 Saul leaves cave
	14-16 Taunting Abner, David calls to show evidence that he could have killed Saul ("Look!")	8-13 David calls to Saul, showing the evidence that he could have killed him ("Look!")
	17 Saul recognizes David's voice (speaking to Abner anonymously): הקולך זה בני דוד	See v. 16, this column
	18 David claims innocence: כי מה עשיתי מה בידי רעה	11 David claims innocence אין בידי רעה ופשע
16 David pours out water as libation to Yhwh	See vv. 23f, this column	11b-13 + 15: David invokes Yhwh: ישמם ה' ביני ובינך ונקמי ה' ממך
	20 David will not die an enemy: כי יצא מלך ישראל לבקש את פרעש אחד כאשר ירדף (cf. v. 18) הקרא בהרים	14 אחרי מי יצא מלך ישראל אחרי מי אתה רדף אחרי כלב מת אחרי פרעש אחד
	See 26:17, this column	16 Saul recognizes David's voice (David not speaking anonymously): הקולך זה בני דוד
	21 Saul confesses he was in the wrong, promising immunity: חחח אשר נפשי בעיניך היום הזה (see v. 23)	17f. Saul confesses David is in the right: אשר סגרני ה' בידך ולא הרגתני
	22 David returns spear	No equivalent
	23 David invokes Yhwh (cf. 24:11b): A וה' ישיב לאיש את צדקתו ואת אמנתו	19 Saul continues (cf. 11f.): A וכי ימצא איש את איבו ושלווה בדרך טובה

2 Samuel 23:13-17	1 Samuel 26	1 Samuel 23:19-24:22
	B אשר נתגן ה' היום ביד (cf. v. 21) C ולא אביתי לשלח ידי במשיח ה'	B cf. 24:18 C cf. 24:18
	A' והנה כאשר גדלה נפשו היום הזה בעיני כן תגדל נפשי בעיני ה'	A' וה' ישלמך טובה תחת היום הזה אשר עשית לי
	25 Saul blesses David, who will "prevail"	20f. Saul recognizes that David will succeed him, extracts an oath not to extirpate Saul's house
	25b וילך דוד לדרכו ושאוול שב למקומו (imperfect-perfect verb sequence)	22 וילך שאול אל ביתו ודוד ואנשיו עלו על המצודה (imperfect-perfect verb sequence)

cellery, in the reverential idiom of prophetic tales, it had no natural life.⁷²

Here, the contrast between the abbreviated note of 2 Samuel 23:14-17 (and its context, 5:17-25) and the expansive, romanticized accounts of 1 Samuel 24//26 deserves special attention: the Ehud story lacks all that the latter have—dialogue, characterization, inessential action; it is, like 2 Samuel 23:14-17, a reduction of the oral tradition. The same is true of 2 Samuel 21:19//1 Chron. 20:5 (read G), the notice that Elhanan ben-Dodo (?) smote Goliath. The story is told in expanded form in 1 Samuel 17, where it, like 1 Samuel 24//26, is displaced to David: the displacement is a typical effect of the oral tradition (Chapter 10). What characterizes the relationship between the oral romance and the literary notice is again a dramatic reduction, a reduction of the drama.

The oral version of the Ehud episode, then, had its home probably in the premonarchic or early monarchic era of Israel's history. Like the notes about David's heroes, the literary version is the fossil of a living tradition. It is self-contained, without theological or ideological implications for surrounding narratives. Driven by the logic of the reconstructed incident, the presentation focuses not on history and eschatology, but on mystery and scatology. The point of the story is to communicate the reconstruction of events.

Does all this distinguish the account from romance? Formally, there is no difference. But the diminishment of fictionalization and characterization, in contrast with comparable sources from the oral tradition, does constitute evidence that Judges 3 is a history. That physical sources (the palace, the topography) are carefully respected does not prove the author's intention is historiographic—the sewers of Vienna are accu-

rately used in *The Third Man*. But Harry Lime is not a historical figure; he is at best a pastiche of other figures. Ehud's name, all scholars concur, was received with the tradition (and 1 Chron. 7:10, suggesting he became an eponym); and the account little resembles the sort of tale the Deuteronomistic historian can be said to have invented (see chapters 6 and 9–10). Judges 3 derives from sources. Throughout, it presents only data that the oral story and his general knowledge licensed the historian to reconstruct.

Is there a difference between Judges 3 and a historical novel? In a novel the author presents events and details for which there is no historical evidence (David struggling with Saul's armor in 1 Samuel 17:38f.). Judges 3 minimizes such elements. Ehud speaks. But he does not speak about topics irrelevant to the reconstruction of events. And, like the generals of Thucydides, he speaks only where the historian was entitled to suppose he must have done. Where is the theme-building dialogue, as between David and Saul in Samuel; where the characterization, say, of Eglon; where the subtle suggestion of a hidden divine hand behind the episode? This is not elegant, but economical, reporting; it is in shorthand. And that shorthand reflects antiquarian interest (Chapter 1), the interest of a historian intent on extracting a reconstruction from his sources. This conclusion cannot be proved. But the evidence from the storytelling tradition renders it probable. The existence of a parallel case, where the source is actually extant (Chapter 4), further bears out the conclusion.

