

The Recurring Theme of “Beginning” in the Samson Narratives

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You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will begin delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Judges 13:5

INTRODUCTION

The Samson narratives (Judges 13-16) contains exploits that move beyond the adventurous exploits which they portray. Interspersed throughout the heroic traditions, often overlooked, is a recurrent theme of “beginnings”. Judges 13:5 is the cornerstone of this theme which is buried in the traditions. Yet, the birth account in Judges 13 establishes verse 5 as a highpoint, a benchmark, and a signal that the actions of the boy which is to be born will have a trajectory that far outlives the immediacy of his unforecasted actions. This verse introduces and summarizes the Theology which will unfold through the adventures.

To Begin

The Hebrew term for “begin” is *ללן*, *chalah*. Most dictionaries and lexicons see the semantic field of the term including “to make ready”, “adapt”, “prepare”, or “establish”. It takes on a general sense of “original”, first cause or existence, to rise, or to commence. It signifies an initial act or to start something new. It is a first step. It can mean to “lay open” or “to wound”. This connotes to “loose” or “give access”. It implies a dissolution or

breaking of a circumstance. The term can also be understood as a foundational ground.

The word is common to the entire Semitic region. The original meaning was “to loose” or “set free”. Later, the meaning was extended to “desecrate” and this meaning dominated with “begin”. In the Akkadian, the semantic field included “clear” or “culturally pure”. A possible cultic interpretation is to “consecrate oneself through cleansing”. We will contend that this connotation is applicable to the occurrences in the Samson narratives. In Arabic the term connotes to be “free” or to be “permitted”.¹ We also see an occurrence of this term in the Jephthah account (Judges 10:18) that is used in the same way as it is used in the Samson narratives (Judges 13:5). Underlying the connotations is the idea of a movement toward a desired end or conclusion.

PRECURSOR TO DAVID

While Samson had an immediate impact on the Philistines’ attempt to rise to power in the region, his actions also began the process which would culminate in David sitting on the throne of Israel. Samson is portrayed as beginning the war with the Philistines that David completed. This was a purposeful compilation on the part of Davidic scribes. A keynote to the link between Samson and David is the charisma, the experience of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him. The Hebrew construction used to describe such events employ the term, צלח, *tsalach*. This term literally means “to rush or advance mightily”. It occurs in the Samson narratives in Judges 14:6, 19, and 15:14 and in the Davidic account in 1 Samuel 16:13.² This term, used in this context, is unique to the Samson-David traditions. This suggests the same editorial hand at work.

¹ F. Maas, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 3 vols (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997) 1:427.

² Admittedly, the term does occur in the Saulide account (1 Samuel 10:6) but this is in a prophetic context. Other mentions are of the “Spirit of God” which is considered a different force.

While Biblical scholarship has expanded the realm of charismatic leadership, the original connotation referred to a person's rise to leadership through the endowment of the YHWH Spirit. This theological event is most prominent in the book of Judges. The YHWH Spirit comes down upon Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (Judges 13:25, 14:6, 19, 15:14). Saul is depicted as a Charismatic Leader, though not quite of the same type as the Judges. (1 Samuel 10:6). The nature of the Charisma will change with David (1 Samuel 16:13). The period of the Judges constitutes the closest thing to a "Heroic Age" that Israel ever experienced. It reflects an era of settlement in Israelite history, before the establishment of the Monarchy and extensive writing. For this reason, many scholars dismiss the Judges' accounts as being of low historical value and quality. However, in the stories of these great heroes, the YHWH Spirit is a dominant factor. As J.L. McKenzie states; "The heroes of Israel are . . . simple peasants. They are not heroes and warriors by profession; they become heroes because the Spirit of YHWH seizes them".³ .

To understand the Davidic orientation of the Samson narratives one has to look to the Yahwist, or J, writer. The writing of the Yahwist is characterized by a rustic and realistic tone, fast-paced action, and vivid details. This is not to argue that the Samson accounts originated with the J writer, but that he is, possibly, the compiler most comfortable working with this type of narrative. The traditions, most likely, began to emerge in an "oral stage" shortly after Samson's death. Martin Noth was the first to argue for the origin of the J source dating to the early monarchy. He writes, "as far as I can see, there is nothing in the original material of the J narrative which would force one to place its composition later than the Davidic-Solomonic period."⁴

³ J.L. McKenzie, *The World of the Judges*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 11.

