Profiles of Resistant Women in the Former Prophets

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1. Introduction

In the texts of the Former Prophets, we encounter, as is well known, many female figures. A not inconsiderable number of them are distinguished by the fact that one can assign to them the attribute *resistant*. Accordingly, there is no need to justify talking about resistant women in the Former Prophets in the series The Bible and Women.

But, why do I not speak simply about resistant women in the Former Prophets? What is meant by *profiles* of resistant women? At this point, I already anticipate the outcome of my study. The point is that there is not just one type of female resistance in the Former Prophets, but rather a variety of types. One also could speak of silhouettes, as Uta Schmidt has done in her narratological study of the portrayal of women in the books of Kings.[1] Whether we speak of silhouettes or of profiles, what is always meant is that the individual narratives can be grouped or clustered according to certain common features in the characterization of the women in question.

Altogether, I have identified five such profiles. But, since profiles of this kind, or silhouettes/clusters, do not have any sharp contours, fluent transitions between them exist, and other groupings would also certainly be conceivable.

1. Uta Schmidt, *Zentrale Randfiguren: Strukturen der Darstellung von Frauen in den Erzählungen der Königebücher* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser; Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003).

2. Women as Victims of Sexual Violence

The books of the Former Prophets contain several narratives in which women become the victims of patriarchal power structures. They experience what befalls them in various feminine roles. Jephthah's daughter (Judg 11:29–40) remains nameless and, as the daughter of her father, becomes a victim. That she shows any resistance toward her father, who in the end offers her up as a burnt sacrifice (vv. 31, 39), is not reported.[2] Rather, her speech sounds as if she consents to it. Cheryl Exum comments succinctly, "The daughter submits to the authority of the father."[3] Nevertheless, the portrayal shows that Jephthah's daughter, in spite of her fundamental submission to the authority of her father, increasingly seizes the initiative and thus, in spite of her namelessness, develops into the main character in the narrative.[4] Even if the daughter "always remains a victim," she is "drawn as the real heroine of the narrative."[5] For this reason, Walter Groß describes this narrative as "one of the narratives about a strong woman that accumulate astonishingly in the Book of Judges,"[6] although the woman in it becomes the victim.

The wife of the Levite, who is handed over to the rapists by her husband in the Benjaminite Gibeah, is raped until she is (almost?) dead,[7] and subsequently is dismembered by her husband (Judg 19), is likewise nameless and portrayed as a concubine—אשה פילגש, or only פילגש (vv. 1–2, 9–10, 24–25, 27, 29)—of her master, אדון (vv. 26–27). Throughout the whole narrative, she is depicted as an object of male negotiations.[8]

2. See Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 102.

3. J. Cheryl Exum, "Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative," in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, JSOTSup 119 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 181.

4. See Walter Groß, *Richter*, HThKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 603, 610.

5. Michaela Bauks, *Jephtas Tochter: Traditions-, religions- und rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studien zu Richter 11,29–40*, FAT 71 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 21, 59.

6. Groß, *Richter*, 610.

7. The formulation in the Hebrew text leaves open the question whether the woman was already dead after the continued rape. It is first of all the Greek text that clarifies matters by declaring that the woman was dead (see Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 79).

8. See Groß: "From (24) 25 on, everything is designed to make the mute concubine more and more comprehensively the mere object of negotiations carried out by the men; the endpoint in v. 29 is also the low point of this development" (*Richter*, 844).

Whether she was resistant or acquiescent in her actions when thrown to her rapists, we do not know.