The Ehud story is not a romance in the sense that the *Iliad* is. It is an attempt to extract from fictionalizations, from more elaborate presentations, the bare historical facts. This tale stands in relation to the oral "romance" of Ehud as the historical credo of Deuteronomy 26:5–9 stands to that of the Hexateuch, as Thucydides' summary of the Trojan War stands to the *Iliad*; it is as densely historical as the Thucydidean epitome, much more so than that in Deuteronomy. The Ehud account is not "fictionalized history," in the sense of historical romance. It is history defictionalized.

It has been a staple of scholarship that the sources of the book of Judges were recollections about tribal heroes achieving local triumphs. The redactor generalized these accomplishments to imply the succor of all Israel.⁷³ The Ehud story, all on Benjaminite ground, is a parade case. Yet even the all-Israel redaction is not willful. Embedded already in Ehud's bearing (all) Israel's tribute to Eglon (vv. 15, 27), it reflects rather the forum in which the tale was preserved: the redaction took place over generations of recitation among Israelite audiences; these identified with the protagonist not because they were denizens of Benjamin or the central hills, but because they, too, were Israelites. When our historian rendered the account in writing, he respected this aspect, too, of the oral tradition.

That the account comes from the storytelling tradition, yet exhibits the features of a *précis*, affords an indication that the author wrote it down to preserve what he thought was a historical memory, all-Israel redaction included. At the same time the historian, or the story he inherited, made painstaking use of other sources: the layout of the palace, as known to Israelite audiences; the protocol of the court concerning private audiences, the stations of the courtiers, and interrupting the king *in camera*; and the military-topographical realities of the Jordan Valley. This application of knowledge is what drives the reconstruction, makes it work: historiography always represents a refraction of what the author believes happened once through what he or she thinks happens generally.

Other biblical narratives make comparable use of architectural data or court protocol to reconstitute the past. Among their number, the cases of Tamar's rape, Absalom's consultation with Ahitophel and Hushai, and Solomon's designation as heir have been touched on in this chapter's section entitled "The Palace." In no case does the historian indulge in fanciful rearrangement of familiar facilities or of recognized custom. These accounts, and the Ehud account in particular, presume the reader's predictable knowledge, instead of providing elaborate explanations of an author's imaginative departures from reality. This has the obvious implication that such narratives are reliable in their incidental details. In concert with the evidence that Judges 3 is a historical reduction from the storytelling tradition, it means further that the historian grounds his reconstruction as far as possible in the reality of Israelite life. His interest lies in recreating events experienced by real people in real time. The Ehud account, so bare, so terse, is as close as the ancient world comes to modern historical narrative. What must one add or subtract to convert it into history? Hardly a word.

The historian's reliance on sources does not certify that his account is accurate. He may have imposed the wrong usage or the wrong palace layout on an earlier Moabite court. His oral sources may not have been historical in orientation, as he thought, but may have been shaped instead by xenophobia vis-à-vis Moab (as Exod. 15:13f.). These are not, however, limitations that preclude the account's being history (Chapter 1). Its aim is to communicate to the reader an allegedly accurate record of physical and mental transactions. It is a meticulous, efficiently crafted, minimal, antiquarian reconstruction,⁷⁴ a contribution to the history of premonarchic Israel.

The case of Ehud involves selection, representation, mentalism—"fictionalization," as addressed in Chapter 1. Ehud speaks! But the reader must take care not to interpret such actualization more literally than its author intended. If we reproached the historian, "Those were not Ehud's words!" he would perhaps smile at our naïveté—one cannot argue that the romantic elements of the narrative should be amended. If

