

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JUDGES 13:1

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INTRODUCTION

The Samson narratives, Judges 13-16, serve a unique role in the canon of Judges. In many ways they are unlike any other account found in the book. Perhaps one of the more outstanding features of the narratives is the detailed birth account, Judges 13. Only a few men in the entire Bible command such details; Isaac (Genesis 18:1-15), John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-24) and Jesus (Luke 1: 26-38). Each of these men had special roles to play in the course of Biblical Salvation and the same is true of Samson. His role, to begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines, is stated clearly in Judges 13:5. However, we propose that the construction of Judges 13:1, what can be called the "first" introduction, presents a powerful theological foundation to this role in Israel's history. Furthermore, this introductory verse foreshadows a new era in Israelite history; the Monarchy.

Preface to the Narratives

The purpose of Judges 13:1 is to, ostensibly, introduce the block of material which narrates Samson's exploits against the Philistines.

The Samson preface reads;

“And again the sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of YHWH and YHWH gave them into the hand of the Philistines (for) forty years”.

It is significant that there is no mention of Samson, or his family, in this verse. To many scholars, and casual students of the Bible, this verse seems imposed on the actual narratives; the stories and memories of the Danite hero.

Traditionally, scholars have interpreted this verse as part of the “Deuteronomistic Framework”. This “framework” was part of an overall construct, proposed by Martin Noth, called the “Deuteronomistic History”.¹ Noth argued that the Historical Books of the Old Testament exhibited a cyclic pattern of sin and punishment, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem. This pattern can be seen in the book of Judges, on a smaller scale, in Judges 2:6-19. The cyclical pattern is comprised of several elements; Israel sinning or doing evil, punishment by oppression by another nation, Israel repenting and crying out to YHWH, a deliverer is raised up to liberate Israel and bring peace, Israel relapses into apostasy. J. Crossan typifies this position; “The traditional opening of the first deuteronomistic redactor appears. The story of Samson is placed within this frame”.² Crossan, following the Noth school of thought, argues that a theological framework was imposed upon the memories of these heroes.

G. Fohrer argues for a “pre-deuteronomistic” collection of Judges accounts, which emerged “during the early or middle period of the monarchy”. This collection underwent a two-fold revision during the Exile. According to Fohrer, “the first and basic revision produced the framework in which the individual complexes are set and which, through multiple repetition, forges them into one great whole”. At this point, Fohrer suggests that Judges 13:1 is added to the narratives.³

Many other scholars have proposed similar arguments.⁴ Although, as the arguments of Crossan, Fohrer, and others demonstrate, Judges 13:1 is regarded as a product of the Deuteronomistic or “D” redaction, the verse is not entirely consistent with the proposed framework. In the account of each of the other delivering Judges the introductory verse, which establishes the sin and punishment of Israel, precipitates a reference to repentance. No such reference is found in the Samson narratives. While it is undeniable that common aspects between Judges

¹ Noth conjectured that this “history” was compiled by one or more editors, possibly as late as the Exile, who used early independent stories to propose a theology which explained why Israel, God's chosen people, were enduring hardships and oppressions.

² J.D. Crossan, “Judges”, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 158.

³ G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon 1968), 212.

⁴ The Samson narratives have caused particular difficulties for this school of thought and there is hardly a consensus regarding the time of the narratives' inclusion. But, we will not entertain this issue, as it will take us far afield from our present study.

13:1 are apparent, this missing element tends to separate the Samson narratives from the other Judges' accounts. It points to a different theology and perspective than the Deuteronomic School. It can be argued that "even the common editorial formula so frequently employed throughout the book of Judges to introduce it several stories is only partially present here. . . Chapter 13 looks very much like an editorial addition to the Deuteronomic recension".⁵

It is very likely that this verse was foundational to the Deuteronomic Framework, of a later editor, based on its common elements. Furthermore, it seems that Fohrer proposes a worthy hypothesis; that a "pre-Deuteronomic" collection of Judges' accounts originated in the Monarchy. However, we propose that this verse, based on its features and construction, originated in the Davidic Kingship and reflects the theological perspective of the Davidic court.