The narrative about the rape in Gibeah opens with the sentence: "In those days, when there was no king in Israel" (v. 1). This is intended to suggest that only a king can provide law and order. The monarchy emerges—and now rape takes place within the royal family itself, in the narrative about the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Sam 13). Here, the victim offers resistance, though not bodily, since she then would have been physically subdued. But she attempts to dissuade the offender to desist from his act with words. Also, after the act, she makes a suggestion that, to be sure, would not have been able to undo the deed, but at least would have prevented the complete social annihilation of the victim. Ilse Müllner remarks correctly in her article "Tamar," in the *Wissenschaftlichem Bibellexikon im Internet*, that "Tamar's verbal resistance is, in comparison with other narratives about sexual violence, extraordinary." Here she refers to the rape of Dinah in Gen 34 and the narrative from Judg 19 just mentioned above: "Therein, she is portrayed as a clever and farsighted woman whose arguments are supported by the narrative community. Thus, the suggestion of marriage made to Amnon also is to be taken seriously."[9] Of course, we know from the narrative that Tamar is not heard.

Thus we have three women who as victims offer no resistance, about whose possible resistance we hear nothing, or whose verbal resistance remains unsuccessful. This is the first profile identified here.

3. Wicked Women

In contrast to the figures considered above, two other women can also be identified as victims, but they offer fierce resistance. These two women are Queen Jezebel and Queen Athaliah. Jezebel, the daughter of the Phoenician king of Sidon, is married to Ahab, the king of Israel (1 Kgs 16:31). The tradition portrays her from the beginning as a wicked woman. She murders the prophetesses and prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs 18:4, 13; 2 Kgs 9:7), supports the prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19), and persecutes the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1–2). She organizes, on behalf of her husband,

9. Ilse Müllner, "Tamar," in *Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet* (2009), https://tinyurl.com/SBL6016e. On the narrative about Tamar and Amnon as a whole, see Ilse Müllner, *Gewalt im Hause Davids: Die Erzählung von Tamar und Amnon (2 Sam 13,1–22)*, HBS 13 (Freiburg: Herder, 1997).

the judicial murder of the honorable vineyard owner Naboth (1 Kgs 21). She also incites King Ahab to commit every wicked act (1 Kgs 21:25).

After the officer Jehu revolts against the governing royal house of the Omrides, he orders that Jezebel be murdered (2 Kgs 9:30–37). In Schmidt's narratological analysis, she is described as the silhouette of a "powerful woman."[10] When her murderer, Jehu, appears in Jezreel, Jezebel faces him proudly and courageously. Unlike the kings of Israel and Judah, who fled before Jehu and who were murdered as they fled (2 Kgs 9:20–29), Jezebel looks her enemy in the eye. With the only words allowed her by the narrator, she accuses Jehu of being a murderer. By comparing him with the murderer Zimri, who shortly afterward is himself killed (1 Kgs 16:8–20), she depicts Jehu at the same time as a loser. Although she becomes a victim because she succumbs in the power struggle with Jehu, and her corpse is eaten by dogs, she dies as a proud, courageous, and resistant woman.

Nevertheless, Jezebel does not stand a chance in the narrative. She is portrayed from the beginning as wicked, and the narrative about her murder is told in such a way that she is finally to blame for her own death. Schmidt points out that the negative interpretations of Jezebel's conduct ensue at the point where she paints her face and adorns her head.[11] She compares Jezebel with the depiction of various feminine figures that represent cities and shows that "the painting of her face and her efforts to make herself beautiful becomes sexually motivated and so becomes a reprehensible act, through which she makes herself guilty of the violent murder committed by Jehu."[12]

Her sister-in-law Athaliah, who is married to the king of Judah and assumes the throne after his murder by Jehu (2 Kgs 8:26; 11), suffers a fate similar to that of Jezebel, not only in the narrated reality but also in the manner of the narration. She also is portrayed from the beginning as the wicked woman who plots the murder of all the eligible heirs to the throne. She, too, is overthrown in a rebellion, conducted this time not by the military but rather by the priests. She, too, is murdered by the rebels and also does not surrender passively to her fate. But in the narrative, as in the case of Jezebel, not a single tear is shed over Athaliah. The narrative ends with the words, "So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet

10. Schmidt, *Zentrale Randfiguren*, 138–96.
11. Schmidt, *Zentrale Randfiguren*, 146.
12. Schmidt, *Zentrale Randfiguren*, 148.

after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king's house" (2 Kgs 11:20 RSV).