reliable in
incidental
details

we taxed him, "None of that occurred," his reaction would be more vigorous. History, as already noted, is all fictionalized, and yet history. An art, mediated by language, it differs from romance in degree and in intention—it is less metaphorical, more literal, and more often meant to convey accurate information at the literal level of discourse. Mark Twain wrote, "The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." Fictionalized history is the almost-right word. This is history, historical narrative, intended by reenactment to communicate antiquarian data.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. With W. Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (BBB 18; Bonn: Hanstein, 1963), vv. 12–15a, 30 are a formulaic framework. See Chapter 6. Hereafter Richter's book is referred to as *TUR*.
2. The setting in Cisjordan is disputed; but the Moabite path homeward crosses the Jordan in v. 28, which is why the framework mentions "the city of palms," and why it says Moab "occupied" (*yrš*) it, not "conquered" or "smote" it. Cf. W. Nowack, *Richter* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902); A. Malamat, "The Period of the Judges," in B. Mazar, ed., *Judges* (WHJP 1/3; [Tel Aviv: Massada, 1971] 154f.; M. Garsiel, "The Ehud ben-Gera Episode (Judges 3:12–30)," in *Sepher Ron* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1974), 61f. (Hebrew); Richter, *TUR* (n. 1) 9f., with vv. 15–26 in Transjordan (but the geographic details in vv. 19, 26, should then center on the river, not some feature near Gilgal).
3. Older versions render "and the excrement came out" (*V cibus/stercus eius eiecit*; T *u'klyh špyk*); cf. Heb. *prš*, read by K. Budde (*Das Buch der Richter* [KHCAT 7; Freiburg: Mohr, 1897], 31), arguing corruption from *msdrwnh*. It is difficult to see what other rendering could be appropriate. RS 24.258 (*Ugaritica* 5:546–51) also mentions this commonplace of death. Cf. C. F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (2nd ed.; London: Rivingtons, 1920), 72f.; O. Glaser, "Zur Erzählung von Ehud und Eglon. (Ri. 3, 14–26)," *ZDPV* 55 (1932): 81f., with *pršdnh* parallel to *msdrwnh* as Ehud's avenue of egress ("a place of excrement"), followed by W. von Soden, "Zum akkadischen Wörterbuch. 61–66," *Or* 24 (1955): 136–45, with lexical evidence (CT XIX 27a I 5; MSL XII 109:174, Akk. *parašdinnu* equals [...] HABRUD.DA) and a supposed Hittite etymon. This theory would demand the formulation *wys' hwd hpršdnh*. If the Sumerian equivalent is "hole," read "It came out at the anus."
4. In I Samuel 24:3 the phrase denotes something Saul seeks out the privacy of a cave to do, from which he afterward "arose," in the course of which David could, undetected, cut a corner from his (limp) robe. Defecation is indicated. According to Josephus (*Bell.* 2.148f.), the Essenes shielded themselves when defecating, which probably reflects an application of this expression to the prohibition against exposing excrement to Yhwh's sight in Deuteronomy 23:13–15. Cf. Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (Jerusalem: I.E.S., 1977), 1.233–35 (Hebrew); Hesiod, *Works and Days* 727–732. On the element of privacy, cf. Herodotus 2.36.
5. G^{AB} and V see ambidexterity here, and carry it into Judges 3:15; 20:16. These passages are not, however, comparable.
6. The joust in Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* translates the incident aptly. On the sling's accuracy, note A. Christie, *An Autobiography* (N.Y.: Ballantine, 1978), 46.
7. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), 64, 296f. Cf. M. Korfmann, "Die Waffe Davids. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Fernwaffen und zu den Anfängen organisierten kriegerischen Verhaltens," *Saeculum* 37 (1986): 129–49.
8. Yadin, *Art* (n. 7), 68f. (Middle Bronze example); M. Gihon, "The System of Fortifications in the Kingdom of Judah," in J. Liver, ed., *The Military History of the Land of Israel in Biblical Times* (Israel: Maarkhot, 1964), 415; E. Stern, "The Fortified City Gate and the Struggle for it under the Monarchy," *ibid.*, 400–407 (both Hebrew). Examples include Iron II Tell en-Nasbeh, Tel Miqneh, and MB II Shiloh. The connection to the Ehud story was made, in conversation, by S. Talmon (1971).
9. A. Malamat, "Early Israelite Warfare and the Conquest of Canaan," *Fourth Sacks Lecture* (Oxford: Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1978), 13–19. On tactics, see