⁴ M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*. B. Anderson, trans. (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981),230

J.L. McKenzie is the most powerful voice for looking to the Davidic Court as the origin of the J tradition. McKenzie writes;

“It is most probable that the J of the Pentateuch was also a scribe of David’s court. The history of early Israel and the history of the early monarchy were produced by the same school of writers. One may probably attribute the institution and intention of this school to David himself. In uniting Israel and Judah in his monarchy he wished the traditions of the tribes to be fused into a single tradition which would identify as one the nation which he had created and merge its dangerous diversities.”⁵

Elsewhere McKenzie argues “if, as seems very likely, the political unification of Israel under David and Solomon was accompanied by a literary unification of tribal traditions, then the first edition of Judges should be placed here.”⁶ One must notice that the adventures of Samson spanned both the tribal traditions of Dan and Judah.

In the original stories and the later redactions, YHWH raises up saviors by conferring the Spirit to preserve His people and the land. The Spirit, according to McKenzie, moves these men to deeds above and beyond their normal capacities, powers, and attainments. It is a Divine impulse that is unpredictable and uncontrollable. McKenzie continues:

“The Spirit becomes the moving force of history in the stories of the Judges. It plays the role here which the Word of YHWH assumes in the books of the Prophets and the history of the Monarchy. . . The Charisma comes to equip them for their mission of deliverance and then leaves them. The concept of the Charismatic Leader becomes highly

⁵ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*. (Chicago: Bruce, 1965) 770.

⁶ McKenzie, *World*, 9.

important in subsequent development of Israelite belief, for the King is the one upon whom the Spirit rests permanently, and the King in turn is the type of the Messiah. Thus, the power of YHWH to save is affirmed in the stories of the Judges.”⁷

Therefore, David was politically aware enough to use the traditions of Samson as a foundation, beginning, for his kingship. The popularity of the powerful Danite would help pave David’s path to securing the throne.

Overall, the Samson narratives will set the theological, literary, and historical stage for David. G. von Rad is credited with identifying a “forward movement” in the Samson narratives. He argued that the redactors placed individual, independent traditions together to form connected whole.⁸ This forward movement is aimed at David, as his scribal school stitched together Samson’s exploits to point to David. Key to this understanding is the occurrences of the term of and the imagery associated with “to begin”. However, we would suggest that these integral phrases were Davidic insertions. Their individual occurrences are anomalous to their context, but they all point to David.

JUDGES 13:5

After the announcement of pregnancy, the angel tells Manoah’s wife; “and he will begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”. Told in the “Child of Promise” context, the birth and mission of Samson is foretold by an angel to Samson’s parents.⁹ By its construction, this verse introduces Samson as starting a new era in Israelite and Salvation History. The text, as it stands, foretells that the boy “will begin”, ללל , to deliver

⁷ Ibid., 15-17.

⁸ D.A. Knight, “Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel” SBLD Dissertation series 9 (Missoula, 1973) 111.

⁹ For a detailed discussion of the “Children of Promise” cf. J. Roskoski, “Isaac and Samson: Sons of Promise”, *AJBT*

Israel. The term, *chalel*, has a semantic field which includes “to bore” or “to pierce”. It is also understood as to undo something, in this case it would be the Philistine oppression. The imagery of the term includes to drive a wedge, wound, or dissolve something. The boy, therefore, is to make the initial rupture of Philistine power.

The compiler of the narratives already set the literary stage for Samson beginning a new era in Judges 13:1. This seems to be the first of two distinct introductions.¹⁰ It is certainly a Davidic introduction, as after the Davidic kingship the Philistines were no longer a threat to Israel’s existence. The introduction of the term “40” refers to the length of Philistine oppression. The use of this number helps to magnify the image of the Philistines. This number is, perhaps, the main key to understanding the theology of Judges 13:1. The number’s significance is universally recognized by the scholarly community. It is a number that frequently occurs in a wide array of contexts. It is seen as the duration of a generation or a long span of time. Both occurrences are to be seen as general approximations. Theologically, the number takes on several important aspects. This must be seen as an innocent generation that was not worthy of continued punishment and being a new generation, it is suitable to usher in a new beginning in Israelite and Salvation History. The number seems to be associated with waiting or preparing for something, testing or probation, or a time of punishment as in the period of Wandering after Sinai (Dt. 8:1-5). However, as many scholars have pointed out, this period of struggle or punishment usually precedes a time of blessing or a new period in Salvation history.

