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### **SAMSON'S FINAL EROTIC ESCAPADES ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS**

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#### ABSTRACT

Jdg 16:1-21 tells of two final erotic initiatives by Samson prior to his dramatic death as described in 16:22-31. This article provides a detailed study of Josephus' retelling of Jdg 16:1-21 in his *Ant.* 5.304-313, with particular attention to the following questions: (1) the biblical text-form(s) used by Josephus, (2) the rewriting techniques applied by him to the source data and the distinctiveness of his version that results from their application, and (3) Josephus' handling of Jdg 16:1-21 in comparison with its treatment by Pseudo-Philo and rabbinic-midrashic tradition.

#### RESUMO

Jz 16:1-21 relata as duas iniciativas eróticas finais de Sansão antes de sua morte dramática descrita em 16:22-31. Este artigo provê um estudo detalhando da narrativa de Jz 16:1-21 dada por Josefo em suas *Ant.* 5.304-313, com atenção particular às seguintes questões: (1) o texto-forma empregado por Josefo; (2) as técnicas de reescrita aplicadas por ele aos dados primários e a distinção de sua versão que resulta de suas aplicações, e (3) o trato de Josefo sobre Jz 16:1-21 em comparação com o tratamento dado por Pseudo-Filo e na tradição rabínica do Midrash.

#### RESUMEN

Jue 16:1-21 narra de dos finales eróticos iniciados por Sansón antes de su dramática muerte como está descrito en 16:22-31. Este artículo provee detallado estudio del reelaboración de 16:1-21 por parte de Josefo en su *Ant.* 5.304-313, con particular atención a las siguientes cuestiones: (1) el(los) texto(s) bíblico(s) impreso(s) usado(s) por Josefo; (2) las técnicas de volver a escribir aplicadas por él a para las fuentes de datos y la distintividad de su versión que resulta de su aplicación, y (3) el manejo de Jue 16:1-21 por Josefo en comparación

con el tratamiento por el Pseudo-Philo y la tradición rabínica midráshica.

#### INTRODUCTION

The biblical figure of Samson is remembered both as a prodigious fighter and a promiscuous lover.<sup>1</sup> The Bible precedes its of the hero's his dramatic death as narrated in Jdg 16:22-31, with two stories that feature Samson in the latter role, i.e. his visit to the Gaza harlot (16:1-3) and his fatal dalliance with Delilah (16:4-21).<sup>2</sup> In this essay, I propose to examine Josephus' rendition of these two stories in his *Antiquitates judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 5.304-313.<sup>3</sup> I undertake my study with three broader questions in mind: (1) Given the many differences evidenced by the various ancient witnesses to Jdg 16:1-21, i.e. the MT (BHS),<sup>4</sup> the Codices Alexandrinus (hereafter A) and Vaticanus (B)<sup>5</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> On Samson in the Bible and post-biblical tradition, see the essays in C. Houtman and K. Spronk, *Ein Held des Glaubens? Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studien zu den Simson-Erzählungen* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 39; Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> For the textual, exegetical and other problems posed by Jdg 16:1-21, I have consulted the following commentaries: G.F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1895), 348-358; C.F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (New York: Ktav, 1970 [rpt., original 1918]), 375-383; R.C. Boling, *Judges* (AB 6A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 245-260.

<sup>3</sup> For the text and translation of *Ant.* 5.304-313 I use R. Marcus, *Josephus V* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1934), 136-141. (Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of the Loeb Classical Library from JOSEPHUS: VOLUME V, Loeb Classical Library®, translated by H. St. J Thackeray, pp. 136-141, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Copyright 1930 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College). I have likewise consulted the text and translation of and notes on the passage in E. Nodet, *Flavius Josephus, Les Antiquités juives*, Vol. II: *Livres IV et V* (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 187-189\* as well as the annotated translation of C.T. Begg, *Flavius Josephus Judean Antiquities 5-7* (Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary 4; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 76-78. On Josephus' portrayal of Samson overall, see L.H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 461-489 and the critique of this by Mark Roncace, "Another Portrait of Josephus' Portrait of Samson," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (2004) 185-207.

<sup>4</sup> Jdg 16:1-21 is not preserved in the fragmentary Qumran manuscripts of the book.

<sup>5</sup> For the A and B texts of Jdg 16:1-21 I use the edition of A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta I* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935), 469-478 where the two texts appear respectively at the top and bottom of the page. I have likewise consulted the text of

Antiochene or Lucianic (hereafter L) manuscripts of the LXX,<sup>6</sup> the *Vetus Latina* (hereafter VL),<sup>7</sup> the Vulgate (hereafter Vg.),<sup>8</sup> and Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (hereafter Tg.),<sup>9</sup> with which of these witnesses do Josephus' affinities in *Ant.* 5.304-313 lie? (2) What kinds of rewriting techniques has Josephus applied to the data of Jdg 16:1-21 and what is distinctive about the historian's version of events that results from their application? Finally (3), how does Josephus' rendition of the Judges passage compare with the use made of it by Pseudo-Philo in his *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (hereafter *L.A.B.*) 43.1-6<sup>10</sup> and in midrashic-Rabbinic tradition?<sup>11</sup>

For purposes of my comparison of them, I divide up the material of Jdg 16:1-21 and *Ant.* 5.304-313 into four parallel segments as follows: (1) Gaza adventure (16:1-3// 5.304-305); (2) Delilah's first failed attempt (16:4-9// 5.306-310a); (3) Two more failed attempts (16:10-14// 5.310b-312a); and (4) Final, successful attempt (16:15-21// 5.312b-313).

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B Jdg 16:1-21 (which differs on occasion from that printed by Rahlfs) given in A.E. Brooke and N. Maclean, *The Old Testament in Greek*, I:IV: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 469-473 as well as the French translation of A and B Jdg 16:1-21 in P. Harlé, *Les Juges* (La Bible d'Alexandrie 7; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 216-223.

<sup>6</sup> For the L readings in Jdg 16:1-21 (which mostly go together with those of A), I use the apparatus of Brooke-Maclean and the references to these provided by Harlé (see previous note). On the characteristics of and interrelations among ABL Judges, see the summary discussion in Harlé, *Juges*, 25-28.

<sup>7</sup> For the VL text of Jdg 16:1-21, I use U. Robert, *Heptateuchi partis posterioris versio latina antiquissima e codice antiquissima* (Lyon: Rey et C<sup>ie</sup>, 1900), 143-145.

<sup>8</sup> For the Vg. text of Jdg 16:1-21, I use: R. Gryson, *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 347-348.

<sup>9</sup> For the tagumic text of Jdg 16:1-21, I use A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic II* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 79-81 and for the translation D.J. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (The Aramaic Bible 10; Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987), 89-90.

<sup>10</sup> For the Latin text of *L.A.B.* 43.1-6 I use H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum I* (AGJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 63-64 and for the English translation, 164-165; see also Jacobson's discussion of *L.A.B.* 43.2-6 in II, 994-1001.

<sup>11</sup> The rabbinic *dicta* concerning Samson are helpfully compiled in J.S. Renzer, *Die Hauptpersonen des Richterbuches in Talmud und Midrash*, I. *Simson* (Berlin: Itkowski, 1902), 20-43.

## GAZA ADVENTURE

In the sequence of Jdg 15-16, the mention of Samson's proceeding to Gaza, seeing a "harlot" there and "going in to" her in 16:1 follows abruptly on the parenthetical notice concerning the hero's twenty-year judgeship in 15:20. The latter verse turn (whose content is duplicated at the very end of the Samson narrative in 16:31b) is itself in turn loosely appended to the preceding account of events at the site "Lehi" (i.e. Samson's overthrow of the attacking Philistines and his subsequent near-death from thirst) in 15:9-19. Omitting the "intrusive" reference to Samson's judgeship of 15:20,<sup>12</sup> Josephus establishes a more flowing transition between the "Lehi episode" (5.297-303) and the following "Gaza incident" (5.304-305) via the transitional phrase introduced by him at the start of 5.304: "*after this combat Samson, scorning the Philistines....*"<sup>13</sup> Having done so, he then proceeds to give his own content to the notice of 16:1 itself: ... "[Samson] came to Gaza and lodged at one of the inns (καταγωγῶν)." Reading this rendition of the biblical reference to Samson's approaching a "harlot" in Gaza, one might spontaneously think that the modification has been dictated by a concern with the hero's image, especially so since one finds Josephus making a similar change in his version of Jos 2:1 (where the Israelite spies, in both MT and LXX, repair to the house of "a harlot whose name was Rahab") in *Ant.* 5.7-8 (which has them retiring to Rahab's "inn" [καταγωγῶν]). Such a supposition is, however, open to question seeing that whereas the Bible itself provides no indication concerning the occupational status of Samson's subsequent romantic interest, i.e. Delilah (whom 16:4 simply calls "a woman"), Josephus' parallel (5.306) does introduce such a qualification, calling her a "harlot"

<sup>12</sup> He does reproduce the parallel notice of 16:31b at the point where it seems better in place, i.e. subsequent to Samson's heroic death; see *Ant.* 5.316b.