Two Introductions

Undeniably, Judges 13:1 is an introductory formula; it is stylized and refers to other transgressions of Israel. Therefore, one has to acknowledge that this is part of some collection of memories or stories. It introduces a national scope to the events which will follow. While the other Major Judges' accounts also introduce a national scope to the events, these prefatory notes flow into the story. In Judges 13, verse 1 seems to be imposed on the rustic and adventurous story that is to follow. The verse narrates the evil which Israel committed again and the duration of Philistine oppression. It does not move smoothly into the accounts nor does it lead into specifics of the oppression, as in other deliverers' accounts. This imposition seems to suggest purposeful editing that, again, separates the Samson narratives from the other Judges' accounts.

Judges 13:2 is the actual introduction to the exploits of Samson. It shifts the scene, abruptly, to Manoah, of the clan of Dan. The verse begins with the Hebrew term, ויהי , which is a narrative device signaling a resumption or continuation of the narrative. Therefore, Judges 13:1 should be considered as an interruption in the flow of accounts and not original to the Samson saga. Although the editor who affixed the first introduction was aware of the accounts of the other Judges, suggesting that the Samson narratives did not develop in isolation as some arguments have asserted. Manoah seems singled out by the account. In the description of Manoah we read the term, אחד , with a common meaning of "one". However, the term in this occurrence, as many translations and scholars affirm, seems to render the connotation of "certain". According to G. Sauer, a related root that "occurs in all subfamilies of the Semitic languages" carries the meaning "to unify/unite".⁶

The construction of Judges 13:2 has a notable parallel to the opening of the Saulide account (1 Samuel 9:1). The two verses begin with a description of the father of the hero, Manoah and Saul's unnamed father. Both verses begin with the phrase, ויהי איש , "and there was a man". In both verses, this phrase begins to build a specific focus of the story. The focus is brought to

⁵ N. Harmon, ed. *The Interpreter's Bible* 12 vols (Nashville: Abingdom, 1953), 2:276

⁶ G. Sauer, "one", *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody:Hendickson, 1997), 78-79.

bold relief in the juxtaposition of circumstances. In both instances, a situation of national importance precedes the introduction. In Samson's circumstance, the Philistines are the oppressors. In Saul's case, the people requested a king. The narratives go from a panoramic national scope to the detail of one man. It is not beyond the storyteller's skill to introduce the singular nature of the roles of Samson and Saul in this way. Both were rallying points for Israel against the Philistines and both pointed to David.

The singular position Manoah and his son is further emphasized by the reference to Dan being only a clan at this time. It seems likely that this is the remnant of the former Tribe of Dan, not the start of it, and this "camp" was a consolidation point of sorts. Judges 1: 34 suggests pressure on the Danites from the Amorites. B.G. Wood has argued convincingly that Philistine expansion from the West was key factor in their migration northward (Judges 18).⁷ Within the Samson narratives we hear of Philistine domination (Judges 15: 11). It is also likely that Judah, the dominant tribe in the South, was expanding westward. These factors seem to point to the "clan" with which Manoah lived as being remnants of the Tribe. Now the narrative focus is on a certain man who lives in a unnamed camp, between Zorah and Eshtaol. The drama produced by the extreme specificity and singularity of this emphasis, wherein a figure of national import will rise from this small point, is a powerful narrative tool. Samson stood alone as a unifying force against the Philistines, whose military and political power rivaled that of Egypt.⁸ With this introduction, the focus of the audience is fixed and recurring narrative and theological threads are begun. These are threads that are woven through the accounts of Samson waging war against the Philistines and hold together what may have been independent stories and memories of the Danite hero.

Overall, the Samson narratives should be seen as having two introductions; one national in scope and formulaic and the other tribal in scope and originating from the rustic storytellers of the oral tradition of the narrative. One single man against a nation will be a theme that will be played in the narratives which follow. The two introductions should be seen as complementary, not contradictory, as they were juxtaposed with a theological purpose.