The reference to “40” in Judges 13:1 contains many of these theological aspects. The verse begins with a reference to the “evil” which Israel again did in the eyes of the Lord and although the text states that He “gave” the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines the juxtaposition suggests that this act was one of

¹⁰ Cf. J. Roskoski. “The Theological Significance of Judges 13:1”, *AJBT* 15(08) 2/23/14.

punishment for their transgression. However, this act was a temporary measure. The Israelites were in the custody of the Philistine nation and the phrase does not suggest that YHWH gave up His rights to His people. This phrase has an underlying foreshadowing that something of significance will follow. YHWH will reclaim His people. This subtle foreshadowing suggests, again, that this verse is not original to the story but was imposed by an editor who knew the sequence of events. As the scholarly community has pointed out, a Biblical pattern exists in which a 40-year period precedes a time of blessing. In the birth account of Samson, it is written that the boy was born, grew, and was “*blessed*” by the Lord (Judges 13:24). According to J. Oswalt, “to bless in the OT means to endure with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.”¹¹ Overall, the concept of being blessed entails the gift of benevolent power, power to bring about positive or healthy change. Samson was to be prepared and equipped to begin the liberation of Israel from the Philistines.¹²

There are other indications that the editor was familiar with the geography and history of the region. That he knew of the reduction of the tribe of Dan being consolidated to a “clan” shows an origin of the verse being somewhat soon after or concurrent with Samson’s life (13:2). This seems to be before the Danite Migration (Judges 18). The editor also was aware of the assumption of Danite cities, most notably Zorah and Eshtaol, by Judah (Joshua 15:33), which is seen as an administrative list from David’s court. The mention of the field in which the mother was sitting (13:9) and the rock on which Manoah offered sacrifice (13:19) indicate a recent memory of a local landmark, as well. The stark descriptions indicate that

¹¹ J. Oswalt, “bless”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 vols (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:132.

¹² For a full discussion of Judges 13¹, cf. J. Roskoski “.The Theological Significance of Judges 13:1” , *AJBT*

14 (24) 6/16/13.

the original source of the account was a native and was familiar to the area.

The focus of these references indicates Danite traditions. They describe a priestly man whose wife will bear a consecrated son, a nazir. If we edit out the “begin” phrase from 13:5, we can easily move toward 13:24, wherein we see the fulfillment of the announcement and the blessing which for which we would look at the end of the forty years. We are not told directly how the blessing will manifest, but the mission is thus sanctified. Samson could have been both a magistrate and a delivering Judge. His funeral notice, in Judges 16:31, suggests this magisterial function; “Then his brothers and his father’s whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years”. Any notice of where they “went down” is omitted, although the news of his death and location, must have reached the Danites. Moreover, Samson’s body was brought to his father’s grave in the area of Zorah and Eshtaol, which echoes Judges 13:2 and, as will be seen, 13:25. Overall, this is the type of notice that is found in the funeral notes for the Minor Judges; Shamgar, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Most scholars have assumed that the duties of these men were mostly judicial or magisterial. Therefore, Judges 16:31, a second concluding formula. seems to be a Danite tradition.¹³

The purpose of this proposed insertion of the “begin” reference, in 13:5, rests with David. He needed to introduce the Philistines, as an overarching theme and to reinforce 13:1. It should be noted that the accounts of the Philistines occur mostly in Judges 14-15 in the narratives. It is in these “middle chapters” that Samson’s exploits against the Philistines, under the Charisma, are the main focus. David needed to present them as a threat to Israel which would make his triumph more

¹³ Cf. J. Roskoski, “The Length of Samson’s Judgeship :Comparing Judges 15:20 and 16:31”, *AJBT* 18(14)

glorious. He needed to emphasize that Samson was only “to begin” the deliverance of Israel. Therefore, Samson could easily be portrayed as starting the war that David finished (2 Samuel 5 and 8:1). The Davidic scribes are creating a recurring theme that underlies and fuels the narratives.