<sup>13</sup> In this essay I italicize elements of Josephus' presentation like the above which lack a recognizable biblical equivalent. The historian's insertion provides an explicit chronological link between the Lehi and Gaza narratives and suggests an explanation as to why at this point Samson ventures to proceed to a town of his Philistine enemies, i.e. his going there is an expression of the "scorn" he feels for the Philistines in view of his recent triumph over them. Josephus' concern to establish a smoother linkage between the events of Judges 15 and 16 has a certain counterpart in the plus of LXX AL (as also VL) 16:1 which speak of Samson coming to Gaza "from there" (ἐκεῖθεν), i.e. "Lehi" (see 15:19).

(or “courtesan”); see further below (and n. 31). It may be then that Josephus felt no particular qualms about portraying Samson’s involvement with “hired women.” Rather, he has simply transferred that status from the less important, nameless figure cited in 16:1 to the much more significant Delilah of 16:4ff., thereby filling a biblical lacuna concerning the latter.<sup>14</sup>

Jdg 16:2 relates the Gazites’ response upon hearing of Samson’s presence among them: they surround the place where he is, likewise keeping watch for him at the city gate throughout the night with the intention of killing him the morning. The historian’s version (5.304b) of this notice attributes the initiative to the Gazite leaders in particular, while also reformulating its closing indication concerning the motivation behind the night-long guarding of the gate: “Thereupon *the chiefs of the Gazites, informed of his presence in the town,*<sup>15</sup> posted ambushes before the gates, *to prevent his leaving it without their knowledge (μή λαθῆ).*”<sup>16</sup> The Gazites’ initiatives of 16:2 are countered by those of Samson himself that are recounted in 16:3 whose content is reproduced without significant differences in 5.305: “But Samson, *not*

<sup>14</sup> In fact, one notes a similar phenomenon operative in Pseudo-Philo’s handling of the two women figures of Jdg 16:1-21. In his presentation, the “harlot” of 16:1 simply disappears, being replaced by a (not further explained) “anger” on Samson’s part towards “Azotus” (biblical “Gaza”) at the beginning of *L.A.B.* 43.2. Thereafter, in 43.5 he has Samson “seeing a harlot *fornicariam*) [compare 16:1 where Samson “sees a harlot” in Gaza] whose name was Delilah.” On the problem of Pseudo-Philo’s place name (“Azotus” according to manuscript Δ in 43.2), see the discussion in Jacobson, *Commentary* II, 994.

<sup>15</sup> Compare the *oratio recta* report made to the Gazites in 16:2aα “Samson has come here.” As often in his retelling of the Bible, Josephus substitutes *oratio obliqua*. On the phenomenon, see C.T. Begg, *Josephus’ Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (AJ 8,212-420) (BETL 108; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1993), 12-13, n. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Here again (see previous note), Josephus recasts biblical direct address (see 16:2bβ “Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him”) as indirect. In addition, he substitutes a clear statement concerning the purpose of the ambush in place of the Bible’s presentation which leaves unclear how the guarding of the city gate through the night relates to the Gazites’ decision to wait till morning before killing Samson relate to each other. Compare the extended, direct address declaration Pseudo-Philo attributes to the “Azotians” (see n. 14) once they have (supposedly) trapped Samson in *L.A.B.* 43.2: “Behold now our enemy has been delivered into our hands, and now let us gather together and save our lives.”

*unaware* (οὐ...λαθάνουσιν)<sup>17</sup> of these schemes,<sup>18</sup> when midnight was come arose, flung himself (ἐνρῶσσει)<sup>19</sup> against the gates, hoisted them— posts, bolts, woodwork and all— upon his shoulders (κατωμαδόν<sup>20</sup>),<sup>21</sup> bore (ἀρόμενος) them to the mountain above Hebron<sup>22</sup> and there deposited them.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> This Greek phrase involves a wordplay with the expression μὴ λάθῃ with which 5.304 concludes.

<sup>18</sup> The above insertion provides a motivation for Josephus' subsequent actions, i.e. his awareness of the Gazites' attempt to block his egress by ambushing the city gate. Josephus' indication on the matter has a certain counterpart in *L.A.B.* 43.2 where Samson, following his nocturnal rising (thus 16:3), “saw the city closed.” In contrast to both the Bible and Josephus where Samson uproots the gate without a word, Pseudo-Philo has him first utter an extended statement of intention that itself incorporates a parenthetical appeal for divine assistance: “Behold, now those fleas have locked me up in their city, and now— may the Lord be with me— I will go out through the gates and fight against them.”

<sup>19</sup> The verb ἐνρῶσσω is *hapax* in Josephus. According to Feldman (*Josephus's Interpretation*, 474) this is its only occurrence in all Greek literature as well. In 16:3 Samson's first action is to “take hold” of the gate's component parts.

<sup>20</sup> This form is *hapax* in Josephus.

<sup>21</sup> Compare 16:3 “(Samson took hold of) the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up (MT; LXX: lifted them up), bar and all, and put them on his shoulders....” *B. Sot.* 10a cites a tradition according to which that the gates of Gaza that Samson carried on his shoulders were “no less than sixty cubits” in width.

<sup>22</sup> Compare the conclusion of 16:3 (MT): “he carried (LXX AL transported) them [the gate fixtures] to the top of the hill that is before Hebron.” Marcus (*ad loc.*) points out that the distance from Gaza to Hebron is some 40 miles.

<sup>23</sup> This conclusion to Samson's initiatives with the gate fixtures lacks an equivalent in MT 16:3, but is paralleled in the closing plus of LXX ABL 16:3. Pseudo-Philo as well concludes his version (*L.A.B.* 43.3) with a comparable notice (“he set them on the mountain,” even while leaving aside the localization of the “mountain” in terms of its relationship to Hebron that the Bible and Josephus share). In further contrast to the latter two presentations, Pseudo-Philo further dramatizes the hero's actions on his way to the mountain: he uses one of the doors as a “shield,” the other as a “sword,” with which he pursues the Philistines and kills 25,000 of them. To his version of 16:3 he likewise appends (43.4) a summary allusion to various other feats performed by Samson as related in the Bible (and Josephus), i.e. his killing of the lion (see *Jdg* 14:5), slaughter of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass (15:15), his self-loosing bonds (15:14) and his fox round-up (see 15:4) that itself concludes with the source reference “are these not written in the Book of Judges?”

DELILAH'S FIRST FAILED ATTEMPT

Judges 16 links its two stories of Samson's romantic entanglements by means of the brief chronological notice "after this" at the start of v. 4. Josephus, by contrast, supplies (5.306a) a much more elaborate transition between the two episodes, this spelling out in advance the reason why the second episode ended as disastrously as it did for him. The sequence reads:

Howbeit he was already transgressing (παρέβαινε) the laws of his forefathers (τὰ πάτρια)<sup>24</sup> and debasing (παρεχάρασεν)<sup>25</sup> his own rule of life (δίαιταν)<sup>26</sup> by the imitation of foreign usages (ξενικῶν μιμήσει ἐθισμῶν);<sup>27</sup> and this proved the beginning of his disaster (κακοῦ).<sup>28</sup>

It is only after the above inserted preface that Josephus comes (5.3067) comes to utilize the indications of Jdg 16:4 concerning Samson's new love interest. In so doing, he likewise introduces several further specifications concerning the woman's identity, even while leaving her biblical place of residence unmentioned: "For being enamoured (ἐρασθεῖς) of a woman<sup>29</sup> who was a harlot

<sup>24</sup> On "the ancestral (institutions, etc.)" as a key Josephan category in his presentation of his people's history, see B. Schröder, *Die 'väterliche Gesetze.' Flavius Josephus als Vermittler von Halachah an Griechen und Römer* (TSAJ 53; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Josephus' remaining uses of the verb παραχάρασσω/παραχατάπτω are in *BJ* 1.529 and *Ant.* 5.315,328.