CONSTRUCTION OF JUDGES 13:1

The opening begins with "and again". The Othniel account (Judges 3:7) does not have such a reference; it is the first account of the Judges and it details the apostasy of the Israelites. It is omitted in the Gideon account (Judges 6:1). Possibly, in the earliest collection of Judges accounts, the "Song of Deborah" (Judges 5) created enough of a narrative break, or intermission of sorts, that the early storytellers felt the need to begin again. The Gideon account also introduces enemies that are national in scope and present threats to entire nation, unlike the more localized accounts of the previous Judges. This seems to be the case for the Jephthah account as well. Therefore, the first Samson introduction (13:1), with the Jephthah introduction (Judges 10:6), seem to be following the narrative lead of the Gideon account, which was based on the formula presented in the Othniel account.

⁷ B. Wood, "Recent Discoveries and Research on the Conquest", *Archaeology and Biblical Research* (1991) 4:108-110.

⁸ This is indicated by the inscriptions of Ramses III. Cf. W. Keller. *The Bible as History* (NY: Morrow, 1981), 178.

The Hebrew phrase for “and again” derives from yāsap (יָסַפּ), “to add, augment, continue”. It contains the connotations of “to increase, do again”. P. Gilchrist points out that, although this term may introduce a positive context, “there is a negative note in connection with yāsap . This is the human ethical problem of sin”. The recurring theme in the book of Judges illustrates this ethical connection.⁹ Gilchrist’s argument points to the idea that “this verb may be used to signify the repetition of an act stipulated by another verb”.¹⁰

This stipulation which follows is expressed by a pair of words, the first of which carries the general meaning of “to do, make” (עָשָׂה). Significantly, this term is “often used with the sense of ethical obligation. . . The numerous contexts in which this concept occurs attest to the importance of an ethical response to God which goes beyond mere mental abstraction and which is translated into obedience which is evidenced in demonstrable act.”¹¹ The verb addresses the “realm of personal relationship, personal responsibility in one’s actions toward God. . . As a verbal abstract [it] means one’s deeds, behavior, and work, which are always ethically qualified and which define one. Conversely, one’s ethics and oneself define one’s deeds and work.”¹²

The demonstrable act, for which the people of Israel are responsible, is referred to as “evil”, deriving from the Hebrew rāʿ (רָע). The theological meaning of the verb “denotes activity that is contrary to God’s will”. According to G. Livingston, “the Biblical writers take rāʿ back into the inner sources of the acts. The people who do it lack understanding of the true nature of their acts. . . In fact, it becomes a habit. . . Part of their lack of understanding is their failure to realize till too late the injury caused to themselves.”¹³

The semantic field of the term is varied; encompassing bad, evil, and misfortune. According to H. Stoebe, “the fundamentally different concepts are held together, at least initially, by the fact that rāʿ does not primarily [connote] evil per se but relates to life in such a way as to indicate the pertinent nuance”. When dealing with a person, group, or nation the term is usually used in a comprehensive sense, active evil, involving the action in the broadest sense.¹⁴

The use of the term “evil”, in 13:1, clearly indicates that the introduction should be understood to be part of a narrative thread that is common to the Judges’ account: Judges 3:7, 12, 4:1, 6:1, and 10:6. Each of these verses refers to the “evil” Israel did in the eyes of the Lord. The ‘evil’, worshipping Canaanite gods or apostasy, is detailed only in the accounts of Othniel(3:7) and Jephthah (10:6). The distribution of the specifics is curious. The Othniel account, the first in the list of Judges, would demand such an explanation. The repeated description might suggest that

⁹ P. Gilchrist, “ yāsap ”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2vols (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:385.

¹⁰ W. Vine, “To add”, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 2.

¹¹ T. McComiskey, “do, fashion, accomplish”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:701

¹² J. Vollmer, “to make,do”, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:946-948

¹³ G. Livingston, “be bad, evil”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 vols (Chicago:Moody, 1980), 2:854.

¹⁴ H. Stoebe, “to be bad”, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 3 vols (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1249-1253.

Jephthah had originally stood outside the early canon of Judges or the memories of the storytellers.

