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A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SUICIDAL TERRORISM SAMSON'S TERRORISTS ACT ACCORDING TO JUDGES 16:30

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Abstract: *This theological analysis delves into the complex and sensitive phenomenon of suicidal terrorism, drawing insights from the biblical narrative of Samson in Judges 16:30. By examining the life of Samson, a figure often cited in discussions surrounding violence and sacrifice, this paper seeks to explore the theological dimensions that may shed light on the motivations and justifications behind suicidal acts of terror. The study begins with examining the biblical text, particularly Judges 16:30, where Samson brings down the temple of the Philistines upon himself, resulting in his death. Through a careful exegetical analysis, we aim to uncover the theological underpinnings of Samson's actions and the implications for understanding contemporary instances of suicidal terrorism. The paper engages with theological concepts such as divine purpose, redemption, and sacrifice to explore how these themes manifest in the Samson narrative and their potential relevance to the ideological framework of modern terrorists. Additionally, it considers the ethical and moral implications of such acts within a theological context, seeking to distinguish between legitimate expressions of faith and distorted interpretations that lead to violence. By bridging biblical scholarship with contemporary issues, this theological analysis aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the theological roots of suicidal terrorism. It encourages a dialogue that acknowledges the complexities inherent in interpreting religious texts and their potential impact on individuals and communities grappling with issues of violence and extremism.*

Keywords: *Suicidal Terrorism, Samson Terrorists, Judges 16:30*

INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament, Samson and other judges were viewed as Israel's direct protectors. They faced an array of adversaries, and their impact was perceived as being restricted to their contemporary predicament (Judges 2:18–19). The Samson narratives stand out among the Judges' stories; we learn of a commission, a miraculous birth, charisma, and an early version of the Naziritic vows. Samson faced the Philistines alone, unlike the other Judges.[1]

The picture of Samson, which originated in the biblical story, came to represent the selfless patriotic ideal that governed Zionist thought. Much has been written about this image's popular and widespread use in Israeli society and culture. Still, Rachel Harris argues that the drama of the Samson story was supported by his final suicide, or martyred sacrifice, rather than just his courage, strength, and symbolic identity as the new Jew, which marked this biblical figure for reuse in popular forums. As ideas regarding collective sacrifice evolved, so did the symbolism of Samson's warriors eager to give their lives for the modern nation-state.[2]

In Samson's day, religion and patriotism were dwindling and dying out. The social order, which rested on judges who were specially chosen and appointed, had collapsed, and the popular life produced, by way of reaction, two extraordinary phenomena: the first was the order of the Nazarites, and the second was the order of the prophets. Samson stood in for the former. Elmslie noticed the importance of the Nazarites: they were complete abstainers in protest against those luxuries and self-indulgences that naturally led to a devotion to Baal. Israel's sole chance at this point in the social condition was the presence and influence of a powerful and remarkable personality. That was Samson.[3]

The Hebrews, who were losing hope owing to the tyranny of the Philistines, found new bravery when Samson defeated the Philistines on his own. He was bestowed with exceptional physical strength, which was required for this, but Samson also brought forth most of his transgressions. In addition, he possessed an unquenchable joy that kept him going despite the general dejection of the populace. His grasp on God only wavered at the end of his career, and then only momentarily.

Samson is positioned in the space between the Dagon Temple's columns. Samson speaks to God and begs for assistance. The narrator adds triumphantly, "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than those which he slew in his life," as Samson tightly grasps the temple's pillars before bringing the building down on himself and all the Philistines (Judges 16:30). Samson does a brave deed before he dies. Other heroes in the Bible begged God to take their lives. We read about Jonah (Jonah 4:9), Jeremiah (20:17), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), and Moses (Num 11:10–15).[4] But these heroes persisted in their purpose, and God turned down their prayers. Samson does a brave deed before he dies. Not just Samson, but other biblical heroes are also persuaded to choose death. Samson's death stands out when compared to the actions of Abimelech, Ahithophel, Zimri, and Saul who committed suicide, as well as their

[1] John Roskoski, "Samson: Judge of Israel, Hero of Faith," *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 9, no. 5 (2018), https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/RoskoskiJ16.pdf.