- further J. H. Breasted, *The Battle of Kadesh: A Study in the Earliest Known Military Strategy* (University of Chicago Decennial Publications 3; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1903), 81–126; S. Yeivin, "Canaanite and Hittite Strategy in the Second Half of the Second Millennium B.C.," *JNES* 9 (1950): 101–107.
10. Rashi, Qimhi; P. M.-J. Lagrange, *Le Livre des Juges* (Paris: V. LeCoffre, 1903), 52.
 11. Yadin, *Art* (n. 7), 254f.
 12. So G. F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1910), and, effectively, Gersonides.
 13. H. Winckler, *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (4 vols.; Leipzig, E. Germany: E. Pfeiffer, 1893–1906), 1.55–57; Moore, *Judges* (n. 12); Burney, *Judges* (n. 3); Budde, *Richter* (n. 3).
 14. As Garsiel, "Ehud" (n. 2), 70f.
 15. See B.-Z. Eshel, "tyqm, sdruv and msdrvn in Biblical Usage," *Leshonenu* 37 (1972–73): 10; A. Salonen, *Die Türen des alten Mesopotamien* (Annalen Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B/124; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961), 74ff. M. Waelkens, *Die kleinasiatischen Türsteine* is unavailable to me. Cf. E. G. Kraeling, "Difficulties in the Story of Ehud," *JBL* 54 (1935): 205–210. Kraeling's example does not relate to a double door, and confuses a latch with a lock. See latterly, A. Malamut, "'Doorbells' at Mari—A Textual-Archaeological Correlation," *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries* (CRLA 30; Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1986), 160–167, especially 167, n. 30.
 16. The former in 2 Samuel 19:1; 2 Kings 1:2; 23:12; Jeremiah 22:13f.; 1 Chronicles 28:11; 2 Chronicles 3:9; 9:4; Psalm 104:3; Nehemiah 3:31f. The latter in 1 Kings 17:19, 23; 2 Kings 4:10.
 17. Note also Proverbs 8:3; 9:3, 14; 11:11; Job 29:7.
 18. So Garsiel, "Ehud" (n. 2), 62; Yadin, *Temple Scroll* (n. 4), 2.19. See now the *byt qwrh* with an *ʿllyā* near the Dead Sea in M. Broshi and E. Qimron, "A House Sale Deed from Kefar Baru from the Time of Bar-Kokhba," *IEJ* 36 (1986): 201–14, especially 206:2.
 19. For which one expects Heb. *ngʾ* or *qrb*. The expression "enter unto someone" (*bv' ʿel*), when not metaphorical (Gen. 6:13; 42:21; 43:23, and use with impersonal subjects), denotes entering someone's presence from somewhere else (Judg. 13:6, 10; 1 Sam. 23:27; 25:5), and generally implies entry into a structure or private room, whence its occasional sexual overtones (as Gen. 16:4; 29:21, 23, 30; 30:4, 16; note Gen. 19:33; 39:14, where the use is not extended, with 39:17). Often the structure is not mentioned (Gen. 27:18; Judg. 4:22; 6:19; 1 Sam. 5:5; 14:29–33; 28:8; 2 Sam. 6:9; 19:6, and so on), and the verb alone has the same meaning (as 1 Sam. 3:10; 4:14; 26:7). Particularly clear is 2 Samuel 4:4–7. The most important parallels to the Ehud account occur in 2 Samuel 13:10ff.; 19:1–9; 1 Kings 2:13–22 (note v. 14 in contrast to v. 20); 2 Chronicles 29:18; Esther 6:5 (in a *bit hilāni*?); especially 2 Kings 9:5f. (cf. also 2 Kings 9:1f.; Num. 8:22; Ezek. 44:2; probably Gen. 7:9–15, 16; 19:5, 8; Josh. 2:2–4 [entry to the house]; perhaps 1 Kings 1:47). In Judges 4:21 Yael reenters the tent from the doorway (v. 20) after collecting the peg and hammer. Only in 1 Samuel 28:21 are the bearings unclear: is Saul in a courtyard or an antechamber?
 20. So Kraeling, "Difficulties" (n. 15), 205–210; Garsiel, "Ehud" (n. 2), 70. Cf. Burney, *Judges* (n. 3), 67f., with a two-source theory; on which C. Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, W. Germany: Mohr, 1912), 294.
 21. See I. Singer, "Hittite *hilammar* and Hieroglyphic Luwian *hilana*," *ZA* 65 (1975): 69–103; cf. *RLA* 4.404–409; S. Alp, *Beiträge zur Erforschung des hethitischen Tempels. Kultanlagen im Lichte der Keilschrifttexte. Neue Deutungen* (Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/23; Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 325–32.
 22. See H. Weidhaas, "Der *bit hilāni*," *ZA* 45 (1939): 108–68, especially 115; D. Ussishkin, "King Solomon's Palace and Building 1723 at Megiddo," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 174–86. Attempts to find the designation in 1 Kings 6:4 or Jeremiah 22:14 have not been compelling.
 23. Yadin, *Hazor* (Schweich Lectures, 1970; London: Oxford University, 1972), 154; on the dating, cf. Y. Aharoni, "The Stratification of Israelite Megiddo," *JNES* 31 (1972): 302–11; W. G. Dever, "Late Bronze Age and Solomonic Defenses at Gezer: New Evidence," *BASOR* 262 (1986): 9–34, 32, n. 34, with bibliography. For 1723, Ussishkin, "Palace 1723," (n. 22); *idem*, "On the Original Position of Two Proto-Ionic Capitals at Megiddo," *IEJ* 20 (1970): 213–15; "King Solomon's Palaces," *BA* 36 (1973): 78–105.