JUDGES 13:25

Some scholars make the assumption that, because there is no exploit attached to the onrushing of the YHWH Spirit, this is a lost feat of strength or episode. It was kept because it was part of the charismatic traditions attached to Samson. However, such a conclusion ignores the full semantics of the phrase which suggests more than one occurrence. Also, this conclusion does not incorporate the goals of Davidic writing; to depict his breaking of Philistine power. Based on this primary goal, needed to secure his throne, the identity of the adversaries whom Samson engaged is not important or mentioned. The adversaries who are missing is probably the Amorites, as these were the people who, originally, harassed and confined the Danites (Judges 1:34). The Amorites were well distributed throughout the region and these events, probably, took the form of border skirmishes led by Samson, thus establishing his charismatic authority. While the problems caused by the Amorites would be a Danite memory of Samson and his feats would establish his charismatic authority, David was singularly focused on the Philistines. Most likely, the Philistines were omitted from the reference because this charismatic event was of a different type than the subsequent events. Therefore, although the Amorites were a constant annoyance to Israel, the Samson narratives had to be focused on the Philistines. However, some of the deeds that established his charisma in the eyes of Israel may have been directed against the Philistines. As Judges 15:3 it reads, literally;” this time I shall be blameless about the Philistines if I do them harm”. This enigmatic comment, first of all, declares war on the Philistines. But with the term, **נפג**, *paam*. This is the same term that is used in 13:25 to speak of repeated charismatic episodes. This suggests

that there were earlier smaller scale events that were non-decisive or even unprovoked for which Samson was blamed by the Philistines, though they did not know him, only his name. However, this time he feels exonerated for any actions. These exploits helped to establish him as a Charismatic Leader to the Danites. The Danite, seemingly, can now recognize the Philistines as a threat. Such events would also allow the Danites to go “down to” Philistia to retrieve Samson’s body. This time, Samson fully intends to exceed any previous misdeeds. Most likely, these deeds were in Philistine territory which, consequently, explains the funeral notice of “going down” (to Gaza).

In Judges 13:25 we see a key piece to the Davidic, theological, influence; “the Spirit of the Lord *began to impel him*”; פָּעַל . . . ַלָּו. The phrase has no literal English translation. Therefore, many scholars satisfy themselves with a metaphorical rendering on the order of, “began to impel him”. This tends to suggest of forward orientation to the phrase, as pointed to by von Rad. At a first reading, it seems that this introduces the charismatic guidance for the rest of Samson’s career. These events were seemingly subtle, not like the violent events of the YHWH Spirit which characterized his battles with the Philistines. It introduces Samson as a Charismatic Leader with an aspect of permanence. In this sense, it would be important to David, as it seems to prefigure his permanent charismatic endowment (1 Samuel 16:13).

The root of the term, “begin”, is the same as was used in 13:5. However this occurrence introduces a new context and connotation. The term for “impel”, פָּעַל, has a layered development. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to beat regularly”. This was extended to imply “to impel” or “agitate”. The cognates, according to lexicons and dictionaries, reveal the foundation for this word. There is a connotation of “thrust”. This connotation complements the term, “begin”, with its implications of “piercing”, and forming the first break in an entity or power. According to other lexicons, typified by *Brown-*

Driver-Briggs, the semantic field includes “strike”, “hit”, and derives from the Phoenician, “foot”. The term seems to indicate that there is the repetition of occurrences, like a cadence or the footfall of marching.

