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## **‘Let my Soul Die with the Philistines’ (Judges 16.30)\***

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### **Abstract**

Samson stands between the columns of the Temple of Dagon. Samson addresses God and asks for help. Samson grips the pillars of temple powerfully, then he pulls down the temple on himself and on all the Philistines, and the narrator adds proudly: ‘So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life’ (Judg. 16:30). Samson’s death is accompanied by a heroic act. Samson is not the only biblical hero who is led to choose death. When one compares the deeds of Abimelech, Ahitophel, Zimri and Saul who took their own lives, and their last moments, one finds that Samson’s death is unique.

Samson is not the only biblical figure who takes his own life. However, the circumstances of his death are exceptional. The biblical author does not always share the motives for heroes’ suicides with the reader, yet these can be inferred from the state of affairs and from the life-story of these figures. What is unique about the story of Samson stands out in the comparison of his death to that of other biblical figures who take their own lives. Abimelech, Saul, Ahithophel, and Zimri all face situations that

\* Unless otherwise stated, biblical translations in this article follow the KJV.

they are willing to avoid at any price, even the price of death. They all decide to take their own lives because they feel they have no other choice. Samson, in contrast, decides to kill himself after the fact, after his eyes are put out, an event after which he finds no reason to continue living. He is the only figure who plans the way in which he will die, and he even asks God to give him the strength he needs in order to accomplish his plan. Samson's death is also unique in that he does not die alone; through his actions he takes the lives of many Philistine enemies as well.

The biblical author creates a special atmosphere that foreshadows Samson's death. The lords of the Philistines mass together in the Temple of Dagon (Judg. 16.27), and on the roof of the building alone there are three thousand men and women.<sup>1</sup> It appears to the reader that the entire city of Gaza has emptied itself of its inhabitants, and that all have gathered in the central temple to sacrifice to their gods. The Philistines exult and rejoice at Samson's distress. They attribute success in capturing him to their god: 'Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand' (16.23). The incorporation of the god Dagon into the victory over Samson gives the event a religious dimension. Samson becomes not only a national enemy in the Philistines' struggle against the tribes of Israel, but also the enemy of the god Dagon, in his war against the God of Israel, for Samson is his representative.

The Philistines want to celebrate, and they call Samson to 'make sport' before them.<sup>2</sup> Samson is brought out to make the Philistines happy because of his handicap and his weakness. The fettered Samson (16.21) looks like a captured wild beast as he is brought before the god Dagon. Despite his weakness, Samson fulfills the expectations of those assembled. The physical force latent in him contrasts with his psychological state, and he indeed makes sport before them.

In his agony, Samson addresses God and asks for strength so that he can take revenge against the Philistines (16.28). This is not the first time

1. Y. Zakovitch, *The Life of Samson (Judges 13–16)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982 [Hebrew]), pp. 198–99. Rubens portrays the Temple of Dagon as crowded with people; see M. Jaffé, 'Samson Destroying the Temple of Dagon: A Rediscovered Rubens', *Apollo* 139 (1993), pp. 377–82. The Septuagint reads 'Seven hundred men on the roof'. Philo further increases the number to forty thousand men on the roof, in order to intensify Samson's strength; see Philo, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (ed. M.R. James; New York, 1971), p. 199; L.H. Feldman, 'Josephus' Version of Samson', *JSJ* 19 (1998), pp. 171–214 (187).

2. This function of Samson's, to amuse those assembled, recalls Ahasuerus, who summoned Vashti to show off her beauty (Esth. 1.11). See P. Galpaz-Feller, *Samson: The Hero and the Man* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 221.

that Samson addresses God and asks for help. Earlier, after slaying the Philistines at Ramath-lehi, Samson addresses God (15.18). Although he has killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, he is thirsty and cannot help himself. Samson is in danger of death, and God mercifully splits a hollow place, from which water flows.<sup>3</sup>

Samson now asks God for help a second time. His first request of God (15.18) has enabled him to stay alive, but his second request shall bring death upon him. This time he turns to God with the knowledge of his previous experience; he knows God's redemptive power. In both appeals, the nature of the request is similar: Samson makes a request for himself and not for his people. This time he asks for strength to take personal revenge against the Philistines, and this is not his first act of revenge against them. Earlier, after he has chosen the woman from Timnath as his wife, the narrator reports: 'it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines' (14.4).<sup>4</sup> Samson provokes the Philistines, and the urge for revenge motivates his deeds. After the woman from Timnath is given to be his companion, he says: 'Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure' (15.3).