 24. Solomon's portico would have the lowest length:width ratio (1.66:1) known (Tayanat IV is closest; a room with this ratio was found in 1986 at Tel Batashi, but the context is not yet exposed). It would probably have required internal columns to bridge the thirty-cubit width. Moreover, no *bit hilāni* occurs to date in association with a structure like the House of the Forest of Lebanon.
 25. "Paläste während der Bronze- und Eisenzeit in Palästina," *ZDPV* 99 (1983): 1–42; also, *idem*, "Die syrische Bauform des Hilani und die Frage seiner Verbreitung," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 1 (1983): 443–58. Cf. Ussishkin, "Building IV in Hamath and the Temples of Solomon and Tell Tayanat," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 104–110, and note that the palace at Hamath, with a temple resembling Tayanat's and Solomon's (but with broad-rooms), exhibits no features of the *bit hilāni*: E. Fugmann, *Hama: Fouilles et Recherches 1931–1938 II.1* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1958), 234, Fig. 308. Nor has such a structure appeared at Samaria or Ramat Rahel VB. In LB, note the elevated rooms off the pillared court in G. Loud, *Megiddo II: Seasons of 1935–39* (OIP 52; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948), 23–28, 113f., with drains, esp. 4084. For Shechem and Amman, see R. C. Boling, "Bronze Age Buildings at the Shechem High Place," *BA* 32 (1969): 82–103; E. F. Campbell and G. E. Wright, "Tribal League Shrines in Amman and Shechem," *BA* 32 (1969): 104–116, but G. R. H. Wright, "Shechem and League Shrines," *VT* 21 (1971): 572–603. These are probably palaces, Shechem Stairway B and room B laid out as at Megiddo.
 26. H. and M. Weippert, "Jericho in der Eisenzeit," *ZDPV* 92 (1976): 139–45.
 27. L. Woolley, *Alalakh* (London: Society of Antiquarians, 1955), 113, Fig. 44; 92, Fig. 35; *Ugaritica* 4, Fig. 21; latterly, J. Margueron, "Un 'hilāni' à Emar," *AASOR* 44 (1979): 153–76. Note also the palace of Shamshi-Adad I, and the western "reception suite" of Megiddo 2041. See H. Frankfort, "The Origin of the Bit Hilani," *Iraq* 14 (1952): 120–31.
 28. Especially Khorsabad F; cf. Room H of Assurnasirpal's NW Palace at Nimrud. In the West, R. Amiran and I. Dunayevsky, "The Assyrian Open-Court Building and its Palestinian Derivatives," *BASOR* 149 (1958): 25–32; G. W. van Beek, "Digging Up Tell Jemmeh," *Archaeology* 36 (1983): 12–19; R. S. Lamon and G. M. Shipton, *Megiddo I. Seasons of 1925–34. Strata I–V* (OIP 48; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1939), Fig. 89, Building 1369, with room 509 (cf. 1052); O. Tufnell, *Lachish III: The Iron Age* (London: Oxford, 1953), pl. 119. For a Babylonian derivation, see V. Fritz, "Die Paläste während der assyrischen, babylonischen und persischen Vorherrschaft in Palästina," *MDOG* 111 (1979): 63–74, emphasizing the courts. But the forms are mixed: see generally G. Turner, "The State Apartments of Late Assyrian Palaces," *Iraq* 32 (1970): 177–213.
 29. At Sakkagözü, Zincirli Upper Palace I and *bit hilānis* II, III, and IV, and Megiddo 1723 (with Ussishkin), one short side of the throne room is unabutted; J. Garstang, *The Hittite Empire* (London: Constable, 1929), 266, Fig. 29; F. von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli* 4 (Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Mitteilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen 14; Berlin: Reimer, 1911). The throne rooms in Zincirli J (Kilamuwa's palace) and Tayanat Palace IV are unabutted on both short sides; R. C. Haines, *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch* 2 (OIP 95; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958). On Halaf, F. Langenegger, K. Müller, and R. Naumann, *Tell Halaf 2* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1950).
 30. Except Zincirli III and Alalakh. Zincirli Upper Palace A and H divide the light between northern and southern exposures. Note Fritz, "Paläste während Vorherrschaft" (n. 28), 69.
 31. Tiglath-Pileser, Clay Tablet R18; Sargon, Display 161f.; Sennacherib in D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (OIP 2; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1924), 97:82.
 32. "Der *bit hilāni* im *bit šuhūri* des Assur-Tempels," *ZA* 70 (1980): 258–73 and Fig. 4.
 33. "Art as Evidence for Interaction: Relations between the Assyrian Empire and North