<sup>26</sup> The above phrase with its reference to Samson's δίαιτα recalls, while likewise giving a negative turn to, Josephus' notice on the young Samson in *Ant.* 5.285: "... it was plain from the frugality of his diet (δίαιταν) and his loosely flowing locks that he was a prophet."

<sup>27</sup> With the above formula compare the phrase used by Joshua in his parting address to the Transjordanians in *Ant.* 5.98: "if ye turn aside to imitate foreign nations (εἰς ἑτέρων ἔθνων μίμησιν), He [God] will turn away from your race." The expression "foreign usages" recurs in *Ant.* 4.140 and 9.138.

<sup>28</sup> On the above preface to the Delilah story as reflective of a key concern highlighted by Josephus throughout his version of biblical history for the benefit of contemporary Jewish readers, i.e. the dangers of assimilation, see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 486.

<sup>29</sup> Compare the opening of Jdg 16:4 where the phrase "after this he loved (ἠγάπησεν) a woman..." by the place indication "in the valley of Sorok." In *Num. Rab.* 9.24 the MT place name qrm is linked with the verb qrm ("to produce no fruit") and taken to signify that by this point Samson had lost his capacity to do good. Pseudo-Philo

(ἑταιριζομένης<sup>30</sup>)<sup>31</sup> among the Philistines (Παλαιστίνους<sup>32</sup>),<sup>33</sup>  
Dalala (Δαλάλης),<sup>34</sup> he consorted (συνῆν) with her.”<sup>35</sup>

(*L.A.B.* 43.5) supplies a place indication of his own for the encounter spoken of in 16:4, having Samson “go down to Gerar, a city of the Philistines.” On this peculiarity of his presentation, see Jacobson, *Commentary*, II, 997 who, with reference to the site’s association with the endangerment of the matriarchs Sarah (Gen 20:1-11) and Rebecca (Gen 26:6-7) comments: “Perhaps LAB thought of it [Gerar] as a place of particularly loose sexual morals.”

<sup>30</sup> Josephus’ one remaining use of the verb ἑταιρίζω is in *Ant.* 8.417, his equivalent to 1 Kgs 22:38, where “harlots” (LXX ἀφ πόρνοι) wash themselves in the blood of Ahab that had collected in his chariot following his mortal wounding by an arrow.

<sup>31</sup> Jdg 16:4 lacks an equivalent indication concerning Delilah’s occupational status. I suggested above and in n. 14 that Josephus (as also Pseudo-Philo) found inspiration for his specification on the matter in the Bible’s designation of the woman of 16:1 as a “harlot” (MT הַיִּזָּה; LXX πόρνην), transferring that qualification from her to the more important figure of Delilah. Possibly too, Josephus’ choice of term for Delilah (“courtesan,” *hetaira*) here in 5.307 is intended to invest Samson’s liaison with her with a higher social status than involvement with the common “whore” cited in 16:1 would have had and likewise to heighten “the Greek coloring” of the story via mention of a class of women who played a significant role in Greek culture; see Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation*, 480-481.

<sup>32</sup> Palaistanoi is Josephus’ standard designation for the “Philistines” throughout the Antiquities. In LXX Judges the prevailing designation is rather ἀλλόφυλοι (literally “those of another tribe”), while VL uses the Latin equivalent form “Alienigenae” and Pseudo-Philo employs “Allophili.” For more details, see Harlé, *Juges*, 58-60.

<sup>33</sup> Jdg 16:4 says nothing concerning Delilah’s ethnicity. Josephus’ indication on the matter makes Samson’s dalliance with her an instance of his “imitation of foreign usages” for which he is denounced in 5.306a. Compare *L.A.B.* 43.5 where, in the speech with which he responds to Samson’s “marrying” of Delilah, God censures him for having “mingled with the daughters of the Philistines”; see n. 35.

<sup>34</sup> Compare MT דִּלְיָה (Eng.: Delilah); LXX A Δαλιδά; LXX B Δαλειδά (Rahlf’s adopts a reading of the name, i.e. Dalila, in conformity with that of MT in his text of both A and B); VL Danila. Rabbinic tradition (*b. Sot.* 9a and *Num. Rab.* 9.24) connects the name with the verb דָּלַל (“to weaken, impoverish”) and avers that Delilah was appropriately so named in that she weakened Samson’s strength, heart, and actions.

<sup>35</sup> This indication that Samson’s “love” for Delilah led to sexual relations between them lacks an explicit counterpart in 16:4. Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.* 43.5) expatiates on the pair’s relationship in similar fashion, stating that “he [Samson] was led astray after her and took her to himself for a wife.” The Pseudo-Philonic Samson’s initiative, in turn, prompts an extended divine response cited in the continuation of 43.5 in which Samson is condemned for not following the example of Joseph who did not “profane his seed” with a foreign woman. The Deity then goes on to announce that having first handed Samson over to his enemies who will blind him, he will ultimately



Samson's infatuation with Delilah leads in Jdg 16:5 to an intervention by the Philistine leaders who call on Delilah to find out the secret of her lover's strength and promise to each give her 1,100 pieces of silver. The historian's version (5.307a) of this development abridges the leaders' proposition and generalizes the specific (and implausibly high) sum they offer her: "...the presidents of the Philistine confederacy (τῶν Παλαιστίνων οἱ τοῦ κοινοῦ προεστῶτες)<sup>36</sup> came and induced her by large promises<sup>37</sup> to discover from Samson the secret of that strength (ἰσχύος)<sup>38</sup> which rendered him invulnerable (ἀληπτός)<sup>39</sup> to his foes."<sup>40</sup>

Pursuant to the leaders' instructions of 16:5, Delilah in 16:6 proceeds immediately to ask Samson a series of direct questions: "please tell me wherein your strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you." The second of these questions in particular might well incite suspicion on Samson's part— why should his interlocutor want to know how he is to be disabled?— and so Josephus has Delilah omit it from her initial query. In addition, he portrays (5.307) Delilah adopting a more subtle approach, one involving shared drinking and sexual activity, that is intended to induce Samson to lower his guard and confide in her: "So she, over their cups (πότον)<sup>41</sup> and in like

enable him to avenge himself upon his captors at the moment of his death.

<sup>36</sup> Compare MT Jdg 16:5 פּלִשְׁתִּים סַרְנֵי (RSV: lords of the Philistines); LXX AL οἱ σατράπαι τῶν ἀλλοφύλων; LXX B οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν ἀλλοφύλων; VL "omnes principes alienigenarum."

<sup>37</sup> This is Josephus' substitution for the "precise" figure of 16:5 which he might have found exorbitant.

<sup>38</sup> Compare the leaders opening (direct address) words to Delilah in 16:5 "entice him, and see wherein his great strength (LXX ἰσχύς) lies." On "strength" and "strong" as *Leitwörter* of Josephus' presentation of Samson— whose very name he declares in 5.285 to mean "strong" (ἰσχυρόν)— see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 465-471.

<sup>39</sup> This adjective is *hapax* in Josephus' corpus.

<sup>40</sup> This appended qualification of Samson's "strength" takes the place of the further directives given Delilah by the Philistine leaders in 16:5, i.e. "... (see) by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to subdue him." In contrast to both the Bible and Josephus, Pseudo-Philo makes no mention of the leaders' words to Delilah; in his presentation (see *L.A.B.* 43.6) Delilah undertakes to discover Samson's secret on her own initiative, thereby assuming a heightened stature in the narrative.