[2] Rachel S. Harris, "Samson's Suicide: Death and the Hebrew Literary Canon," *Israel Studies* 17, no. 3 (2012): 67, https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.17.3.67.

[3] W. G. Elmslie, "Samson," *The Old and New Testament Student* 14, no. 1 (1892): 58–59, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3157606.

[4] Shaul Bar, "The Death of Samson," *Old Testament Essays* 33, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2020/v33n1a10.

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final moments.[5]

Biblical scholars have persuasively demonstrated in recent years that liminality—the hero's position as a person stuck "betwixt and between" two distinct realms or states of being—is a crucial aspect of the story's portrayal of Samson. When Samson's liminality is discussed, it usually highlights his constant presence on the edge of the worlds of men and women, or between nature and society. He freely moves across these boundaries but never stays on either side for long. This article demonstrates how a crucial part of Samson's liminality remains to be revealed: his inability to finally cross the barrier into maturity as a man-child.[6]

Wilson argued that recent research on masculinity in the Hebrew Bible has acknowledged that the character's remarkable power, rhetorical fluency, and long hair are striking markers of manhood in ancient Israelite literature. Samson does, however, concurrently exhibit youthful immaturity qualities with these manly attributes, indicating an inability to mature into a mature adult. By closely examining the Samson cycle and drawing on social science studies on male growth as well as the Hebrew Bible's portrayal of childhood, the essay determines the signs of Samson's immaturity.[7]

The powerful Samson was no longer in charge. He was made abundantly aware of that stance when he was taken prisoner. His eyes were gouged out by the Philistines, and they turned him into a grinder in the jail (Judges 16:21). The Philistines were adhering to a long-standing Near Eastern tradition. After being rendered blind, prisoners were made to perform menial labor for women and slaves. Ironically, Samson ended up working for a woman.[8]

Many Muslims and perhaps some Christians too, think of those who perpetrate suicidal murders as martyrs for the faith, especially blessed by the Almighty with a vocation to kill. Some even find arguments for it in their holy book or the Old Testament. Before we rush in to condemn their arguments, we must see some precedents. The most obvious is that of Samson. On the face of it, we read the story in Judges 13-16, Samson appears simply as a suicidal terrorist hitman. Even the narrator in Judges regards him as a specially blessed instrument of divine purpose.[9] Using a stunning act of suicide terrorism, the blind Samson committed himself to a deadly goal even as he was dying—crashing Dagon's temple over the heads of the Philistines and himself (Judges 16:25-30). Not for some honorable, spiritual, or divinely inspired reason, but rather for ruthless retaliation, so " I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judges 16:28 NRSVUE). He is the only judge in the Bible who did not succeed in saving the nation, even though God had given the go-ahead for it. He would merely "begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines," not freeing his people from the onerous burden (Judges 13:5).[10]

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[5] Pnina Galpaz-Feller, "'Let My Soul Die with the Philistines' (Judges 16.30)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 3 (March 2, 2006): 315–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089206063435.

[6] Wilson, "Samson the Man-Child: Failing to Come of Age in the Deuteronomistic History," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 1 (2014): 43, https://doi.org/10.15699/jbibllite.133.1.43.

[7] Wilson.

[8] Michael J. Smith, "The Failure of the Family in Judges, Part 2: Samson," *Faculty Publications and Presentations.* 116 (2005), http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/sor_fac_pubs/116.

[9] Brian Wicker, "Samson Terroristes: A Theological Reflection on Suicidal Terrorism," *New Blackfriars* 84, no. 983 (January 27, 2003): 42–60, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2003.tb06486.x.