In Jezebel and Athaliah, therefore, we encounter two women who also become victims, but who strongly resist their fate. In the narrative, they are described from the beginning as wicked. Theirs, in the end, is a futile attempt to resist the fate that, according to the narrative strategy, rightly befalls them.

4. Women Who Support Future Victors

In contrast to Jezebel and Athaliah, three other women, whom I place under a third profile, are valued positively for their resistance. They all resist a government that at the time exercises power over them. At the same time, they take sides with an important figure who later usurped the old authority.

The first example is Rahab from Jericho. The king of Jericho learns that Israelite scouts have spent the night in her house and demands that she deliver up these men (Josh 2:1–3). She, however, hides the men, lies to the king's messengers, and sends the pursuers on a false trail (vv. 4–7). In this way, she mounts resistance against the authority to which she is subject. She justifies her behavior toward the Israelite spies by pointing out that YHWH has already given them the land in any case, and no one could resist that fact (vv. 9–11). Her real concern, however, is different, as the term that introduces her speech ועתה ("and now") in verse 12 shows. Rahab seeks guarantee that she and her family will be spared after the anticipated conquest of Jericho (vv. 12–13).[13] The men promise her safety, and Rahab helps them to escape from Jericho. When Jericho is captured later and all the city's substance is dedicated to destruction (the so-called ban), Rahab with her family is spared. Thus, she is said to live in the midst of Israel "to this day" (Josh 6:25). In the genealogy of Jesus in Matt 1, she is described as the mother of Boaz, the husband of Ruth, and in essence the great-great-grandmother of King David (Matt 1:6–7).

13. See José Luis Sicre, *Josué*, NBE (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2002), 113: "En el fondo, la confesión de fe es una extensa introducción a lo que realmente pretende Rajab: salir con vida ella y su familia (vv. 12–13)" ("Basically, the confession of faith is a detailed introduction to what Rahab really wants: that she and her family escape with their lives").

In spite of this positive afterlife, it should be noted that Rahab, as a non-Israelite, is a woman who already foresees who the victors will be and aligns herself with them in order to save her skin. This point can be considered critically from a postcolonial perspective. In this regard, Musa Dube speaks about "collaboration with the colonizer." Thus, the positive assessment of Rahab by the narrative voice suggests that Rahab does not have power over her own story, which is written by the oppressors in order to highlight Rahab's concern and to justify their conquest of her land. In Dube's words: "Rahab's story is not her own—it is written by her oppressors to project their own agendas as well as to validate the conquest."[14]

A second example of this type of resistance is found in Michal, the daughter of Saul, who becomes David's wife (1 Sam 18:27). When her father decides to have David killed, Michal helps him to flee. She then lies first to the messengers of her father, Saul, who have come to arrest David, and then to her father by claiming that her husband has used violence to force her to act in the way she has done (1 Sam 19:11–17).

One can argue about Michal's motives. The narrative says explicitly that Michal loves David (1 Sam 18:20; see v. 28) and for this reason desires to marry him. This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where a woman desires to marry a man.[15] But she is not alone in her love for David. Jonathan also loves David as much as he does his own life (v. 1), and all of Israel and Judah love David (v. 16). It is the love for a future victor. From chapters 15 and 16, where Saul is first rejected and David is then anointed, it is clear that Saul's time has run out. It is thus at least not inopportune that Michal takes the side of David, the future ruler, against her father, the ruling king.

As far as the emotional side of the love relationship goes, one must also say that Michal is treated rather shabbily by David. After his flight from Saul's court, he meets, of course secretly, with Saul's son Jonathan (ch. 20), but not with his wife Michal. Although he later brings back Michal, who in the meantime is now married to another man (1 Sam 25:44), it is not out of love for her. Rather, it is to demonstrate his claim to power over the family of Saul (2 Sam 3:12–16). After these things, the final rift between Michal and David occurs quickly (2 Sam 6:16, 20–23).