This “evil” was in the “eyes of the Lord”. Many translations render this term as “offended” the Lord. However, the verse uses the Hebrew term for “eye”, עין, which has a semantic field that includes the process of seeing along with understanding and obedience. According to C. Schultz, “the eye is used to express knowledge, character, attitude, inclination, opinion, passion, and response. . . . The phrase ‘in [the] eyes of . . .’ is equivalent to opinion or judgment.”¹⁵ The phrase “in the eyes” occurs approximately 15x’s in the book of Judges, with the connotation of “viewpoint, assessment, or judgment”.¹⁶ Theologically, if the hypothesis of a pre-Deuteronomic collection of Judges’ account is correct then we can argue that the concept of sin and punishment, key factors in the D History and framework, were extensions of this early idea of the judgment of YHWH instead of a later redactor unevenly imposing a framework upon early heroic accounts.

In response to the “evil”, YHWH “gave” Israel into the “hand of the Philistines”. The Hebrew term for “give” is נתן . This term has a very wide semantic field. However, it can be broken down to “three broad areas of meaning. . . 1) give, 2) put or set, and 3) make or constitute. The other terms used in translation are extensions or variations of these.”¹⁷ Often the term connotes the setting of something or a process in motion. While not to overstate the point, this connotation of process may be at the core of the cyclical pattern which M. Noth argued characterized the D History.

According to C. Labuschagne, “the expression [give into the hand] is primarily used, however, in the military and legal realms and refers to the extradition or abandonment of a person or matter to the control of others”.¹⁸ The idiom of the hand “conveys authority involving responsibility, care, and dominion over someone or something. One may be under the custody of this authority”.¹⁹ This suggests a temporary situation. Although temporary, the hand is seen as a symbol of power and authority.²⁰ Significant to the theology of the verse is that although the Israelites are in Philistine control YHWH is still the master of the situation. It is by His will that the Philistines were allowed to take control or custody, as seen by the term “gave”. This suggests that the verse was written by a later hand, one who knew the historical shifts, and was not original to the accounts.

The Philistines

The Philistines, the oppressing enemies of Israel and Samson, were part of the “Sea Peoples” who invaded Egypt during the reign of Ramses III (1196-1165). In a tremendous battle they were repulsed, according to Egyptian inscriptions, and settled on the Southwest coast of

¹⁵ C. Schultz, “eye”. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2vols (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2: 662.

¹⁶ Jenni/Vetter, “eye”, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 3 vols (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:878.

¹⁷ M. Fisher, “give”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 vols (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2: 608.

¹⁸ C. Labuschagne, “give”, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 3 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997),2:786.

¹⁹ R. Alexander, “hand”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2vols. (Chicago:Moody, 1980), 1: 362.

²⁰ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*. s.v. “hand”. (Chicago: Bruce, 1966), 336.

Canaan.²¹ The Philistines were a powerful nation; “they were obviously superior to the Canaanites and the Israelites in arms and military organization, and perhaps in physique also. They introduced iron into Palestine, and for some time exercised a monopoly of iron weapons and tools. The Philistine confederacy. . . was more closely organized than any other Palestinian group of the period, and the Philistine hegemony endured from about 1150-1000BC.”²²

Philistia abutted the original tribal territory of Dan. B Wood has argued convincingly that the Philistines were established on the coast by c.1177. From this point they exerted pressure on the tribe of Dan, which helped to force the Danite Migration northward. Wood dates the migration to c. 1175 BC.²³ According to Judges 1:34, the Amorites also exerted pressure on the Danites. However, although the Amorites “were well distributed over the entire area of Canaan”, the relationship between the Amorites and the Israelites and Canaanites “is somewhat obscure”.²⁴ According to McKenzie, “the [Samson] stories illustrate better than any other OT narratives the relations between Israelites and Philistines. They live in adjoining villages on the frontier, with relations which are sometimes friendly, sometimes viciously hostile. They move freely into each other’s territory. They intermarry.”²⁵ However, the political and military supremacy and, consequent, domination of Philistia over Israel is clearly acknowledged in the Samson narratives (Judges 15:11).