[10] Anton Karl Kozlovic, "Making a 'Bad' Woman Wicked: The Devilish Construction of Delilah within Cecil B. Demille's Samson and Delilah," *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 7 (2006): 70–102, https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=r

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His untimely death is not obscene or impolite. For the people of God, he gave his life. The victory of Israel against Philistia and the reinstatement of pure faith in his own country was his final deed. When Samson destroyed the temple of Dagon, bringing overwhelming destruction to the pride and blossom of all Philistia, every Hebrew heart was filled with fervor and enthusiasm for their national faith, and they worshipped.[11] Instead of using his normal sight, Samson sees in this passage through the eyes of faith. He saw himself as God's representative, enforcing God's justice onto the pagan world. This extra-biblical depiction of Samson strikes a chord because, on a deeper level, they both share the defiance and faith in God's final justice, as well as the loss of sight and their struggles. Samson's description of them in these lines: they both remain completely stubborn to the very end, finding strength in their conviction that God supports them in their disobedience.[12]

What possible links exist between basic fear of terror and other forms of fear, particularly acts of terror committed against the number of invisible persons of many racial, religious, and sexual backgrounds who swarm around the blind Samson from an unknown distance? What are the connections between Samson's fear of losing his manhood and the public portrayal of him as the shaved and degraded prisoner of war? How much does Dagon's formal hybridity" which suggests that the portrayal or representation of Dagon within a particular work involves a synthesis of different forms, styles, genres, or cultural influences provoke Samson to behave terroristic ally, and how can this reaction indicate a particular constitutive relationship or provocative similarity between effeminate manhood and pagan assemblage?

RESEARCH METHODS

Researchers using a library research method for a theological study entails systematically going through previously published books and academic articles on the subject. Researchers clearly state what theological analysis aims to achieve by deciding which specific areas would like to look into more, such as theological readings of Judges 16:30, historical settings, or parallels to modern suicide terrorism. To find pertinent material, start by looking through scholarly periodicals, library catalogs, and academic databases.

RESULTS

Samson's desire for retaliation against the Philistines—who had taken away his strength and blinded him—is what drives his actions. Although the act is not overtly suicidal, it does entail a readiness to give his life to further a cause. Samson prays for strength, acknowledging that he is dependent on God for his strength, which comes from a heavenly blessing. The morality of using violence and seeking retribution is a topic raised by the narrative. Samson's acts reflect his own decisions as well as a condemnation of the Philistines. The narrative explores the idea of supernatural empowerment and how God helps people fulfill their ambitions. In particular, Samson's self-selected demise (Judges. 16:30). Samson's willingness to give his life in order to eliminate Israel's foes makes it seem noble. Despite being taken prisoner and rendered blind by the Philistines, who used him as a symbol of Israel's and their god Yahweh's defeat, he miraculously regains his abilities and kills a large number of Philistines by demolishing the

ep1&type=pdf&doi=c2567158971e57c9ace77ab8d41d75e9ce9cce67.

[11] Elmslie, "Samson."

[12] Matthew Mullin, "A Joy Presumptuous to Be Thought': Milton's Vindication of Radical Theocracy in Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes," *West Texas A&M University*, n.d., https://www.wtamu.edu/_files/docs/EPML/Tracks 3 Papers/10 Milton, Matthew Mullin.pdf.

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temple dedicated to their god Dagon.[13] Herman mentions that Samson gives his life, to accomplish his goals according to Judges 16:30. He is essentially a suicide bomber, and like others who commit suicide bombings, he feels that his murderous act is a manifestation of God's will.[14]

DISCUSSION

The Early Conflicts

The Book of Judges informs us of Israel being delivered into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years (Judges. 13:1) and of the skirmishes and private vendettas of Shamgar and Samson. Neither of these two leaders even aimed at a confederation of Israelite tribes to stem the tide of Philistine expansion. They were unlike the judges of the North, where Deborah inspired Barak to form an alliance of the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Issachar and win a brilliant victory over Sisera's mighty chariot army. In the southern area dominated by the Philistines, there was no outstanding warrior like Gideon who, with a small force of 300 men using the cover of night, psychological warfare, and a surprise attack, annihilated the marauding Midianites.[15]

The tribes of Dan and Judah were the first victims of Philistine expansion. Dan, enclosed to the northeast by the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin and by Judah to the south, was denied access to the Mediterranean Sea by the Philistines. The Danites were thus compelled to find new territory and moved north, occupying Leshem (Joshua 19:47). From the story told by Samson, we learn of the shameful incident when 3,000 Judeans came to Samson “to take you prisoner and hand you over to the Philistines” (Judges 15:12), because “You knew that the Philistines rule over us” (Judges 15:11).