<sup>41</sup> This inserted allusion to Samson's "drinking" together with Delilah portrays him

*intercourse* (συνουσίαν),<sup>42</sup> by admiration (θαυμάζουντα) of his exploits would craftily seek (ἔτεχνίτευε<sup>43</sup>)<sup>44</sup> to discover by what means he had come to such extraordinary valour (ἀρετήν).<sup>45</sup>

Samson responds to Delilah's queries in 16:7 by declaring that should he bound with "seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried,"<sup>46</sup> he will "become weak (LXX ἄσθενήσω), and be like other men." Josephus (5.308) prefaces the hero's reply with an indication that highlights the deliberate falsity with which he parries Delilah's own deceptiveness: "But Samson, whose wits were yet robust (φρονεῖν

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as transgressing the injunction laid down for him already before his birth in the angel's address to his mother of *Ant.* 5.278 "he was to renounce all other forms of drink (so God commanded) and to accustom himself to water only" (in *Jdg* 13:5,7 it is the mother rather than Samson himself who is told to "drink no wine and strong drink"). His "taking to drink" at this point exemplifies the charge about Samson's "debasement of his own rule of life" made by Josephus in 5.306. Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.* 43.6) mentions Delilah's getting Samson drunk as well, but only in connection with her fourth, successful attempt. By contrast, *Num. Rab.* 10.5 avers that it was only the Nazirite Samson's adherence to the prohibition of drink that kept his tendencies to lewdness within any kind of bounds. See also n. 56.

<sup>42</sup> This term harks back to the reference to Samson's "consorting" (συνῆν) with Delilah already before the leaders' intervention in 5.306b (see n. 35) and provides additional evidence of the "debasement" of Samson's "own rule of life" that his involvement with Delilah brought with it.

<sup>43</sup> Josephus' two remaining uses of the verb τεχνιτύω ("to undertake craftily, effect by a ruse, bring about cunningly") are in *BJ* 2.604; 4.422.

<sup>44</sup> The above formulation introduces a further dimension of the Josephan Delilah's multifaceted approach to inducing Samson to entrust his secret to her: not only does she involve him in drinking and having sexual relations, she also craftily flatters him with expressions of admiration for his strength.

<sup>45</sup> Compare Delilah's opening question to Samson in *Jdg* 16:6: "please tell wherein your great strength (LXX ἡ ἰσχὺς σου ἢ μεγάλη) lies." Cf. also *L.A.B.* 43.6 where in the (one and only) word she addresses to him, Delilah "pressures" Samson, saying to him, "Show me your power (potentiam) and in what your strength (virtus) lies, so I will know that you love me." (The last element of Delilah's discourse here has no equivalent in her word of 16:6; Pseudo-Philo like found inspiration for it in her fourth biblical address to Samson in 16:15, where she asks "how can you say 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me?")

<sup>46</sup> Thus RSV translates MT's לֹא חֲרָבוּ אֶשֶׁר לִהְיוֹת לְיָרִים בְּשֶׁבַע יָרִים לְהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא חֲרָבוּ. LXX A renders "seven fresh, undamaged tendons" (νευραῖς...μὴ ἡρνημέναις); LXX B has "seven fresh undeteriorated tendons" (νευραῖς...μὴ διεφραμέναις), while LXX L reads "seven fresh, undried vine branches" (κλήμασιν μὴ ἐξηραμμέναις).

ἰσχυρός),<sup>47</sup> countered Dalala's ruse with another (ἀνταπάτω)...<sup>48</sup> Thereafter, his reproduction (5.308b) of Samson's actual answer of 16:7 utilizes wording that seems to reflect that of LXX L with its reference to "undried vine branches" (see n. 46) in particular: "... telling her were he bound with seven vine-shoots (κλήμασιν...ἀμπελῆονις ἐπι καὶ περιελεῖσθαι<sup>49</sup> δυναμένοις),<sup>50</sup> he would be the weakest of men (ἀσθενέστερος...πάντων)."<sup>51</sup>

Jdg 16:8-9a tells of a series of measures taken in response to Samson's declaration in 16:7: the Philistine "lords" (see 16:5) bringing the requisite "bowstrings" (LXX L vine branches) to Delilah who uses these to "bind" him, her stationing men in the "inner chamber," and informing Samson that the Philistines are "upon him." For the first of these measures, the historian (5.309-310a) substitutes a reference to Delilah's initial reaction to Samson's statement, while likewise interjecting an allusion to the hero's own condition as others make their moves against him: "*At the moment she held her peace, but after reporting this to the lords of the Philistines* (τοῦς ἄρχουσι τῶν Παλαιστίνων<sup>52</sup>)<sup>53</sup> she posted some soldiers in

<sup>47</sup> This (inserted) characterization of Samson's mental capacity as still "strong" recalls the mention of his physical "strength" (ἰσχύος) in 5.307, indicating that the hero's strength pertained—up till this point—to his mind as well, this enabling him to best Delilah in the contest of deception between them in its first round.

<sup>48</sup> The verb ἀνταπάτω is hapax in Josephus; its application to Samson here makes clear that he perceives the "crafty scheming" attributed to Delilah in 5.307b and responds in kind.

<sup>49</sup> The verb περιελέω is hapax in Josephus.

<sup>50</sup> Harlé (*Juges*, 44, 219) cites Josephus' above rendering of Jdg 16:7 for his use of a Greek version of Judges corresponding to the Antiochene (or Lucianic) manuscripts known to us (this in addition to the Hebrew text also used by him). The same terminological agreement between LXX L and Josephus against MT and LXX AB will recur in 5.309// 16:9aa; see n. 57.

<sup>51</sup> In Pseudo-Philo Samson does not give an answer equivalent to that of 16:7 in reply to Delilah's opening query of *L.A.B.* 43.6 (// 16:6; see n. 45). Instead, Pseudo-Philo follows her question immediately with a summarizing transitional phrase, synthesizing the whole content of 16:7-14, i.e. "when Samson had tricked her three times and she was pressuring him daily...."

<sup>52</sup> Josephus here varies his designation for the Philistine leaders from 5.307 (where they are called τῶν Παλαιστίνων οἱ τοῦ κοινοῦ προεστῶτες); compare LXX B 16:8 which speaks of οἱ ἄρξοντες τῶν ἀλλοφύλων.

<sup>53</sup> In citing Delilah's report to the Philistine leaders here (even as she says nothing

ambush within<sup>54</sup> *and while Samson was drunken* (μεθύοντα<sup>55</sup>)<sup>56</sup> bound him with the shoots (κλήματα)<sup>57</sup> *as firmly as possible* (κατὰ τὸ ἰσχυρότατον),<sup>58</sup> *and then woke him*<sup>59</sup> with the announcement that men were upon him.

The account of Delilah's first (failed) attempt to disable Samson (Jdg 16:4-9) concludes in v.9b with the hero's snapping off his bonds

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to Samson himself), Josephus supplies the necessary presupposition for what is related in 16:8a where, without any prior such report by her, the leaders somehow just know what Delilah needs for the binding of Samson and bring this to her.

<sup>54</sup> "Soldiers" are not mentioned explicitly in the formulation of 16:9a $\alpha$  which reads literally: "and the ambush was sitting for her [Delilah] in an inner chamber." Josephus' rendering highlights the active role ("she posted") of Delilah in setting up the "ambush." In mentioning the ambush at this point, prior to his notice on Delilah's binding of Samson, Josephus reverses the sequence of 16:8b-9a $\alpha$ , having Delilah first ensure that she has an armed force available before attempting to "operate on" Samson herself.

<sup>55</sup> This is the *lectio brevior* of the codices ROE followed by Marcus. Nodet adopts the more expansive reading of MSPL, i.e. καθεύδοντα μεθύοντα. The Latin translation of 5.309 simply has Samson "sleeping" (*dormientem*).

<sup>56</sup> Josephus' insertion concerning Samson's "drunkenness" at this juncture harks back to his— also inserted— reference to his and Delilah's lingering "over their cups" in 5.307, highlighting anew the hero's violation of the divine prescription that he was to drink only water of 5.278 (see n. 41). In addition, the insertion serves to explain how Delilah was able to "bind" Samson as she is said to do in 16:8b— she could do so given his current drunken state. Here again, as with his interjected mention of Delilah's report to the leaders (see n. 53), Josephus endeavors to fill gaps left in the biblical presentation and so makes this appear more plausible.