Theologically, this phrase points to David. It moves against the former working of the Charisma in the previous Judges; a transitory force in the face of a crisis. This starts the notion of permanence through multiple experiences. This phrase begins a new, although short, period of charismatic authority in Israelite leadership. This notice works with the introduction in 13:1 and the announcement in 13:5. They introduce the theme of the Philistines which will be picked up later. We also maintain that this was an insertion, as it creates a redundancy. Immediately before the reference to the YHWH Spirit is the reference to Samson being “blessed”. The reader is left to conclude that the blessing is somehow connected to the Charisma. In its present form, the reference presents the Charisma, the bestowal of the YHWH Spirit, to be an aspect of blessing. In other words, the Charisma is depicted as one of the gifts of the Divine blessing. According to J.L. McKenzie, a blessing entails “a communication of life from YHWH. With life come vigor and strength and success, which bring one peace, peace of mind and peace with the world . . . [a blessing is] endowed with a vital reality; once the blessing is spoken, it cannot be recalled or annulled”.¹⁴

Such a presentation would lead the reader to assume that, by virtue of his blessing, Samson’s charisma was linked to, or a product of, his blessing. In addition to the Davidic purpose, this reference is the first suggestion that Samson’s mission will be accomplished by his surpassing physical strength. The blessing of David, presumably, was manifested in the anointing ceremony conducted by Samuel. Both blessing and anointing signify the approval of YHWH.

¹⁴ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, (Chicago: Bruce, 1965) 98.

JUDGES 16:22

The final reference to “begin” occurs in Judges 16:22; “However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven”. This also seems to be an editorial insertion. The comment offers hope for a triumphant ending. It is a brilliant literary “hook” to keep the audience in rapt attention and looking forward to a later triumph. According to the early scholarship, this circumstance, though in itself inconsiderable, is noted as a sign of the recovery of God’s favor and his former strength, in some degree, upon his repentance, and renewing his vow with God, which was a later codification [Numbers 6] allowed for the Nazarites to do. Although the comparison to the codified laws of the *Nazir* in Numbers 6 is anachronistic, the argument referring to repentance has merit. This is another prefiguring of David. Samson was brought low by his love for a woman. David parallels this mistake with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2). Although no word of love is given for David, the Samuel text does write that Bathsheba was “beautiful”. David falls from God’s grace, but makes amends and restores his relationship with God. It has been that the broken relationship of Samson is beginning to heal with his growing hair. This would be a popular insertion with the audience and look to David. Similarly, David was able to repent and be forgiven (2 Samuel 12:13). Although both men were drawn back to God from their misstep, neither man could avoid the consequences of their actions. Samson was captured, blinded, and placed into slave labor; lower than that of a beast of burden. David was to lose his first-born son. The glorious fulfillment of their punishment will come to fruition later.

It, also, acknowledges the common theology of hair in the Ancient Near East. It was a common assertion that a man’s vitality and power was linked to the length of his hair. It is a dramatic image that would appeal to all listeners, from peasant

to religious leader. The most egregious example was the “Holy Warrior”, who left his hair uncut in preparation for battle. We see the respect given to the hair of the warrior as early as the “*Epic of Gilgamesh*”, particularly with the character Enkidu (c. 2100 BC). We have found inscriptions of long-haired warriors throughout the Ancient Near East. Also, archaeology has uncovered a “roundel” with the head of an unnamed hero, dated to the 14th-13th century BC. A brief description from “The Met” reads, “This roundel, carved out of bitumen, was originally overlaid with silver and gold foil. Finely incised in the center is the head of a hero figure with long hair parted down the middle, ending in three curls on each side”. The sign of Samson’s consecration was his hair. According to Judges 13:5, it seems most probable that Samson was to be in a constant, lifelong, state of battle readiness with his uncut hair. However, H.W. Hertzberg argues that Samson was always open to timely interventions of the YHWH Spirit, in addition to his status as a Nazirite.¹⁵

Therefore, with his consecration being broken, so too was his preparation or his mission, war on the Philistines. In a singular way, Samson has conflated his consecration with his charisma. Delilah and the Philistines only knew of his feats of battle and strength. The consecration was known only to Samson. With his admission, Samson makes his consecrated hair the sign of his charisma. According to the text, with his consecration being broken, his Charisma also left him. Also, the tool of his mission, strength, left him.