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14. Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 142–43.

15. See Robert Alter, "Characterization and the Art of Reticence (from *The Art of Biblical Narrative*)," in Clines and Eskenazi, *Telling Queen Michal's Story*, 68.

Here it is important to observe the narrative subtlety in how Michal is described through the men who have authority over her. She is the "daughter of Saul" before her marriage with David (1 Sam 18:20, 27). Afterward, she is called "his wife," that is, David's wife. But since the marriage is practically not functional from David's side after his flight, we read that Saul hands over "his daughter Michal, the wife of David" to another man (1 Sam 25:44). When David reclaims her for political reasons, he calls her at first "the daughter of Saul" (2 Sam 3:13), but then, in order to underscore his claim, "my wife" (v. 14). However, when the final rift occurs, Michal again is called the "daughter of Saul" by the narrative voice (6:16, 20). At the point when David finally rejects her, she still remains the daughter of the king whom she once opposed. In the words of David Clines: "Michal is not behaving as David's wife … but as his opponent; she is acting like a true daughter of Saul, and the narrator has spelled this out by writing 'Michal, daughter of Saul' in two places where her criticism of David is expressed."[16]

The third example also tells of a woman who places herself early on the side of David. This woman is Abigail, the wife of Nabal (1 Sam 25:3), who challenges David and provokes him to undertake a violent reaction. In order to avoid a bloodbath, she goes out to David's men without telling her husband about it (v. 19). In a speech directed at David, she distances herself from her husband, calls him a blockhead, and claims to have known nothing about David's earlier delegation (v. 25). She announces to David in a prophetic manner—long before the famous prophecy by Nathan (2 Sam 7)[17]—that YHWH will prepare an enduring house, that is, a lasting dynasty for him (1 Sam 25:28). Consequently, David desists from his plans of revenge. Once back at home, Abigail reports what happened to her husband Nabal, who collapses and dies (vv. 36–38). The way is then free for Abigail to become the wife of the future king and founder of the dynasty (vv. 39–42).

Unlike the case of Michal, there is no report of a rift between Abigail and David. Abigail continues to be mentioned as one of the wives of

16. David J. A. Clines, "X, X *ben* Y, *ben* Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style," in Clines and Eskenazi, *Telling Queen Michal's Story*, 128.

17. The link between the dynastic promises made to David by Abigail and by Nathan has been treated in detail by Irmtraud Fischer. See Fischer, *Gotteslehrerinnen: Weise Frauen und Frau Weisheit im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006), 31–36.

David (1 Sam 27:3; 30:5; 2 Sam 2:2). That she plays no further role in the story could be because her son Chileab, whom she had for David (2 Sam 3:3), died early.[18] In any case, he, unlike other sons of David, as well as his mother, is no longer mentioned.

The discussion above has focused on three women who offer resistance—Rahab to her king, Michal to her father, Abigail to her husband. It is reasonable to bring together in one profile the three women who, at an early stage, already place themselves on the side of future victors. The fate of these women is different in each case. Rahab is saved along with her family, Michal's relationship with David breaks down, and Abigail is lost in history. As important as each of their roles is in the narrated story, all of them still act in their own interest. They are not leadership figures in their communities. This leads us to the next profile.

5. Women as Leaders of Their Community

Other women who offer resistance do this in the interest of their communities. The judge Deborah falls in this category (Judg 4–5). Following the plot of the book of Judges, she appears when her people are in great crisis. The crisis was caused by the Canaanite king Jabin and his military commander Sisera. Deborah, who is introduced as a prophetess and a judge, organizes the armed resistance. She calls on the Naphtalite Barak to marshal an army and marches with him to the scene of the events (Judg 4:1–9). Irmtraud Fischer demonstrates how, in this scene, Barak "is presented from the beginning as dependent upon her (scil. Deborah)." He objects to being called to be the leader of the troops and will agree only if Deborah comes along. Thus, "Deborah has the discursive dominance in regard to Barak." His decision depends on the prophetess. Therefore, the latter informs him that the credit of the victory will in the end be given to a woman (4:9), which means reference already is made to Jael, to whom we will return shortly. Before the battle, Deborah announces the victory (v. 14). Therefore, she assumes in a certain sense the leadership of the battle;[19]

18. Alternatively, Fischer, *Gotteslehrerinnen*, 26, argues "that the narrative was inserted into the context only later and for this reason no longer could be more closely connected with the course of action."