<sup>57</sup> Josephus' term for the "restraints" with which Delilah ties Samson here corresponds to that used in the binding notice of LXX L 16:9a $\beta$  (where MT and LXX AB refer to "bowstrings, tendons"). One thus has the same LXX L-Josephus alignment against MTLXX AB as was met in 5.308// 16:7; see n. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Josephus' above appendix to the binding notice of 16:8b introduces an ironic wordplay on the terms of the ἰσχυ- root twice used of Samson himself in the immediate context; see 5.307,308. "Strong" Samson now finds himself "very strongly" bound by his paramour. At the same time, of course, the historian's highlighting of the strength of Samson's bonds here also to magnify his subsequent feat in so readily extricating himself from these.

<sup>59</sup> Such a "waking" of Samson is not mentioned in 16:9ab where she simply tells him "the Philistines are upon you." Josephus' insertion of the item has in view his earlier addition concerning Samson's "drunken" state— from which he must now be "awaken"— during Delilah's binding of him.

and the appended editorial notice “so the secret of his strength was not known.” Dispensing with the latter item, Josephus, conversely, elaborates (5.310b) on the biblical account of Samson’s self-deliverance: “But he burst the shoots (κλήματα)<sup>60</sup> asunder and made ready for defence as though his assailants were coming.”<sup>61</sup>

#### TWO MORE FAILED ATTEMPTS

Delilah initiates (16:10) her second attempt to uncover Samson’s secret by accusing him of having mocked and lied to her, and then once again (see 16:6) asks how he might be bound. In both its parts this new address by Delilah might not seem particularly well suited to elicit the information she is seeking: the charges about mockery and lying would hardly put Samson in a receptive frame of mind and the reiterated request to make known how he is to be bound would be even less likely to get a truthful response from him after what has just happened. Accordingly, Josephus here too (see on 5.307b), depicts Delilah adopting a more subtle approach in which, even as their sexual involvement continues, she reminds Samson both of her own attachment to him and trustworthiness and the hurt he is causing her but not confiding in her. His version of the woman’s words in 5.310b reads accordingly: “And then this woman, *with whom Samson was continually consorting* (συνεχῶς ὁμιλοῦντος),<sup>62</sup> would say that she took it ill that he had not confidence enough in her affection

<sup>60</sup> For the third time Josephus uses this term to designate Samson’s bonds. In LXX 16:9 the reference is to (τὰς νευράς). Josephus leaves aside the appended biblical indication that Samson snapped the bowstrings “as a string of tow snaps when it touches the fire” (MT and LXX B). The historian tends to avoid the Bible’s figurative language, either simply omitting this (as here) or replacing it with more prosaic formulations.

<sup>61</sup> With this elaboration of the notice of 16:9bα, Josephus supplies an answer to the question of what Samson did once he had extricated himself from his restraints in the face of the announced Philistine assault upon him (see 16:9aβ), informing us that the now unencumbered Samson assumed a defensive posture, ready for an attack— should it actually come.

<sup>62</sup> Here for the third time in his version of Jdg 16:4ff., Josephus introduces reference to the (forbidden) sexual interaction between Samson and Delilah (see 5.306,307), this now continuing despite the former’s experience of the latter’s treachery.

(εὐνοΐας) for him not to tell her just what she desired,<sup>63</sup> as though she would not conceal what she knew must in his interest not be divulged.”<sup>64</sup>

To Delilah’s second interrogation Samson replies in 16:11 that he could be rendered as weak as anyone else by being tied with new, never used “ropes.” Just as he did with the hero’s initial response (see 5.308 and n. 48), Josephus (5.311a) makes explicit opening reference to Samson’s conscious deception of his questioner all this time: “*But again he deluded (ἀπατῶντος)* her, telling her were he bound with seven<sup>65</sup> cords (κάλους)<sup>66</sup> he would lose his strength (ἰσχύον).”<sup>67</sup>

Jdg 16:12 tells at length of the failed outcome of Delilah’s second attempt: she binds him with the ropes, warns him of an imminent Philistine assault,<sup>68</sup> only to have him snap the ropes off his arms “like a thread.” In Josephus’ rendition this entire sequence is reduced to the transitional phrase “and when she had tried this too without success....”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> With this formulation, taking the place of the biblical Delilah’s “please tell me how you may be bound” (16:10b), Josephus has her appeal, in more psychologically effective fashion, to what she “desires” from Samson— a desire the latter would have reason to try to satisfy given their ongoing intimate relationship.

<sup>64</sup> Delilah’s above assertion of her trustworthiness sounds ironic given the use made by her of Samson’s previous disclosure. Perhaps, we are to think that Delilah is relying here on the fact that Samson was “drunk” (5.309) during the preceding episode and thus would not realize that she had in fact had attempted to utilize the information supplied by him contrary to his “interests.”

<sup>65</sup> This figure for the number of restraints required has a counterpart in LXX AL and VL 16:11, but not in MT and LXX B.

<sup>66</sup> LXX AB Jdg 16:11a read καλδοῖς. Josephus leaves aside the biblical Samson’s specifications about the ropes’ being “new” and “not used.”

<sup>67</sup> For the fourth time within his version of Jdg 16:4ff., Josephus introduces a form of the ἰσχυ- stem. In Jdg 16:11b, Samson’s reiterates his declaration of 16:7b “then I shall become weak, and be like other man.”

<sup>68</sup> At this juncture in the sequence of 16:12 MT LXX AL VL all read the parenthetical notice “and the men were lying in wait in the inner chamber,” corresponding to the mention of the ambush in 16:9aα. By contrast LXX B reverses the sequence of MT AL’s 16:12aβ (Delilah’s warning) and ba (the presence of the ambush), likewise turning the latter notice into a reference to the ambushers’ previous “leaving” of the chamber.

<sup>69</sup> In thus abbreviating the biblical presentation Josephus avoids the wide-going repetition of the content (and wording) of 16:9 in 16:12, leaving readers to fill in the

The third round in the biblical contest between Delilah and Samson (16:13-14) commences in v. 13a with the former repeating her words of v. 10 (see above) virtually verbatim. Thereafter, MT and LXX offer notably different texts of 16:13b-14a. MT— the (shorter) text of which is generally seen as the result of homoteleuton— reads as follows: “And he said to her, ‘If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web...’ And she made them tight with the pin.” The more expansive text of LXX (B), for its part of 16:13b-14a runs: “And he said to her, ‘If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web *and make it tight with the pin to the wall*<sup>70</sup>, *then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.*’ So while he slept,<sup>71</sup> *Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web.* And she made them tight with the pin *to the wall.*”<sup>72</sup> Thereafter, the biblical witnesses converge in relating (16:14b) the failure of Delilah’s third attempt: she informs him that the Philistines are upon him; he awakens and pulls away “the pin, the loom and the web.”<sup>73</sup>

Josephus, who already significantly reduced the Bible’s account of the outcome of Delilah’s second attempt (16:12b) in 5.311 (see above), has recourse to a still more drastic abbreviation in his version of her third attempt (16:13-14). Specifically, at the end of 5.311 and the start of 5.312 he limits himself to the following indications concerning Delilah’s final failure: “... *a third time*<sup>74</sup> he advised her to weave

details of the outcome of Delilah’s second attempt in light of the way her first initiative turns out in 5.310b.

<sup>70</sup> Vg. 16:13b $\alpha$  reads “to the ground” (*terrae*).

<sup>71</sup> This is the reading of LXX B at the opening of 16:14. LXX AL and VL have “and she made him [Samson] sleep.” In place of the description of Delilah’s “operations” upon the sleeping Samson of LXX 16:14a, Vg. reads simply “quod cum fecisset (i.e. Delilah)....”

<sup>72</sup> In the above rendition of LXX B (for which I follow RSV’s translation), I italicize those elements which lack a counterpart in MT. On the textual and *realia* problems of Jdg 16:13-14, see the commentaries cited in n. 1. and the discussion of Harlé, *Juges*, 220-221.

<sup>73</sup> Thus MT 16:14 *in fine*. Compare LXX B (“he pulled out the pin of the web from the wall”); LXX AL (“he pulled out the pins of the web along with the loom [or chain,  $\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\alpha$ ]. And his strength was not known [see 16:9b $\beta$ ]”).