Samson was too humble to take on the role of commander of a Jewish army. Furthermore, he didn't want to incite the Philistines to terrorize his fellow Jews anymore. He decided to get personal revenge on them by berating them, scaring them, and stopping them from bothering the Jews. He started looking for ways to communicate directly with the Philistines[16] Thus, the Bible suggests that they had some amicable interactions, as demonstrated by Samson's choice of a Philistine wife from Timnah (Judges 14:1). His parents were horrified by this decision, but they came to terms with it in the end (Judges . 14:5). Afterwards, Samson received an invitation to marry her younger sister (Judges 15:2). Even if these partnerships did not work out, the fact that they were even entertained suggests a dynamic that permitted harmonious communication across the groups—a finding that is consistent with comparative colonial studies.[17] Bakon said that there are so many paradoxes in his life. He is not like the other judges in that he is a "judge". Israel is fighting for its freedom, but Samson is taking personal revenge on the Philistines for the "wrongs" that have been done to him. He doesn't lead anybody, and there is no evidence that he encourages a religious

[13] Bernard Reitsma, “Divinely Approved Suicide-Terrorism? A Christian Critique of the Death of Samson,” in *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth* (BRILL, 2012), 853–66, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004224421_056.

[14] Peter C. Herman, “Samson among the Terrorologists,” in *In Terrorism and Literature*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 486–504.

[15] Simon Novak, “The Philistines: Bitter Enemy of Israel,” *JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY* 43, no. 3 (2015), https://jbqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/433/jbq_433_novakphilistines.pdf.

[16] Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, “The Story of Samson and Delilah in the Bible,” Chabad, n.d., https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112512/jewish/The-Story-of-Samson-and-Delilah-in-the-Bible.htm.

[17] Novak, “The Philistines: Bitter Enemy of Israel.”

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renaissance.[18]

Judges 14:4 will seem strange to most Bible readers. It is common knowledge among those who have heard the story of David and Goliath that the Israelites had adversaries in the Philistines and some of the worst ones at that. The conflicts with the Philistines serve as the backdrop for the whole book of 1 Samuel, which chronicles Israel's effort to establish a monarchy. In 1 Samuel 4, Eli's sons are murdered battling them, and in 1 Samuel 31, Saul and his sons perish at Gilboa. It is true that conflicts with the Philistines persist throughout the Exile period (Jer. 47:1-4, Eze. 24:15–16) and beyond (Zech. 9:6).[19]

As a result, God makes a special effort to strengthen the moral and spiritual base of the Philistines because their disobedience had hurt God. Their status was changed to "the hereditary enemies of Israel." Their status as "the most powerful of the resident people" meant that for numerous centuries they dominated all Canaanite affairs. According to Amos 9:7, the Philistines were transported from Caphtor by a sovereign God (the Hebrew word for causality).[20] Emmrich said naturally, the depravity of the land was caused by the filth of the people who had inhabited it; hence, the country's shameful condition could only be removed by their passing (see Num 35:33). Israel was to live in an idolatrous nation that could only be inhabited by God's people once God's enemies perished, much like bees in a cadaver.[21]