Samson justifies his revenge against the Philistines and declares that the act of revenge will, as it were, clear him, purify him. He assumes the right to take revenge and proclaims that this one act of revenge is necessary. However, after the woman from Timnath and her father are burned, Samson again decides to take revenge, and he declares: 'yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease' (15.7). Samson is certain that after this act of revenge, he will no longer feel the urge to take revenge against the Philistines; he will overcome his urge. However, when Samson stands in the Temple of Dagon, in the Philistine pagan center, a powerful desire arises within him and he feels compelled to take revenge a third time. This time, he does not justify himself. He announces his desire to pay the Philistines back for putting out his eyes. Now the Philistines deserve a huge act of revenge. However, his power, his physical situation, and his psychological state do not permit him to accomplish such revenge. Therefore, Samson asks God to help him take revenge

3. God similarly showed mercy to Hagar as an individual and to the Israelites collectively (Exod. 17.6; Num. 20.8; Ps. 78.15 and elsewhere).

4. The Hebrew noun used here, *toanah*, comes from the root *A-N-H*, which in the pual construction means "to make something appear or happen" (Exod. 21.13). In the hithpael construction it means "to seek an occasion to do harm" (2 Kgs 5.7). See Y. Amit, *Judges: Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Mikra Leyisra'el, 1999 [Hebrew]), p. 234.

against his enemies, and he declares that he will be content with the revenge coming to the enemy for putting out one of his eyes, and not the revenge they truly deserve for putting out both of them.<sup>5</sup> That is to say, he states that this time, from the start, his revenge will be limited and moderate, revenge for the loss of one of the two eyes that have been put out.

Samson implores God neither aggressively nor imperatively, asking him to strengthen him just one more time. The reader remains in doubt, because every time Samson wishes to take revenge against the Philistines, he declares that this will be the only time. We find, as the story continues, that indeed this time he will keep his word—this shall be his final revenge. Hitherto, his acts of vengeance against the Philistines had been spontaneous; now, however, he plans his revenge and asks for God's help. Samson asks for strength, but he does not reveal his plan for revenge. He does not divulge his secret. The biblical author reveals part of it: Samson's request of the Lord and its purpose—explicit revenge against the Philistines. However, he conceals the rest: the way in which Samson will carry out the revenge.

Because of his blindness, Samson needs a boy to lead him to the columns of the temple. Samson grasps the columns powerfully. The way he leans on them recalls the way he had gripped the gates of the city of Gaza. There his grip enabled him to uproot the gates of the city, including the doorposts, and carry them away. Now Samson has to grasp the columns of the temple with all his might, so that he will not stumble because of his weakness. Because the Philistines have abused him, Samson, who has followed his eyes throughout his life, is blinded. He wishes to die, and in his death, to take revenge against the Philistines.<sup>6</sup>

The author does not state God's reaction to Samson's request, yet the way in which Samson dies clearly indicates that God has answered his prayers. With the strength he has been given, he brings down the temple upon himself and upon the many Philistines present. The author proudly reports: 'the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life' (Judg. 16.30). Although Samson takes his own life due to personal motives, the author depicts him as a man who is willing to

5. Samson's words recall those of David in the Song of Songs: 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes' (4.9). For one of the beloved's eyes is sufficient to ravish his heart. In both cases, a single eye appears in place of two eyes. The depiction of love in the Song of Songs is the opposite of the depiction of revenge in the present story. In the Song of Songs, love is great. Here, revenge is severe. On this topic, see Zakovitch, *The Life of Samson*, p. 204.