<sup>74</sup> This chronological indication takes the place of Delilah’s words to Samson of 16:13a (which themselves largely repeat those of 16:10 verbatim). In Josephus’ presentation then Samson “volunteers” his new suggestion about how he might be

(ἐνυφῆναι) his locks (τὰς κόμας) into a web.<sup>75</sup> But when even by this experiment the truth (ταληθες) was not found...<sup>76</sup>

#### FINAL SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT

Having thrice failed to uncover Samson's secret, Delilah renews her efforts in 16:15-16. This sequence begins (v. 15) by citing her reproachful words to him ("How can you say 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me wherein your great strength lies") and then continues with the narrator's notice of v. 16 ("and when she pressed him hard with her words day after day,<sup>77</sup> and she urged him,<sup>78</sup> his soul was vexed to death").<sup>79</sup> In contrast to the Bible's expansive biblical portrayal of

deprived of his strength. Josephus' allusion to this being the "third" interaction between Samson and Delilah here does have a counterpart both in Jdg 16:15 (where she accuses him of having mocked her "three times") and in *L.A.B.* 43.6 (where the phrase "when Samson had tricked her three times" is, as pointed out in n. 51, Pseudo-Philo's summation of the content of the entire segment Jdg 16:7-14).

<sup>75</sup> Compare the rendering of Nodet "(il lui indiqua qu'il fallait) lui tisser les cheveux avec la chaîne d'une tissu." K.H. Rengstorf (ed.), *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, I (Leiden: Brill, 2002) *s.v.* does not venture a translation of the verb ἐνυφάϊνω in 5.312. Josephus' above version of Samson's word to Delilah of 16:13b clearly stands closer to the shorter form of that word found in MT than to the longer form found in LXX (see above). As Nodet (*ad loc.*) points out, however, given Josephus' thorough-going abbreviation of the whole of 16:13-14, it remains unclear whether he is actually basing himself on MT's shorter text or rather compressing a longer LXX-reading on his own initiative. It might indeed be the case that Josephus—like subsequent interpreters—found the details of the restraining process described in 16:13-14 (in whatever text-form(s) this was available to him) puzzling and so limited himself a brief allusion to its content.

<sup>76</sup> This concluding phrase is Josephus' summation of the content of the whole of 16:14. Its allusion to "the truth not being found" picks up on the previous references to Samson's "deceiving" Delilah (see 5.308,311), indicating that also this time her had deliberately misled her.

<sup>77</sup> For this chronological indication common to MT and LXX B, LXX AL and VL have "the whole night."

<sup>78</sup> In *y. Ket.* 5.8 this phrase is interpreted by R. Isaac bar Eleazar as meaning "she would pull herself out from under him" during their sexual intercourse.

<sup>79</sup> *y. Ket.* 5.8 preserves various rabbinic comments about this concluding phrase of 16:15: Whereas Samson himself found the non-consummation of their sexual relations [see previous note] supremely "vexatious," she herself did not, or, alternatively she found sexual satisfaction with other men.



Delilah's new initiative, Josephus (5.312) minimalizes her role at this juncture, opting rather to supply (5.312a) a series of preliminary indications as background to his reproduction of the hero's words of 15:17 in what follows: "... *at last*, at her petitions (δεομένης,<sup>80</sup> Samson— *since he must need* (ἔδει) *fall victim to calamity* (συμφορᾶ)<sup>81</sup> — *wishing to humour Dalala...*"<sup>82</sup>

Samson's telling Delilah "all his mind" (thus 16:17αα)<sup>83</sup> in 16:17αβ consists of two parts: a declaration about his life-long Nazirite status and the related disclosure that if he is shaved he will lose his strength and become as weak as other men. The historian (5.312b) elaborates the first component of the hero's discourse with a double statement of God's particular solicitude for him, while also leaving implicit the "disabling procedure" that the biblical Samson spells out in the second part of his address. The version of Samson's words that results from these redactional moves by Josephus reads thus: "I am<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> With this participle Josephus sums up the whole complex of 16:15-16 concerning Delilah's words and actions. Pseudo-Philo as well confines himself to highly abbreviated version of 16:15-16 in *L.A.B.* 43.6b "(when Samson had tricked her three times) and she was pressuring him daily..." In contrast to the Bible, neither author supplies a content for Delilah's final verbal initiative.

<sup>81</sup> With this inserted phrase Josephus foreshadows the new turn that it about to occur for Samson after his three previous successful escapes from Delilah's traps. The formulation likewise points back to 5.306 where Josephus introduces Samson's dalliance with Delilah with mention of his infractions against the ancestral laws and his own "rule of life" that would "prove the beginning of his disaster (κακοῦ)", a disaster whose inevitable moment of fulfillment has now arrived.

<sup>82</sup> Via this further prefatory expansion of Samson's words to Delilah of 16:17, Josephus supplies a motivation for the hero's sudden shift to truthfulness after the foregoing series of deceptions he has perpetrated upon her: in the face of Delilah's ongoing "petitions" (and acting as the unwitting agent of his own inevitable "calamity"), he now finally experiences the urge to satisfy her relentless curiosity.

<sup>83</sup> Josephus does not reproduce this opening editorial notice concerning Samson's subsequent communication to Delilah (perhaps because in his version he will be as forthcoming with her as is his biblical counterpart). Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.* 43.6), by contrast, limits his rendering of 16:17 to a reproduction ("... the fourth time he revealed to her his heart") of the notice, dispensing with the actual words of the hero's reply.

<sup>84</sup> For Samson's climactic speech to Delilah Josephus, exceptionally, does retain the direct address of 16:17, whereas in what precedes he has consistently recast characters' words in indirect address; see n. 15.

*under God's care* (θεὸς κήδεται) *and under His providence* (κατὰ τὴν ἐκεῖνου πρόνοιαν)<sup>85</sup> *since birth*, I nurse these locks (κόμην), God having enjoined me not to cut (ἀποκεῖρειν) them,<sup>86</sup> *for that my strength* (ἰσχὺν) *is measured by their growth and preservation.*"

The narrator's focus reverts to Delilah in 16:18: she sees that "Samson has told her all his mind,"<sup>87</sup> announces this to the Philistine "lords" whom she summons to her and who do appear before her, carrying "the money [see 16:15] in their hand." Following these preparatory measures, 16:19-20 directs attention now to Delilah, now to Samson: In v. 19 Delilah causes Samson to sleep on her knees, summons "a man" (VL a barber) who proceeds to shave Samson's seven locks;<sup>88</sup> this done, Delilah begins to "torment" Samson and his strength leaves him. Thereafter (v. 20) Delilah informs the hero that the Philistines are upon him, this prompting him to awake, state his intention

<sup>85</sup> This phrase harks back to *Ant.* 5.277 where a God-sent "spectre" brings Samson's mother "the good news of the approaching birth of a son through God's good providence" (κατὰ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν καλοῦ). On "providence" (πρόνοια) as a key term of Josephus' theological vocabulary, see H.W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (HDR 7; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 71-106 and P. Spilsbury, *The Image of the Jew in Josephus' Paraphrase of the Bible* (TSAJ 69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 72-74.

<sup>86</sup> In *Ant.* 5.278 it is Samson's mother-to-be who is instructed by the angel "not to cut (ἀποκεῖρειν) the lad's locks (τὰς κόμας)." The above phrase is Josephus' rendering of Samson's initial reply to Delilah in 16:17 where he informs her: "A razor has never come upon my head; for I have been a Nazirite (LXX A transliterates ναζιραῖος; L B transliterates with ἄγιος) to God from my mother's womb." (In his rendering of Jdg 14:6 ["the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth"] in *Ant.* 5.278 Josephus avoids the biblical technical term "Nazirite" as well).

<sup>87</sup> Compare the narrator's notice at the opening of 16:17 ("he [Samson] told her all his mind"). Rabbinic tradition (*B. Sot.* 9b and *Num. Rab.* 9.24) poses the question of how Delilah could know that this time Samson had indeed opened his heart to her. The reply attributed to various authorities is that his mention of "God" in his reply to her gave her that assurance since so righteous a man as Samson would not use the word "God" as part of a lie. (An alternative explanation of Delilah's perception about Samson's final answer is that truthful words bear the evidence of their veracity on their face.)