19. Irmtraud Fischer, *Gotteskünderinnen: Zu einer geschlechterfairen Deutung des Phänomens der Prophetie und der Prophetinnen in der Hebräischen Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 113, 115.

so does the narrative report in chapter 4. In the subsequent song, Deborah praises herself as a "mother in Israel." Her presence ends the time of need in Israel (5:6–7).

While Deborah makes her appearance solely as a leader of the tribes of Israel, it is somewhat different in the case of Jael, whose narrative is woven into that about Jabin and Sisera. She is a part of the overall story insofar as she kills the fleeing commander Sisera. But she also is designated explicitly as the wife of a Kenite, that is, as a non-Israelite woman (4:17; 5:24). According to Judg 4:17, a peace treaty exists between the house of her husband, Heber, and King Jabin. In that Jael kills Jabin's military commander, she can be assigned, on the one hand, to the profile of resistant women who, at the right time, place themselves on the side of the victors. In this, she resembles Rahab in a certain sense. On the other hand, the conclusion of Deborah's song contains clear allusions to the fact that Jael, with her killing of Sisera, escapes rape and abduction[20]—one should note here the expression that Sisera fell "between her feet" (5:27), and the expectation of Sisera's mother that the victorious men would bring home mothers' laps as spoil (5:30). Then, Jael would have belonged to the first profile of women as victims and would lend it a completely different course. She then would be a woman who avoided being a victim, which would have been her fate, by killing the offender. In any case, Jael is one of the resistant women here who cannot be assigned to just a single profile.

Likewise, two women are mentioned in warlike contexts who remain unnamed and, for this reason, are designated according to their places of origin. The first is the woman of Thebez (Judg 9:50–57). In the siege against her city, Thebez, by Abimelech of Shechem, all the people flee to a fortified tower. When Abimelech comes up close to the tower in order to set it on fire, this courageous woman crushes the skull of the attacker with a millstone that she throws down on him. The incident became so legendary that it was still recalled in David's time (2 Sam 11:21).

Less heroic, but definitely wise in the interest of her community, is the conduct of the woman from Abel Beth-Maacah (2 Sam 20:14–22). Her city, too, is besieged because a rebel, who already has been defeated, takes refuge in it. The wise woman (v. 16), however, does not throw down a millstone. Rather, she persuades her community to behead the man in flight

20. On the erotic foundation of the Jael-Sisera episode, see Yair Zakovitch, "Sisseras Tod," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 364–74.

and to throw his head over the wall, whereupon the siege is lifted. That may not be very pleasant, but it is effective, and it saves the city from siege and destruction.[21]

Among the women who offer resistance in the interest of their community, Delilah also should be counted. Her resistance, to be sure, is directed against the Israelite hero Samson, for which reason she, as a Philistine woman, does not come off well in the narrative (Judg 16:4–22). She is suspected of acting only in order to rake in the enormous sum of money offered to her (16:5, 18). But, evidently, she is the only one among the Philistine people who is in a position to conquer the hero. Her resistance is successful, even if also not permanent.

The large number of women who singlehandedly offer resistance in the interest of their communities is remarkable. The narrative course in the Former Prophets cannot be imagined without them. Yet, their profile covers a broad spectrum—from the prophetess, judge, and "mother in Israel" Deborah to the Philistine woman Delilah. In brief, I would like to lift up two women from this broad spectrum whom I would like to assign to a profile called "Women Fighting for Their Rights."