Suicidal Terrorism by Samson

Samson and Dalila are both represented by Dagon, which mean suggest a symbolic association between the characters and the themes or forces represented by Dagon in the biblical narrative, such as idolatry, betrayal, or the consequences of straying from one's faith or principles and this reciprocal figuration intensifies the text's play of similarities as "manliness" interacts with its other characters. Dalila and Dagon, as a weird lady and her unusual deity, are forced to quietly represent one another in an unveiling. Exodus 20.4 "You are not allowed to create an idol for yourself, regardless of its form—whether it be an object in the sky above, on the ground below, or submerged in water beneath the surface of the earth." In a sense, Samson has chosen a form of love/sexual idolatry that the poetic drama attempts to refute and rectify by placing his passionate loyalty to Dalila above his obligations as a Nazarite to Israel.[22]

Now that we know why Samson despises himself and despises Dagon, we can also understand why his effeminate submission to Dalila led to the idolatrous submission of the God of Israel to Dagon. Samson's exogamous cravings are brutally symbolized by the idol's hybridity as a man/fish (woman) assemblage, which grotesquely literalizes the "mixture with the other" that has effeminately submitted the Nazarite hero to a foreign lady. Dagon's

[18] Bakon Simon, "Samson: A Tragedy in Three Acts," *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2007), https://jbqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/351/351_samsonact1.pdf.

[19] Foster J. Stuart, "Judges 14:4— Yahweh Uses Samson to Provoke the Philistines," *OTE* 25, no. 2 (2012): 292–302, https://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/ote/v25n2/04.pdf.

[20] Benton W. Robert, "The Philistines and The Early Kingdom of Israel," *Grace-Journal*, 2021, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/grace-journal/08-1_21.pdf.

[21] Martin Emmrich, "The Symbolism of the Lion and the Bees: Another Ironic Twist in the Samson Cycle," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 1 (2001): 67–74, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/44/44-1/44-1-PP067-074_JETS.pdf.

[22] Drew Daniel, "Dagon as Queer Assemblage: Effeminacy and Terror in Samson Agonistes," *Early Modern Culture* 10, no. 5 (2018), https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/emc/vol10/iss1/5.

mixed status—he is neither flesh nor fish—reminds him of the disgrace that Samson's exogamous wanderings from his people in favor of sexual relationships with women of different ethnicities—first with the anonymous "woman of Timna" and then with Dalila—brought upon him. To put it bluntly, Samson's sexual inclination is the source of his humiliation. His reputation as their judge and deliverer has suffered because of his desire to leave Isreal and make love to Canaanites and Philistines.[23]

In addition to casting doubt on the chorus's visual acuity by portraying them as Samson's "blind guides," who can barely see better than the blind slave they advise, if Dalila only "seems" to be of female sex also highlights the queerness of the Dalila/Dagon duo by implying that something is deceptive or erroneous about their gender itself, either concealed or eternally changing. By examining how these terms intersect, I believe we can project the temporal/social structure of displacement at the center of anxiety theories onto Samson Agonistes' dramatic structure. This enables us to consider Samson's last act of destructive religious violence—a violent act of "terror"—as a violent ratification and expulsive expression of an ongoing emotional state, or his constant "act" of anxiety in the sense of a public affective display. The demolition of the feast of Dagon is a victorious terrorist event that transforms fear into horror and unleashes the effect that has been held, enjoyed, or endured in the past. Daniel argues Samson's interpretation of a vision from God authorizing the feast of Dagon to be violently destroyed. In the text, as well as in the enduring patterns of critical denial outside and about it, effeminacy on the plane of gender and terrorism on the plane of religious politics share a structural position as the excluded yet ineradicable perverse possibility that mobilizes and justifies a violent and repressive response.[24]

Drury mentions that *The Bold Testament*, a novel by Maurice Yacowar, retold the Samson story in a postmodern manner, with Delilah's perspective—that is, the perspective of the Philistines—serving as the narrator. This has the result of bringing to light some of the reality that the Bible fails to mention. Delilah makes it very evident that many people were living in the Promised Land and that the Hebrews ultimately drove the Philistines out. According to the postmodern perspective advanced by Michel Foucault and others, each group is aware of its truth. Both the triumphant and the defeated have their reality. It's also a reality that history is typically written by the winners. As a result, the Hebrew perspective—that is, the perspective of the victor—is used throughout the Bible. One may argue that Samson was a hero even though he was only God's tool and did act on his own volition. And God wanted to get retaliation on the Philistines for their transgressions and idolatry.[25]