- Syri Renger, eds., *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (Berliner Beirnt 1; Berlin: Reimer, 1982), 355–82.
34. Ibiessner and P. Rost, *Noch einmal das bit hilāni und die assyrischany*; Pfeiffer, 1893), 7; Meissner, "Das bit hilāni in Assyrien,"
 35. See: (n. 33), 363, especially 362 on Sargon. Tiglath-Pileser claimi "for (his) leisure," *ana multa'ūtiya*.
 36. 1 Kicles 3:3; windows in 1 Kings 6:4. See T. A. Busink, *Der Tempel Salomos* (Studia Francisci Scholten Memoriae Dicata 3; L. 180–92 and Fig. 52. For clerestory illumination, see also the del shrine (*JM* 82.24.415). Note CTA 4.7.13–47 on the winch, in light of the foregoing feast, is probably installed to venteast suggests that the "windows" of 1 Kings 6:4 are windowstruction. Note that 1 Kings 8:12 is corrupt (see OG), and less, but a local environment of Yhwh (cf. Exod. 20:18). For le with the *bit hilāni*, see E. Grant and G. E. Wright, *Ain Sherd*: Haverford College, 1939), 68–69, with bibliography.
 37. So 2is 26:8, with Isaac and Rebecca out of town; note Jeremiah 2nd L of Palace K at Zincirli.
 38. Tayo top of portico unless the user crossed the upper level of the (4 or 5), J10, Megiddo 1723M (public stairs in 1723G, Zincirli III, I, Upper Palace C (B), Megiddo 6000).
 39. Bothun, however, cf. G.P.F. van den Boorn, "Wd' ryt and Justice 85): 1–25, which links the term used here with judgment, whicwith the "hall of judgment" as the denomination for Solomonly with an *'alīyyā*; W. A. Ward, "Late Egyptian 'r.t: the So-Called 4 (1985): 329–35, arguing that the Wen-Amun is in a threore on the ground floor (the problem is, upper stories do not sas a clear view of the sea, below). Also Genesis 26:8, looking db, *lqy*).
 40. See *Tell Qasile* (Qodem 12; Jerusalem: I.E.S., 1980), 68f., for instail., *Tell Halaf* (n. 29), 2.349–57; Fugmann, *Hama* (n. 25), 11.1.1, kin, "Building IV at Hamath" (n. 25); M.E.L. Mallowan, *Nimron*: Collins, 1966), 1.236, 262, 263, figs. 199, 242, 244; Y. Aole and Inscriptions," *BA* 31 (1968): 19; *idem*, *IEJ* 34 (1987)mpel (n. 36), 199–207, 397ff.; but note the elevation at Bethus on Lachish. In temple 2048 at Megiddo (*Megiddo* [n. 25] 2ch in VIIB reflects a dais in the niche in VIII).
 41. See *Dethronement of Sabaath* (CBOTS 18; Lund, Sweden: Gleesarakku, Ug. 'It'bt, Heb. *mākōn*. Further, J. W. and G. M. Crowmaria (London: P.E.F., 1938), 11.
 42. Theits above the adyton floor (Exod. 25:10), and the front of th 9 cubits recessed. Contrast Busink, *Tempel* (n. 36), 201–25 unnecessarily sideways. That the poles were unseen fromto do with the steps leading to it, which Busink, too, recor
 43. Assyund level, despite the clerestory, and may have had no upperl (n. 36), 284f.) would place Yhwh on a Solomon-like platfwith footstool, see G. Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* (OIP 52; Chicago, 1939), 4:2a, b. Note further the illustration on the Ahiri
 44. Tripole-doored adytions at Tayanat (C. W. McEwan, "The Syriental Institute of the University of Chicago," *AJA* 41 [1937]adin, *Hazor* 3–4 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961], 126:2–3, 101fhe niche). At Lachish, Tufnell describes (*Lachish* [n. 28], 3.14 in the plaster to act as a drain" in the center of the adyton dain near the recess or cupboard to the left of the door-
 - way." The drain to the left contained various fragments of objects, the "small circular hole" none. The latter probably received the vertical post that anchored the double doors when closed. Note Mallowan, *Nimrud* (n. 40), 1.42.
 45. Note especially 2 Kings 9:13, where some steps form the platform for a makeshift "throne," and such texts as 1 Kings 1:37, 47; Isaiah 22:23; Jeremiah 17:12; Ezekiel 1:26; 10:1; Isaiah 66:1; Psalm 11:4; 1 Samuel 2:8. See further, K. Kenyon, *Royal Cities of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 50–66. Solomon's lion-throne was, in fact, probably on a platform.
 46. The layout is paralleled in the Stratum VI temple at Beth Shean, for which see A. Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1940), 6–21. See further, D. Ussishkin, "Levels VII and VI at Tel Lachish and the End of the Late Bronze Age in Canaan," in J. N. Tubb, ed., *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Papers in Honour of Olga Tufnell* (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985), 213–30 on the Level VI Area P temple at Lachish, with further comparisons and literature. Cf. a temple type podium in what may be a residency, *IEJ* 34 (1984): 34. Busink (*Tempel* [n. 36] 199ff.) hypothesizes an unraised adyton in Jerusalem, which, apart from falling afoul of 1 Kings 8:8 (above, and n. 42), and of the layout at Arad and Lachish, demands that the nave be considered as separate from the adyton. But the adyton, which develops from the cult niche, is part of the nave, and the throne platform a part of the audience hall. On both points V. Fritz ("Der Tempel Salomos im Licht der neueren Forschung," *MDOG* 112 [1980]: 53–68) lines up with Busink's position, but based largely on etymology. Note that von Luschan (*Sendschirli* [n. 29], 4.296–99) thought that the hearths served a sacramental function. They are not solely for heat, as they appear in the summer and winter palaces (J and K) at Zincirli. For heat, braziers were employed.
 47. So 2 Kings 1:2; 6:26, 30 (the king with a cloak thrown over his sackcloth). Saul's *mōšāb qir* (1 Sam. 20:25) could be either atop the wall (1 Kings 4:10) or against it. The Assyrian remains shed no light, because the better first-story lighting there and the absence of a strong tradition of raised daises (Mazar, *Qasile* [n. 40], 68f.) attenuate the impulse to elevation. There is a parallel in the raised adyton of the Arad temple, inside the nave. For this, and for a putative wood screen (as of a throne platform), see Y. Aharoni, "The Solomonic Temple, the Tabernacle and the Arad Sanctuary," in H. A. Hoffner, ed., *Orient and Occident* (Fs. C. H. Gordon; AOAT 22; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1973), 1–8, with bibliography, and indications of priestly offices surrounding the temple, as in Jerusalem. Note that Busink (*Tempel* [n. 36], 208) has the adyton in Jerusalem built on wood. It should be added that heavy concentrations of wood found in throne rooms, as, e.g., at Halaf or the Hama temple, are not sufficient evidence of an upper chamber: see M.E.L. Mallowan, "The Excavations of Nimrud (Kalhu), 1956" *Iraq* 19 (1957): 1–25, especially 15, with much wood found by a throne dais in Ezida, with "stone tram lines" for a fire wagon leading up to it.
 48. See Chapter 9, n. 28, and E. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien* (BoSt 8–9; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1923), 18:60–61 ("Let no one sit with her") for the import of the queen's (or queen mother's) throne station.
 49. Cf. 2 Kings 4:21, 32–37: the Shunamitess waits outside, at a remove of two rooms from Elisha's *'alīyyā*. Gehazi is in the four-room-house courtyard. But the resonance of zones of holiness may be in play. Cf. also 2 Samuel 21:13f. On the roofing of the courtyard, see the forthcoming study of J. S. Holladay, "The Stables of Ancient Israel," in Fs. S. Horn.
 50. As Lagrange, *Juges* (n. 10), 56, 60, citing Bonfrère, presumably *Josue, Judges et Ruth commentario illustrati* (Paris: 1631), unavailable to me; Budde, *Richter* (n. 3); C. Rabin, "Etymologica-Miscellanea," *SH* 8 (1961): 394; Eshel, "tygym" (n. 15), 3–12, equating *mdrawn* with a reconstruction of *idruv*.
 51. Cf. R. Alter, "Sacred History and Prose Fiction," in R. E. Friedman, ed., *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text* (Near Eastern Studies 22; Berkeley: University of California, 1981), 19f., suggesting that the account makes a butt of Moabite stupidity. But Ehud's tactics shine only against a realistic background, in which the Moabites, if plodding, are not preternaturally obtuse.