6. Women Fighting for Their Rights

The books of Samuel are framed by two narratives in which resistant women play a central role. These are the Hannah and Rizpah narratives.

One can ask, To what extent Hannah is a resistant woman? She does not ward off any rape, she does not act in the interest of the community, and she does not engage in any combat operations. Nevertheless, she is resistant because she does not resign herself to fate. She fights for her rights and stands against every form of obstacle. She fights against, in the sense of the title of a well-known opera, *The Power of Fate* (*La forza del destino*). In the opening of the narrative, it is mentioned three times that

21. Silvia Schroer shows that moral reservations toward the woman are to be found only in Christian exegesis and that "Jewish exegesis has viewed the woman from Abel consistently in a fully positive way." In addition, she notes, "The biblical authors clearly have depicted the woman from Abel positively." See Schroer, "Die weise Frau auf der Stadtmauer von Abel-bet-Maacha (2 Sam 20,14–22)," in *Seitenblicke: Literarische und historische Studien zu Nebenfiguren im zweiten Samuelbuch*, ed. Walter Dietrich, OBO 249 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 394–95.

she is childless (1 Sam 1:2, 5–6). She must endure the insults of her husband's second wife, who does have children (v. 6). Her husband loves and comforts her, saying, "Am I not better for you than ten sons?" (v. 8), but this means nothing to her. When she seizes the initiative and prays in the temple, the priest thinks she is drunk (vv. 12–15).

In my view, Hannah is belittled by the translators of the Bible. To Eli's charge that she is drunk, she replies: "No, my lord, I am a אשה קשת־רוח" (v. 15). This means, literally, "a woman hard and firm in the spirit." The Vulgate renders this as a "mulier infelix nimis," a "very unhappy woman." In Luther's translation of 1545, she is "an anguished woman," and in the King James Version "a woman of sorrowful spirit." The NRSV reads "a woman deeply troubled." Why should a woman who is hard or firm in the spirit be regarded as sorrowful, distraught, or unhappy? However, Oswald Loretz suggested an alternative rendering, "an intensely courageous woman," in 1959.[22] In the German *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (Bible in Fair-Minded Language), Uta Schmidt and I translate Hannah's statement as, "I am a strong-willed woman."

Hannah wins the fight against the power of fate because God takes her side. She bears one son, Samuel, and after that three other sons and two daughters (1 Sam 2:21). Shortly after the birth of Samuel, she sings her song (2:1–10), which is in every sense a song of resistance. It sings about the God who overturns circumstances. Here the singer uses her own experience as the starting point but soon goes beyond this: "Even the barren woman gives birth seven times over, and the woman with many children withers away" (v. 5). Hannah's experience is that even an apparently barren woman can conceive a child; the fact that seven children are born is not true, either at the time Hannah sings—she has only one at this point—or later, when she bears only five more children (v. 21). Hannah's song is about more than her personal fate. It is about the divinity that reverses everything that human beings consider normal and expected. The song begins with the "bows of the mighty" that break, while those who falter gird themselves with strength (v. 4). It further refers to the fat and the hungry and, in particular, to those who have many children and those who are barren (v. 5). This God YHWH can cause the death of those who apparently are full of life and can bring human beings into the sphere of life from the sphere of death—referring to sickness, misery, and social

22. Oswald Loretz, "Weitere ugaritisch-hebräische Parallelen," *BZ* 3 (1959): 293–94.

isolation (v. 6). This God also overturns the apparently firmly established social order by making the poor rich and the rich poor, by lifting up people who search for something to eat from the scrap heap (so can v. 8 be translated, arguably).

In her resistance against the power of fate, against the apparently firmly established orders of the world, Hannah becomes finally a prophetess. For, in the last verse of her song, she entreats God on behalf of the future king. She does so at a time when her son Samuel, who later will anoint kings Saul and David, has just been born. As is generally known, what we have here is the model for the Magnificat of Mary in the Gospel of Luke. In it, also, the subject is the future king, the Anointed One, the Messiah, or Christ. And, following the Song of Hannah, Christ's mother likewise sings about the overthrow of all apparently unchangeable orders by the God of Israel.