Samson, The Delivering Judge

The Philistines supply the general historical and religious background for the Samson accounts. The commission of deliverance is included among the instructions on how to be ready for the unborn hero throughout the birth tale in Judges 13. This is the idea of getting ready for divine calling and human reaction. It is possible to conclude that the severe instructions given to the mother—but not to the son—may have enhanced the unidentified power and gifts that YHWH was supposed to use to affect the process of rescue. Samson's job was, according to Judges 13:5, "to begin" the battle with the Philistines, which David would finish (2 Samuel 5).

[23] Daniel.

[24] Daniel.

[25] Shadia Drury, "TERRORISM: FROM SAMSON TO ATTA," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1/2 (2003), https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858434.

Samson was not to end the current problem, in contrast to the previous Judges. A new chapter in Israel's theological and historical history began with the arrival of the Philistines, a novel kind of adversary.

Samson was not your typical prisoner. Though it's debatable whether or not to call him a "judge" (*šōfēṭ*, indirectly at 15:20 and 16:31), the Philistines saw him as a powerful foe and a "ravager of our land, who multiplied our slain" (16:24). They were prepared to part with an enormous sum of money (perhaps 140 pounds of silver; 16:4) if Delilah could deliver him defanged but alive. As they informed her (16:5), they sought to tie him (*va'ăsarnūhû*), trying to humiliate him (*lĕc annōtô*), possibly by rendering him submissive. In any case, it's possible that Samson didn't stay in his cell for very long, where only a small number of people may have seen his humiliation.[26] Regardless of whether the leaders had planned Samson's subsequent humiliation, a chance presented itself to gather the public, Dagon, and leaders in a joyous gathering. Ancient folklore often attributes the victory to a god, but when the leaders said, "Our God has handed us Samson, our enemy," 15:24, their joyous rhyme resonated with the populace. The people expanded the basic feeling into a complaint against Dagon, which made it more difficult for the leaders to reject their request.

Samson was being carried into the arena while blindfolded and chained, and it wasn't only for ghoulish entertainment. He and the onlookers must have realized that he was unlikely to see his cell again because the occasion demanded that he make up for his transgression in public. Next, let us insert Samson between the middle columns and draw attention to his final request: he begs God to provide him a second chance, not to repeat the events described in Lehi 15:18–19 at Einhaqqore, but to exact retaliation for the loss of his two eyes.[27]

Samson uses dramatic language in 16:28, asking God to strengthen him once more so that he can exact revenge on the Philistines for breaking both of his eyes. However, the passage has been criticized in the literature for being self-centered and possibly endorsing suicide as a solution. The last idea may be unfounded since those who are facing a certain sword cannot be held accountable for the way or moment they choose to pass away. But whether Samson deserves criticism for being conceited begs for more discussion. Rosen accounted for Samson's the judge's need to maintain confidentiality. It highlights that judgments and confidentiality are not something that judges bestow; rather, they are declarations of their own. Examining a narrative from the Book of Judges contributes to the literature on Christian studies by highlighting the fact that judges come before the state in Hebrew prophetic literature.[28]

Sasson argues Samson resorted to the God who had saved him from an ending that seemed too sudden previously (at 15:18–20), as he confronted the finality of death in a temple in Philistine. Not only may such injections have belonged to different fragments from his sagas, but Samson never experienced another surge of divinely supplied power since his conviction was no longer necessary to be reinforced. Samson was destined to be more than just a pain in the side of his adversaries; he was also meant to be a prophecy's tool. He deserved to be called a "judge" as a result.[29] Samson's fights

[26] Jack M. Sasson, "Sightless in Gaza On the Fate of Samson," *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History, Language and Culture* 114 (2022): 443–51.

[27] Sasson.