52. Here the suffix conjugation is used (1) in subordination (vv. 18, 23; 2) in negation (28, 29); and (3) to start units of narrative (19, 20, 24, 26; on v. 23, see n. 57). Thus the perfect-imperfect, as in v. 26, is the expected sequence.
53. Narrators use the *happax* chiefly to denote unusual qualities or items. See H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (SBLDS 37; Missoula: Scholars, 1978).
54. See S. Talmon, "The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narratives," *MJ* 27 (1978): 9-26; C. Kuhl, "Die 'Wederfalschungen'—ein literarkritisches Prinzip," *ZAW* 64 (1952): 1-11; B. O. Long, "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography," *JBL* 106 (1987): 385-99. The similar epianepsis in v. 26 (perfect-imperfect *and*) frames action occurring while the courtiers dally. See also the progressive epianepsis of Genesis 13:12, 17.
55. Genesis 7:16; Isaiah 26:20; Judges 9:51; 3:22; Job 2:7; 2 Kings 4:3, 5a, 33, 4a *bis*, 21, all clear. The preposition implies enclinging (57 of 102 occurrences involve intercession on someone's behalf, which is linked to the connotation of physical shielding, as Job 1:10; Lamentations 3:7; Psalm 3:4; Jonah 2:7, and 6 other references). Note Amos 9:10 (preventing flight); Genesis 20:18; 1 Samuel 1:6 thus describe Yishai sealing wounds from outside. The preposition otherwise implies defenestration or peering down from a window (the exception is Joel 2:9). The expression for locking someone out of a room is to close *hry* (2 Sam. 13:17, 18). Note Joshua 2:7; Ezekiel 46:12; Genesis 18:10, with Yishai outside the tent.
56. So Gersonides, AV. Bonifrate (Lagrange, *Juqes* [n. 10]: 35); Eshel, "qpw" [n. 13], 10. The sequence of subjects from v. 23 on is: Ehud, Ehud, x, Ehud, Eglon, and any alternation could only cause confusion.
57. Though v. 23 suggests ongoing action (imperfect *avv*), *avv l*, "he boiled (them)," suggests action out of sequence. This is sometimes emended (Moore, *Judges* [n. 12]: 99), but 2 Samuel 13:18 furnishes a counterexample; *avv l* could be infinitive absolute, neither adverbial nor simultaneous (Exod. 8:11), suggesting circumstantiality. Genesis 41:43 exemplifies the use, where the clause with infinitive absolute parallels the preceding two verses, linking to the Pharaoh's commission.
58. See A. Parrot, *Le Palais: Architecture* (Mission Archéologique de Mari 2; Paris: Geuthner, 1958), pl. XLVI: 2, 3, 22-4; Winter, "Art as Evidence" [n. 33]: 360-62; Turner, "State Apartments" [n. 28]: 192-94, with seat fittings; *ABL* 487. For elaborate plumbing at LB I garr, including some for upper stories, see Y. Calvet, "Ougarite: Une maison bien aménagée," *Le Monde de la Bible* 48 (March-April 1987): 15.
59. Malhawan, *Nimrod* (n. 40): 2, 442. That the posts shared up the roof is unlikely; probably they helped screen off the king's end of the hall. Note also the toilet on the royal podium in MB IIC-LB I Megiddo Palace 4031 (and cf. LB I Palace 2134 above it).
60. One by Ketovon, two by Y. Shiloh (seventh century). Compare the furniture fitted with chamberpots at Versailles. Contrast M. Kochavi, "The Canaanite Palace of Ahiabek and its Inscriptions," *Qat* 10 (1977): 62-68, especially 67.
61. See AV. G^a translates *psudula*, "porch." G^a *darungomni* (equals *avv sudlirim*?), G^a doubles its translation of the term to make Ehud lock the doors after his departure (cf. Qumh). All these renderings are tentative. No early evidence links the root with pillars.
62. "The Root SDR, 'Blindness' and Two Old Testament Hapax Legomena," forthcoming. Goliath points to Job 10:22 and the Targum to Genesis 19:11, as well as to Arab. *sudra* ("to be blinded").
63. For the parallel, see A.V. 10:14f., the fragment in the Beirut Museum, but joined in M. Dunand, "Le Silex de Vexaymilk," *BIB* 5:3 (1941): 37-85. For the context, see Dunand, *Fouilles de Bolo, I. Texte* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 24; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1939), 81-84, 87, CE, Jeremiah 49:10; Isaiah 45:3.
64. See especially R. H. Kennet, *Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as Indicated in Late Narrative and Mishnah* (Schweich Lectures 1931; London: Oxford University, 1933).
65. Hypothesizing egress through a sewer in an outer wall; also, Glaser, "Erzählung" (n. 3): 82; cf. Kraeling, "Difficulties" (n. 15): 208: "It is difficult to treat the suggestion seriously."