J. Bright explains that the conflict came about when the Philistines started to expand inward from the coast and into the hill country, the region occupied by Israel.²⁶ It is the Samson narratives which recount the start of the Philistines’ push forward and quest to “extend their territory eastwards”. It was the clash with Samson that marked the beginning of an ongoing series of battles between Israel and Philistines which ended during the Monarchy.²⁷ The Philistines represented a threat that was greater than Israel had ever before experienced.²⁸ Possibly Midian, the enemies of Gideon, may have had the same level of political and military sophistication but their homeland was far south and, probably, eastward of Israel. This distance did not allow them to exert the same pressure as the neighboring Philistines and may account for the Bible often depicting the Midianites as nomadic tribesmen.

The reference to the Philistines is stark, without description or explanation. In other Judges’ accounts, the audience or reader is reminded of the oppressions or atrocities, even by an

²¹ The battle between Egypt and the “Sea Peoples” was very costly to each side. Carved reliefs in the Temple of Amun attest to the urgent preparations made by Egypt in the face of this enemy. Although Egypt was able to withstand the assault, they were weakened and could not pursue the Philistines further than their vassal land, Canaan.

Cf. W. Keller, *The Bible as History* (NY: Morrow, 1981), 112

J. Bright, *A History of Israel* 3rd ed. (Phil: Westminster, 1981), 175.

²² McKenzie, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Philistia, Philistines”, p. 673

²³ B.G. Wood, “Recent Discoveries and Research on the Conquest”, *Archaeology and Biblical Research* (1991) 4:104-110, 110.

²⁴ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Amorites”, p. 26.

²⁵ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Samson”, p. 767.

²⁶ Bright, p. 176.

²⁷ Keller, p. 181.

²⁸ The Philistines are mentioned in the Jephthah account (Judges 10:7), but they disappear from the narratives after this reference and are not depicted as the main threat to Israel against which Jephthah had to fight.

oblique reference, which Israel endured. This seems to suggest that the domination of the Philistines remained in the Israelite memory, or this introduction originated while the Philistines were still a formidable power, and no such reminders were needed.²⁹

The Philistines began the waves of conquerors in Israelite/Jewish history; the Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Judges 13:1 reflects the beginning of this historical trend. Theologically, the introduction points to a new era for Israel as well. The judgeship of Samson will find completion in the Davidic Monarchy, as David broke the power of the Philistines. With the Monarchy, the relationship between Israel and YHWH and Israel with her neighbors changed forever.

For Forty Years

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. It 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 punishment for their transgression. However, as we have argued, 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. 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 endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc."³⁰ Overall, the concept of being blessed entails the gift of benevolent power, power to bring about positive or healthy change. Samson was to be a Judge who was to begin the liberation of Israel from the Philistines.

Samson was not to complete the war, as recorded in Judges 13:5, that task was for David. David completely broke the Philistine power (2 Samuel 5:17-25). This crushing defeat of the Philistines is presented as foundational to the establishment of the Davidic kingship. Samson

²⁹ The hatred of the Philistines endured long after their power was broken, as attested to in Isaiah 14. The reference to the "broken rod" seems to be a lament of the state of the Davidic dynasty.

³⁰ J. Oswalt, "bless", *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 vols (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:132.

began the war which David finished. Samson, blessed with the power for his mission, was the forerunner to the monarchy and led the way for this monumental period in Israel's Salvation History. Therefore, the 40-year period is the editor's way of preparing the reader for the blessing and new age which is to come.

As we have noted, the Samson narratives do not contain any feature of "repentance", which is associated with the D framework. J. Gray has argued that although the narratives are introduced by a statement of Israel offending the Lord and consequent oppression, "this [verse] is not set in the context of the Divine contention with Israel, public repentance, and Divine mercy as in the pre-Deuteronomic collection of narratives of the Judges".³¹

The reason for this omission is not clear. Perhaps after the numerous times that repentance was mentioned in the collection of accounts the editor or storyteller assumed that the reader or audience could assume some repentance. On the other hand, the editor's theology might hold the actual answer for the omitted repentance. Forty years represented a complete generation. Therefore, the ones who committed the offense have died and a new and innocent generation was now in enemy hands, with no reason to repent from anything. It was this generation that was chosen by YHWH to be saved from an underserved punishment. This innocent generation was also chosen by YHWH to be the one in which the liberation from the Philistines was to begin, with the power of Samson being the weapon of YHWH. The 40-year period seems to, theologically, parallel that of the "wandering" in the desert. The later editor or storyteller who imposed this introduction on the Samson narratives seemed to have an affinity to the "Sinai Experience" of Israel.³²

THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF JUDGES 13:1

The theological importance of Judges 13:1 seems to be found in three areas; as foundational to later Biblical authors, as preparation for a new era in Israelite history, and as a Davidic parallel to the "wandering" in the desert. Regarding the first area, the presence of the stylized or formulaic introduction which refers to other themes in the book of Judges points to an established and redacted collection of accounts, often called a "pre-Deuteronomic" collection. There is no convincing argument for excluding the Samson accounts from this collection. The Philistines were a pre-monarchic enemy. The "charisma", the endowments of the YHWH Spirit (Judges 14:6, 19, 15:14), was a hallmark of leadership in the period before and during the early Monarchy, as with Solomon dynastic succession became the hallmark of leadership. Therefore, these accounts originated early in Israel's history. They would become foundational the later, monumentally important, D History. Consequently, it is highly unlikely that a later redactor, possibly writing during the Exile, would edit the accounts of the Judges, especially the Samson narratives. The scholarly opinion which holds this theory is fundamentally flawed, by aspects of its own theory. The D Editor was imposing a framework on the accounts of Judges to convey his theology of Divine retribution and punishment, as the theory suggests. The uneven distribution of key elements such as repentance, the evil committed, the phrase "and again", and the references to charismatic endowments all undermine the theory of a D redactor, or school,

³¹ J. Gray, ed., *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*. (Nashville; Nelson, 1967), 233.

³² W. Rast, *Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings*. (Phil: Fortress, 1978), 20.

imposing a theology on these accounts. However, it does suggest that the D redactor incorporated these elements and built the D Theology upon them.

Secondly, we have noted that there is no reference to any act of public repentance from Israel in the Samson accounts. That Israel was not repentant may indicate that, although under Philistine domination, Israel was prospering with the imposed political and military organization of the Philistines. More likely, it is part of Israel's long history of being a "stiff-necked" people that resists changing their actions. Therefore, the disastrous cycle of apostasy was bound to continue. The Chosen People of YHWH were facing possible annihilation because of their stubbornness. Furthermore, expanding upon this, it should be understood that the 40-year period was a duration of Divine preparation. While it is undeniable that oppression from a foreign nation is the punishment given in response to apostasy, this was the period in which YHWH was preparing to begin a new era in Israelite Salvation History, one that would culminate with the Davidic Kingship. This is a part of the salvation process, which was set in motion by the "evil" committed by Israel. This theme of YHWH making preparatory actions, unknown to man, is taken up in the explanation given as to why Samson was to marry a Timnite (Judges 14:4).³³ The reference to 40 years indicates that the preparations are complete; the time for the beginning of the liberation of Israel is to begin. The absence of repentance also indicates that YHWH, the Lord of history, moves to His ends with or without Israel's participation.

The third theological area is Davidic. This verse was part of the unification efforts of David. According to McKenzie;

"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."³⁴

McKenzie also points out that David was responsible for, what scholars call, an "Israelite national epic", which is an "expression of the national consciousness of Israel which arose from the victories of David and the prosperity which his reign initiated. . . many of the best known stories of the OT belong to this document". The Davidic history begins with the Fall of Man and portrays YHWH as the "Lord of History". Through its portrayal of the characters and events the reader is left to conclude that the "monarchy of David is the fulfillment of the saving promise".³⁵

Part of the history leading to the Davidic Monarchy was the wandering in the desert. While this entails its own Biblical theology, it provides a model for David. As the evil of apostasy of Israel committed at the foot of Mt. Sinai set in motion the process which led to the possession of the Promised Land so, too, did the evil of Israel in the eyes of the Lord set in motion the process

³³ Although Timnite was seen as a Philistine city and Manoah thinks that the girl is Philistine, archaeological evidence and textual clues suggest that the girl was not a Philistine. Moreover, the phrase used by Samson, "right in my eyes", to describe the girl is recognized as connoting upright and lawful, hardly a designation for a Philistine girl. Therefore, many scholars have misinterpreted Samson's words as just being a reflection of lust for Philistine women.