<sup>88</sup> The verbal forms of MT and LXX 16:19 appear to make the man/barber the one who shaves Samson; generally, translators and commentators understand this as indicating Delilah used him as her instrument for the shaving process (see RSV's rendering "[she] had him shave off the seven locks of his head").

of “shaking himself free” this time as well, unaware as he is that “the Lord had left him.” The extended sequence of 16:18-20 is drastically reduced in Josephus’ rendering at the opening of 5.313: “the secret learnt,<sup>89</sup> she reft him of his locks<sup>90</sup> and delivered him to his enemies, being now powerless (οὐκέτ’ ὄντα ἰσχυρόν)<sup>91</sup> to repulse their assault.”<sup>92</sup>

With Delilah’s role now accomplished, the Philistines as a group come to the fore in the story’s conclusion of Jdg 16:21 where they seize the now hapless Samson, gouge out his eyes,<sup>93</sup> bring him down

<sup>89</sup> Compare 16:18aa “when Delilah saw that he had told her all his mind” which raises the question of how she would have perceived this- especially after her paramour’s long string of previous deceptions; see n. 89.

<sup>90</sup> Josephus makes Delilah in person the one who shaves Samson, dispensing with the figure of the “man/barber” who— it is generally supposed— does this acting at Delilah’s direction— in 16:19a<sup>u</sup>; see n. 89. He likewise leaves aside the reference of 16:19a<sup>β</sup> to Delilah’s “making Samson sleep on her knees and the related mention of 16:20a<sup>u</sup> of Samson’s “awaking from sleep.” In Josephus’ presentation Samson then appears to be awake during Delilah’s shaving of him. That he allows this to happen without resistance indeed confirms Josephus’ earlier statement about the inevitability of Samson’s “falling victim to calamity” in 5.312.

<sup>91</sup> With this phrase, Josephus sums up various components of 16:18-20: Delilah’s summoning of the Philistine “lords” and their coming to her, money in (v. 18ab<sup>β</sup>) and her warning to Samson about the Philistines being “upon him” (16:20a<sup>α</sup>). The biblical notice on the lords’ bringing Delilah money (16:18b<sup>β</sup>) omitted by Josephus from his rendition harks back to their earlier promise of 1,000 pieces of silver” for Delilah’s services (16:5b<sup>β</sup>) which Josephus generalized into a reference to their “large promises” in 5.307. Thus, in neither instance does Josephus reproduce Judges’ mention of the money (to be) paid Delilah (Pseudo-Philo lacks the item as well).

<sup>92</sup> For the sixth and final time within *Ant.* 5.304-313 Josephus uses a word of the *iscu-stem*.

<sup>93</sup> Compare 16:19b<sup>β</sup>: “and his strength (LXX ἰσχύς) left him.” Josephus leaves aside the further particulars surrounding Samson’s loss of strength as cited in 16:19b<sup>α</sup> (Delilah’s “beginning to torment him”) and 16:20ab<sup>β</sup> (Samson’s awakening, supposing that this time too he will “shake himself free” and not knowing that “the Lord has left him”). In particular, he passes over the Bible’s explicit statement (16:20b<sup>β</sup>) about the Lord’s “abandonment” of Samson. Like Josephus, Pseudo-Philo abbreviates the sequence of 16:18-20, while at the same time utilizing certain elements of its presentation not employed by the former. The relevant portion of L.A.B. 43.6 (in which I italicize elements proper to Pseudo-Philo) reads: “She got him drunk (compare Josephus’ earlier allusions to Samson’s drinking in 5.307,308) and while he slept [see 16:19a<sup>α</sup>], she summoned a barber and he cut the seven locks of his head [see LXX AL VL 16:19a<sup>β</sup>; cf. n. 89] and his strength left him [see 16:19b<sup>β</sup>], for so he

to Gaza,<sup>94</sup> bind him with bronze fetters, and have him “grind in the mill in prison.”<sup>95</sup> The Josephan version of this catalogue in 5.313b, once again, abbreviates: “... and they, having put out his eyes, delivered him over to be led away in chains.”<sup>96</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Having now completed my detailed reading of *Ant.* 5.304-313, I shall now attempt to summarize its findings with regard with the three questions I posed at the start. On my initial, text-critical question, this study did yield certain indications of Josephus’ utilization of a text of Jdg 16:1-21 whose affinities are more with LXX (LXX L in particular) than with MT. Thus, in 5.305 (*in fine*) he has a counterpart to LXX’s plus concerning Samson’s laying down the gate fixtures he had carried off from Gaza. His term (“vineshoots,” see 3.08,309,310) for the restraints Samson initially suggests be applied to him corresponds to that used in LXX L 16:7-8, whereas MT and LXX AB speak of “bowstrings, tendons” (see nn. 46,50,57). In addition, Samson’s specification that “seven” cords are to be used in binding him of 5.311 has a parallel in LXX AL (and VL) 16:11, but not in MT and LXX B. Conversely, although Josephus’ “minimalizing” rendering of 16:13-14a

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himself had revealed (cf. Samson’s statement to this effect, not earlier cited by Pseudo-Philo but presupposed by him here of 16:17b “If I be shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man”). She called to the Philistines [see 16:18ab].”

<sup>94</sup> *B. Sot.* 9b represents this happening as an instance of “measure for measure” punishment in that it was his “eyes” that aroused Samson’s wrongful desire for the Philistine woman; see Jdg 14:3 where he tells his father that “she is pleasing in my eyes.”

<sup>95</sup> In rabbinic tradition (*b. Sot.* 9b; *Num. Rab.* 9.24) Samson’s ending up in Gaza as the place of his confinement by the Philistines is another (see previous note) exemplification of the measure for measure principle, in that it was in that same city that Samson sinned with a harlot (see Jdg 16:1).

<sup>96</sup> *Num. Rab.* 9.24, with reference to Job 31:10 (“then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down upon her”), sees a sexual nuance in the reference to her warning to Samson about the Philistines being “upon him” (16:20α). The biblical notice on the lords’ bringing Delilah money (16:18bβ) omitted by Josephus from his Samson’s “grinding” here, i.e. Samson was compelled to have intercourse with the Philistine women who were brought to him in the hope that he would procreate children by them that would have a part of his extraordinary strength.

stands closer to the shorter MT than to the more expansive LXX, this does not exclude that he knew the latter witness and simply abbreviated it on his own (see n. 75). The evidence of *Ant.* 5.304-313, limited as of course it is, does thus seem to point to Josephus' use of a LXX-like text-form in preference to the one represented by MT.<sup>97</sup>

My second opening question asked about the rewriting techniques applied by Josephus in *Ant.* 5.304-313 and the resultant distinctiveness of his presentation of the events of Jdg 16:1-21. Of such rewriting techniques, it is the historian's abbreviation of the biblical account is that is most conspicuous in our segment. In particular, he reduces the sequence concerning the outcome of Delilah's second attempt (16:12) and the entire third attempt (16:13-14) to a series of allusive phrases in 5.311b and the start of 5.312. He likewise turns Delilah's extended fourth and final appeal to Samson (16:15) into a one-word mention of her "petitioning" him at the opening of 5.312 and drops Samson's concluding instructions about how he may be disabled (compare 16:17b and 5.312b). Similarly, he drastically compresses the lengthy segment (16:18-20) relating the interactions between Delilah and Samson following the latter's "confession" in 5.313a, just as he omits several items from the catalogue of Samson's afflictions of 16:21 in 5.313b.

At the same time, Josephus' rendition is not lacking in elaborations of/additions to the biblical presentation. Examples include: the preliminary indications introducing his version of 16:1 in 5.304, his "preface" to the Delilah story in 5.306a, the expansions concerning Delilah's initial inquiry in 5.307b, the inserted remarks on Samson's reply to this (compare 16:7 and 5.308a), the embellishments regarding Delilah's resultant initiatives (compare 16:8-9a and 5.309), the allusion to Samson's "continually consorting" with Delilah worked into the

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<sup>97</sup> From the listing of Jdg 16:21 Josephus leaves aside the mention of "Gaza" and the concluding allusion to the captive's "grinding," while also conflating its references to Samson's seizure, leading away, and binding with bronze fetters. On the historian's non-reproduction of the biblical notice on Samson's "grinding," see Feldman (*Josephus's Interpretation*, 474) who points out that the detail would have been found degrading by his Greco-Roman audience for whom grinding at the mill was a punishment especially associated with recalcitrant slaves. Pseudo-Philo's rendering of Jdg 16:21 in L.A.B. 43.6 (in fine) largely parallels that of Josephus both in what it takes over and leaves out, though with the addition of an idem peculiar to himself: "... and they [the Philistines] beat Samson and blinded him and put him in prison."

account of her second inquiry (compare 16:10 and 5.310b), the interjected observations preceding Samson's final "confession" (5.312a), and the hero's double declaration concerning God's solicitude for him (compare 16:17a and 5.312b).