65. Budder, *Recher* (n. 3): 30; Kraeling, "Difficulties" (n. 15): 206f. This excludes the suggestion that Ehud went to Gilgal for an oracle, a view based on the declaration of v. 20, *after* Ehud has gained privacy with Eglon.
66. Not, as commonly held, to receive an oracle. There is no Israelite tradition of kings rising for prophets. In K 43:10 1,30 (4R² 61), an oracle of Ishar of Arbela to Esarhaddon ends, *adbe ussib*, "I shall rise up; you sit!" This is not a reversal of a custom of standing to receive oracles, but an order to Esarhaddon to remain still, so that Ishar can work alone (cf. Exod. 14:13, 14). On the physics of Eglon's death, see LXX.
67. So Malama, "Doorbells" at Mari" (n. 15), n. 30.
68. So Hamlet and Oedipus. Modern specimens of the genre mystify the reader instead, and Agatha Christie Malhawan's *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1936) is a sort of counterpart to Oedipus. Christie probably drew inspiration from Israel Zangwill's *Big Bow Mystery*, the first true locked-room mystery (the locking is incidental in "Murders in the Rue Morgue"); it, too, plays on the opportunities of a principal investigator. *Big Bow* is the earliest modern equivalent of the Ehud escape.
69. Alter, "Sacred History" (n. 51), 20.
70. See Richter, *TR* (n. 1), and Chapter 6, on the assembly of Judges 3ff.
71. This insight comes from Professor J. Meagher (oral communication).
72. Some heroic tales may have been reframed when reduced to writing—Hushai at Absalom's court, for example. The literary form of a story need not mirror its character in oral transmission.
73. E.g., Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943), 89-92, where the "all-Israel" redaction is seen as the work of the second editor, Dtr.
74. For comparable perspectives on the historiography, see M. Liverani, "Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts," *Or* 42 (1973): 178-94; A. R. Millard, "The Old Testament and History: Some Considerations," *Transactions of the Victorian Institute* 110 (1983): 34-53.