³⁴ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, s.v. Samuel, Books of", 770.

³⁵ Ibid, s.v. "Pentateuch", 656.

which led to the establishment of the Monarchy. Each epic event portrays the promise of YHWH being fulfilled. Each event is integral in establishing Israel as a nation. Joshua, blessed warrior (Dt. 34:9), and Samson, a blessed Nazirite, were to lead the Israelites into these monumental stages in Israel's history. Yet, these plans would not proceed nor stages commence until those that committed the evil had died.

These parallels were not lost on David, or his scribes, as the Wandering and Conquest of Israel provided a powerful foreshadowing of his own reign. The introduction to the Samson narratives, Judges 13:1, seems to reflect an imposition of a formulaic structure imposed on tribal memories that was consistent with the Davidic unification effort, which would include, as McKenzie suggests, a unification of tribal traditions. It is entirely probable that the narratives already included an early form of this introduction. This would have been constructed by the storytellers who were attempting to bind together the diverse accounts of the Judges. There is no doubt that these were popular stories and were targeted at keeping the hope of Israel alive during periods of oppression. To try to determine what form this introduction had in the oral traditions would be a fruitless pursuit. However, the national scope and the historical and theological parallels to the Davidic reign are undeniable. Therefore, to formulize the rudimentary elements of the introduction, for the sake of historical and literary consistency, would be entirely in keeping with the Davidic political and theological purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the theology behind the construction and imposition of Judges 13:1 onto the Samson narratives is Davidic, drawing upon the recent religious history of Israel and the imagery of the wandering. The verse was kept by later editors because of its connection to David. David, and his kingship, found favor with the Lord and was promised the Eternal Kingship. From this Kingship, the Messiah arose. Therefore, David represented not only a turning point in Israelite political history, in that she had a human king, but a new paradigm for theological, messianic, history. These were elements that were never forgotten by the later authors.

The trajectory of the theology of the verse must also be recognized. The verse, read at face value, has an immediate historical and theological trajectory that was fulfilled in the career of Samson. This paralleled other accounts of the Judges in that there was crisis of oppression and a leader was raised up by YHWH to deliver His people. A second trajectory was fulfilled in David. Historically and theologically the kingship of David was of utmost importance to Israel's history. This verse foreshadowed and pointed to the glory of David and Israel. Finally, the third trajectory lies in messianic history. David provided the first model for "royal messianism" and the concept of the warrior-king that was still prevalent in the time of Jesus Christ, who changed the messianic paradigm.

Therefore, we see David as joining historical imagery and theological constructs. The theology of David's kingship invoked images of the wandering and the triumphant entry into the Promised Land. However, at the same time, the kingship looked forward to the Messianic King. In the prophecies of Nathan, we see the forward orientation of the Kingship while resting on the images of the past. The text of Judges 13:1 depicts Samson as being foundational to the Davidic Kingship and, consequently, the Eternal Kingship and the Messiah. This introductory

verse places Samson in national context even if, as some scholars maintain, his actions were local. This verse introduces him as a national hero who fought against one of the most hated enemies of the nation of Israel. By the implicit connection to David, through the reference to the Philistines, the verse fixes Samson in the Salvation History of Israel. His place of honor was affirmed in the speech of Samuel (1 Samuel 12:11) and the roll call of heroes of faith in the Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 11:32).³⁶ Judges 13:1 depicts Samson as the precursor to David, the progenitor of the Messianic Line. Therefore, while the theology of Judges 13:1 is immediately Davidic, its perduring authority comes from the Messiah.

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³⁶ Some translations do not contain the name "Samson" and have the name "Samuel". These are unlikely original texts, to defend the insertion of Samuel into the list in 1 Samuel one would have to argue for some sort of "third party" reference of Samuel to himself which would amount to a form of circumlocution. Samuel, like the author of Hebrews, was presenting a historical recital of the saving power of God. We would maintain that in a speech which may have been original to Samuel that it is unlikely that he make such a reference to himself and that Samson is a fitting hero with which Samuel could make his point.

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