Generally, Josephus reproduces the sequence of Jdg 16:1-21 as he found it, this in contrast to the liberties he takes with the Bible's order elsewhere.<sup>98</sup> In 5.309 he does, nonetheless, reverse the sequence of 16:12, mentioning the presence of the ambushade (16:12ba) prior to Delilah's binding of Samson and warning him that the Philistines are upon him (16:12a). In addition to his application of the above three rewriting techniques, Josephus adapts and modifies the narrative of Jdg 16:1-21 in still other ways. On the stylistic level, he converts characters' direct address discourses into indirect in all but one instance (see nn. 15 and 84). The historian's modifications extend also, however, to the source's content. In Gaza, Samson "lodges at an inn" (5.304) rather than "going into a harlot" there (16:1). The Gazarite "chiefs" take initiatives against him in 5.304, whereas in 16:2 the populace as a whole does this. Delilah, "a woman in the valley of Sorek whom Samson "loves" (16:4) becomes "a harlot among the Philistines" with whom he "consorts" (5.306b). The Philistines leaders' offer to pay Delilah 1,100 silver pieces each (16:5) is generalized into a reference to their "large promises" to her (5.307a). Josephus gives his own distinctive content to Delilah's second discourse (compare 5.310b and 16:10), just as he replaces Samson's declaration about "no razor having come upon my head" and his being "a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb" (16:17) with the hero's claim "I nurse these locks, God having enjoined upon me not to cut them, for that my strength is measured in their growth and preservation" (5.312b). Delilah's "seeing" that Samson had "told her all his mind" (16:18aá) is replaced by the phrase "the secret learnt" in 5.313a, and it is Delilah herself, without any involvement by the "man/barber" summoned by her in 16:19, who shaves Samson's head (5.313a). In contrast to 16:19-20 there is moreover no indication in

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<sup>98</sup> On the question of Josephus' text of the Book of Judges as a whole, see, e.g., Harlé, *Juges*, 44 (he holds that Josephus used an LXX-L text of Judges as a supplement/corrective to his Hebrew text) and Nodet, *Les Antiquités juives II: Livres IV et V*, xiv (who maintains that Josephus employed a Hebrew text of Judges that itself has significant affinities with that preserved in the LXX L manuscripts).

5.313a that Samson is asleep during his haircut and then awakes from this.

Given the foregoing array of rewriting techniques applied by Josephus to the data of Jdges 16:1-21 what then is distinctive about his version of the two episodes related there? In the case of the Delilah story, Josephus retells its fourfold sequence of inquiry by Delilah, response by Samson, and resultant attempts to subdue the hero recounted with much verbal repetition in 16:6-20 in markedly streamlined fashion in 5.307b-313a, leaving readers to fill in many details for themselves.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, Josephus also fills various small-scale “gaps” posed by the biblical narrative: How was it that Samson ventured to go to Gaza, the city of Philistine enemies (compare 5.304a and 16:1)? What prompted Samson to forestall the Gazarites’ projected dawn assault upon him (compare 5.305 and 16:2-3)? What was the occupational and ethnic status of Samson’s nemesis Delilah (compare 5.306a and 16:4)? How did the Philistine lords know what Delilah needed to bind Samson (compare 5.309a and 16:8a), and what did he do once he thrown off his restraints in the face of the threatening Philistine onslaught (compare 5.310a and 16:9)? And finally, what prompted Samson to finally tell Delilah the truth about his strength after thrice deceiving her (compare 5.312a and 16:17)? In the same line, Josephus endeavors to enhance the biblical story’s literary quality, verisimilitude, didactic content and status of its hero in other respects. Thus, e.g., at the start of 5.304 he provides a smoother transition between what precedes and follows than does 16:1. Twice the historian interjects foreshadowings of the disastrous outcome of Samson’s dalliance with Delilah, first in 5.306a and then again 5.312b, coupling the first of these indications with an advance evaluation of the liaison that helps account for its turning out as it did. He eliminates the exorbitantly high reward money promised Delilah by the Philistines lords

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<sup>99</sup> The Book of Judges itself provides a noteworthy instance of such liberty on Josephus’ part. In his rendition of the book, the complex of events related in its closing chapters, Jdg 17-21 (the Levite’s concubine and the Danite migration) appear towards the beginning of his account of the Judges period (*Ant.* 5.120-317) in 5.136-178 where they serve to illustrate the statements about Israel’s defection and its consequences found in Jdg 2:6-3:6 (and paralleled in 5.132-135).

(compare 5.307a and 16:5). The Josephan Delilah, for her part, is not represented as asking Samson the all too direct question about how is he to be bound (as her biblical counterpart does three times [16:6,10,13]), just as the hero himself avoids spelling this out in his final response to her (compare 5.312b and 16:17b).

Likewise the portrayal of the story's two primary figures undergoes various retouchings at Josephus' hands. In introducing Delilah in 5.306b he supplies details about her person (calling her a harlot/courtesan among the Philistines") not cited in 16:4. In her subsequent attempts to pry into Samson's secret Delilah shows herself more subtle and psychologically astute than her biblical prototype, using wine, sexual favors and flattery in connection with her first inquiry (5.307; compare 16:6 where she launches into her questioning without any such preambles), and making appeal to her affection and relations with her (see 5.307,308, 310 and 43.5), negative commentary on Samson's involvement with what is "foreign" (5.306 and 43.5), allusion to his deception/tricking of Delilah (5.308,311,312 and 43.6), and the hero's drunkenness (5.310 and 43.6). On the other hand, Pseudo-Philo's rendering also differs from Josephus' in many respects. Specifically, Pseudo-Philo modifies and/or embellishes the episode of Samson's visit to Gaza in ways that set his presentation apart from that of both Jdg 16:1-3 and Josephus: the hero's (unexplained) "anger" at "Azotus" (see n. 14) as that which sets events in motion (43.2) the declaration-prayer attributed to him in the face of the inhabitants' encirclement (43.2), the embellishments concerning Samson's carrying off the city gates (43.3), and the attached allusion to his previous exploits (43.4). Also in the case of Jdg 16:4-21, Pseudo-Philo's rendition features elements unparalleled in Josephus (and generally the Bible as well), e.g., the setting of the episode in "Gerar" (43.5), Samson's "marriage" to Delilah (43.5), the long divine speech condemning his conduct and announcing its proximate and ultimate consequences (43.5), Delilah's attempting to ascertain Samson's secret on her own initiative rather than at the instance of the Philistine lords (43.6; compare 16:5 and 5.307a), her use of a "barber" to shave Samson (43.6 and LXX AL VL 16:19) instead of doing this herself (as in 5.313a), and the added detail about the Philistines' "beating" Samson (43.6). Josephus and Pseudo-Philo's versions stand then in a complex, ever-varying relationship of similarity and difference to each other and to



their biblical source with the former, however, hewing more closely than the latter to the Judges account.

Josephus' points of contact with the *ad hoc* rabbinic-midrashic comments on Jdg 16:1-21, for their part, are quite minimal. Thus, while both go beyond the Bible itself in making explicit mention of the sexual intercourse between Samson and Delilah (see nn. 78 and 79), they differ on the question of Samson's taking to drink, Josephus averring that he did, *Num. Rab.* 10.5 seeming to exclude this (see n. 41). Similarly, the historian has no counterpart to the Rabbis' observations about the extraordinary dimensions of the Gaza gates (see n. 21) or the name "Delilah" (see n. 34), just as he does not invoke the "measure for measure" principle regarding Samson's being blinded and confined at Gaza as they do in their reflections on Jdg 16:21 (see nn. 95,96).

Jdg 16:1-21 with its account of a hero's strength, erotic involvements, test of wits with a woman, and eventual defeat therein, tells a story of universal interest. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Josephus in his attempt to rewrite the Jewish Bible in a way that would prove appealing to non-Jewish readers makes extensive use of the story, even while, as we have seen, he also brings to bear a variety of rewriting techniques on its content that are designed to improve and enhance the Bible's own telling.