[28] Robert Eli Rosen, "Samson the Judge: Religion and Violence in Milton's SAMSON AGONISTES," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2009, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1354796.

[29] Sasson, "Sightless in Gaza On the Fate of Samson."

with the Philistines foreshadow the culmination of the conquest since he is the one through whom God will begin to rescue Israel.[30]

Yadin argues the conventional understanding of Samson's resistance to the Philistines is completely at odds with the cultural dynamics demonstrated in this verse. According to the reading presented above, Samson is not anti-Philistine from the beginning. [31] On the contrary, he feels completely at home among the Philistines, plans to marry a woman from the region in accordance with local customs, and bases his challenge to the Philistine wedding guests on his extensive understanding of oral and written literary traditions as well as Philistine cultural practices. Samson wins by beating the politically and culturally powerful people at their own game because the Philippines are unable to rise to his challenge and are forced to turn traitorous.

Instead of speaking about political conflict, the Hida narrative speaks of cultural coexistence. Samson interacts with the Philistines not as an innate foe but, as is often the case, as a betrayed lover. It is not because the Philistines control politics in Israel that he is angry with them; before the Hida incident, Samson seemed to have nothing but friendly feelings for his neighbors from the Philistines. Because they won't admit that he is superior to them at his own game and that he has a deeper understanding of Philistine culture, he turns into their adversary.[32] Yahweh's ultimate goal is accomplished when Samson and the Philistines become enmeshed in this pattern of reciprocal provocation: a culture of acceptance and exchange where the Philistines (and their gods) rule is being replaced with one where conflict is the norm.[33]

Zorah and Eshtaol are geographically bookended by Samson's twenty-year judicial rule, which was meant to start the exodus from the Philistines (Judges 13:25-16:31). These physical landmarks predict the impending regional calamity in addition to providing locative positioning (Judges 17-18). Hildebrand (1988) proposed three main narrative sections within this geographical inclusion: (1) the story of the birth (Judges 13); (2) the story cycle started by the Philistine woman of Timnah (Judges 14–15); and (3) the story cycle started by Samson's meeting with the Gazite prostitute and Delilah (Judges 16). The relationship betrayals that turn Samson's seeming loss into his adversaries' deaths in Philistine are the main structural element of the last two narrative cycles. Additionally, these two cycles conclude with a remark about Samson's twenty-year rule.[34]

CONCLUSION

By examining the biblical text and drawing parallels to contemporary acts of terror, we have identified several theological themes that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations and justifications of such actions. The life of Samson, as depicted in the scriptures, serves as a poignant illustration of the consequences that can arise when religious fervor is distorted and manipulated for destructive purposes. His self-sacrificial act raises questions about the fine line between divine purpose and human agency, prompting us to reflect on the ethical dimensions of interpreting and applying religious narratives in the context of contemporary issues. Furthermore, our

[30] Emmrich, "The Symbolism of the Lion and the Bees: Another Ironic Twist in the Samson Cycle."
[31] Azzan Yadin, "SAMSON'S HÎDÂ," *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 3 (2002): 407–26, https://doi.org/10.1163/156853302760197539.
[32] Yadin.
[33] Foster J. Stuart, "Judges 14:4— Yahweh Uses Samson to Provoke the Philistines."
[34] Crisp Benjamin, "Samson's Blindness and Ethical Sight," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 9, no. 1 (2019): 233–45, https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol9no1/Vol9Iss1_JBPL_15_Crisp.pdf.

analysis has emphasized the importance of discernment in distinguishing between legitimate expressions of faith and the perversion of religious teachings that fuel acts of violence. Theological concepts such as sacrifice, central to the Samson narrative, require careful consideration to prevent their misappropriation of extremist ideologies. In conclusion, the theological analysis presented here emphasizes a holistic approach that combines biblical scholarship with an understanding of contemporary challenges. Therefore, my hope to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the theological aspects of suicidal terrorism, fostering discussions that can lead to the promotion of tolerance, empathy, and the rejection of violence in the name of faith.

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