DAVIDIC BEGINNINGS

Each reference to a “beginning” seems to be a Davidic redaction. The purpose was to emphasize that Samson was the beginning of a new era in Israelite history and that David fulfilled Samson’s actions. The three references are all placed in the narratives to produce a bolstering of the waning national spirit

¹⁵ H.W. Hertzberg, *Die Bücher, Josua, Richter, Ruth* ATD (Göttingen, 1953) 224-229.

which was happening under Philistine oppression. Julius Wellhausen argued for a “pre-Deuteronomic” book of Judges. He demonstrated that this book, probably composed during the reign of David, was characterized by peculiar linguistic structures and unique viewpoints, such as the idea of “all Israel” and the peculiar description of the Charisma. This accounts for Samson being depicted as national hero in the Davidic history. Wellhausen saw Samson as being depicted as a preparation for the monarchy. Samson, as McKenzie also argues, was the sole “source of pride” for Israel.¹⁶ Such a need for bolstering the religious-national spirit of the country, with the backdrop of the Philistine oppression, would only resonate with an early, Pre-Deuteronomic, Davidic redactor.

Such a spirit was needed for the Israelites to withstand Philistine aggression. The forward orientation, of which von Rad speaks, was uppermost in the minds of the Davidic scribes for popular and political reasons. The Samson narratives stand apart from the other Judges’ narratives as his predecessors’ narratives were self-contained. With this stress on “beginnings” the scribes were able to strengthen a literary block of historical narratives that form a powerful inclusion with the Davidic narratives.

To this end, the stress on “beginnings” complements the description of Samson’s charismatic events (14:6, 14:19, 15:14), The term used is *נלץ*, *tsalach*, meaning “to rush (upon)”. This description is peculiar to the Samson and David narratives¹⁷ In a literary sense, this forms the beginning of new type of description for the events of the YHWH Spirit. Therefore, the entire group of Samson narratives is presented as a literary and historical precursor to the Davidic Kingship. This type of Charisma was short-lived in Israel; spanning the time between

¹⁶ P.D. Miller, “Wellhausen and the History of Israel’s Religion” *Semeia* 25 (1982) 61-74. Cf. McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 98.

¹⁷ Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6 had the YHWH Spirit rush upon him, but this was in a prophetic context and must be seen as a different context and circumstance.

Samson and David. After David, with his son, Solomon. Charisma had become part of the trappings of the kingly office. This is a phenomenon M. Weber termed “routinization”. This is when the Charisma takes on the character of a “permanent relationship forming a stable community, , , or organization”. The character of the Charisma becomes “radically changed” from its original conception. The pure form exists only in the early stages of the oral transmission and, possibly, earliest compilations.¹⁸ With Solomon the Charisma was supplanted by “dynastic succession” as the main source of authority.

These phrases, though anomalous to their immediate contexts, act as Davidic benchmarks in the Samson narratives. They seem to interrupt the narratives in order to foreshadow major elements in the rise of King David. They establish a trajectory to David, while addressing the attention of the audience and common beliefs of the age. By this trajectory and acknowledgement, the compiler shows that the Samson narratives are inextricably connected to the thought of the Ancient Near East and, more specifically, the Davidic era.

CONCLUSIONS

By introducing these “beginning” phrases into the narratives, the compiler clearly depicts the period in which the narratives assembled. These references would have little meaning without a Davidic context. Without this context, they would stand, perhaps, as remnants, of a pagan or forgotten culture. Therefore, they could not have been written before Davidic writing. If these references were added long after David, they would seem to be the product of awkward redactions. Additionally, after David these references would have little or forgotten meanings. Like the references to the Charisma (14:6, 19, 15:14), they seemed oddly or unevenly distributed throughout the narratives. Their references were placed

¹⁸ M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Glencoe, Free Press, 1947) 364

carefully to prefigure David.¹⁹ Without the Davidic context, these significant verses can be easily dismissed as theological glosses or insertions, as many scholars have argued, meant to make a profane account of a local resistance fighter into a figure that was more palatable to the Hebrew mindset. Or, they can be seen as a corruption of the narratives by Canaanite religions. With the Davidic context, the Samson narratives can stand as an integral part of the Salvation History of Israel.

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¹⁹ Even the settling of the wager by despoiling the men of Ashkelon (14:19) points to David as it introduces the city of Ashkelon, part of the Philistine Pentapolis; even though the marriage account had little to do with this city.