The second woman, whose story is narrated at the end of the books of Samuel, also fights for her rights. But while in Hannah's case the question is about her right to children, or about the life of her children, which fate appears to dispute, Rizpah fights for the right of seven executed persons to be buried properly. Two of them are her own children, fathered by Saul, and the other five are Saul's grandchildren from one of his daughters.[23] The power of fate is here embodied by David, who infers from a divine oracle that he should surrender Saul's progeny to the Gibeonites, who will kill them. The corpses are not buried but rather are exposed to the wild animals. In this manner, David violates the commandment, read in canonical sequence, in Deut 21:22–23, which stipulates that those who are executed must be buried on the same day. Only Rizpah's relentless vigil over the dead instructs David—Rizpah becomes in a certain sense David's teacher of the torah, as Luise Metzler has noted.[24]

As in Hannah's case, Rizpah overcomes the power that she confronts, in this case the power of the ruler, because God takes her side. Metzler, in my opinion, has shown convincingly that the water that falls from heaven (v. 10) is in no way the rain that ends the famine—as such, it would occur much too early in the narrative, as has been seen repeatedly. The rain, as in other passages, is a divine demonstration of the power with which God intervenes in favor of those who belong to him. Metzler writes: "Together

23. See the MT of 2 Sam 21:8.

24. Luise Metzler, *Das Recht Gestorbener: Rizpa als Toralehrerin für David*, TF 28 (Berlin: LIT, 2015).

with Rizpah, YHWH protests with blows like those delivered during the liberation from Egypt. No life-saving, famine-ending rain falls from Heaven.… The hunger has not passed. It threatens to become much worse because of the rainstorm, if human beings are not buried." In the rain," says Metzler, "the solidarity of YHWH with Rizpah and with those who have been killed" is shown.[25] Only when those executed are buried does God let himself be "entreated" (v. 14).

In Hannah and Rizpah, at the beginning and the end of the books of Samuel, we encounter two women who act ostensibly in their own interest, or on behalf of their children. By so doing, they not only call into question seemingly immutable orders and power relationships, but they also bring God over to their side and, therefore, prevail.

7. Conclusion

The Former Prophets contain several narratives about resistant women. The narratives are not about only one type of resistant women. Rather—and this is the first finding of the reading of the texts—the narratives account for approximately five profiles or silhouettes or clusters. My initial task was to identify these profiles.

Second, I would like to state that these profiles, and the individual narratives that find expression in them, reflect the scope of the *conditio humana*. Women can become victims and more or less resign themselves to this fate. They can obtain power and then fail. They can already anticipate who will win in history and can profit more, but also less, from this intuition. They can commit themselves under more or less pleasant circumstances relating to their community. They can also stand up for their rights and those of their children, thereby bringing God to their side. All of this is possible, and the narratives do not reduce the portrait to one single image of the resistant woman.

Third, one should ask a question that so far I have touched on only marginally. Where is God in all this? It is striking that in none of the narratives discussed above does God play even the tiniest of roles. This is true of practically all the figures in the first four clusters. Women in resistance do not need God to act. It is not that they are godless. But in their concrete actions, God does not appear, except in the cases of Hannah and Rizpah.

25. Metzler, *Recht Gestorbener*, 320–21.

With these two, the decisive turn of events occurs when God takes their side. Their resistance is presumably the most difficult, because it is directed not at human beings, but rather at a supposedly divine law. Hannah is childless because "YHWH had closed her womb," as the text says (1 Sam 1:5–6). And David, in the case of the execution of the seven descendants of Saul, appeals to a divine oracle (2 Sam 21:1). Only God can take a stance against God. For this reason, the resistance of Hannah and Rizpah, in my view, is most radical. They offer resistance to a power that apparently is hostile to life, and through their resistance, they provoke the God who responds to life. For me, they are the most important mothers in the faith.

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