6. Galpaz-Feller, *Samson: The Hero and the Man*, pp. 221-23.

sacrifice his own life for a greater cause: the death of many Philistine enemies.

Samson is not the only biblical hero whose course of life leads him to choose death. The Bible distinguishes between those who reach moments of crisis and merely express their wish to die and those who actually take their own lives and kill themselves. Moses (Num. 11.14-15), Elijah (1 Kgs 19.14), Jonah (Jon. 4.8-9), and Job (Job 7.15-16) express their desire to die. Samson does not only express the will to die; he acts upon it and only turns to God in search of the strength he needs to take revenge.

Abimelech, Gideon's son, rules the Israelites for three years (Judg. 9.22). He rises to power through an act of murder and continues to act violently throughout his reign. The period of his rule is riddled with inner conflicts and battles. He wages a cruel pointless war in the course of which he destroys Shechem and sows it with salt. He continues the war against the fortified tower of Shechem. Abimelech intends to burn the tower, where the people have gathered, with everyone in it. While he is standing beneath the tower, a woman throws a millstone at his head and crushes his skull.

When Abimelech sees that his death is imminent, he orders his arms bearer: 'Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died' (Judg. 9.54). The author emphasizes the urgency in Abimelech's tone: he makes his decision instantly and requests that his arms bearer take his life at once. Abimelech would rather die with honor than die a contemptible death: 'that men say not...a woman slew him'. Not only does a woman slay Abimelech, but also the weapon, the millstone, is a contemptible tool, which women use for grinding grain (Exod. 11.5; Isa. 47.2; Job 31.10, and elsewhere).<sup>7</sup> The millstone, usually used for grinding flour to make bread, to give life, serves as a murder weapon this time, to take life. Abimelech refuses to die at a woman's hands by a woman's tool and orders his lad to draw his sword and take his life.

7. H. Schwegler, 'Aufstieg und Fall eines Gewaltmenschen—Abimelech (Richter 9)', *Männer weinen heimlich* (1993), pp. 46-56; J.G. Janzen, 'A Certain Woman in the Rhetoric of Judges 9', *JSOT* 38 (1987), pp. 33-37; T.A. Boogaart, 'Stone for Stone: Retribution in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem', *JSOT* 32 (1985), pp. 45-56. On the literary structure of the chapter, see J.P. Fokkelman, 'Structural Remarks on Judges 9 and 19', in M. Fishbane and E. Tov (eds.), *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 33-45.

The terrible shame of falling at the hand of a woman or having victory credited to a woman appears in the story of Deborah as well: 'notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman' (Judg. 4.9). However, Abimelech's wish is not fulfilled: his death is to be remembered as being brought on by a woman, in addition to being a result of carelessness in battle. Joab, David's military chief, tries to teach the lesson of Abimelech's death: 'Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? Why went ye nigh the wall?' (2 Sam. 11.21).

Abimelech's lad obeys his master's command without hesitation, unlike King Saul's arms' bearer (1 Sam. 31.4).<sup>8</sup> Abimelech dies by stoning, and there is no description of his burial.<sup>9</sup> Samson, too, dies of stoning, and the death of both is a result of the actions of a woman.

King Saul also wishes to die. The Bible presents three different versions of Saul's death. The first time, the narrator reports the death of Saul and his sons on Mt Gilboa (1 Sam. 31.6). The second account is presented from the point of view of the Amalekite boy, who reports Saul's death (2 Sam. 1.4-10). The third time it is told from the point of view of the author of Chronicles (1 Chron. 10.1-6). Additionally, in a passing remark, David mentions the Amalekite's pleasure as he brings them news of Saul's death (2 Sam. 4.10).

There has been considerable scholarship on the similarities and differences among the various versions of the death of Saul.<sup>10</sup> The central issue

8. Edelman suggests the difference may derive from the fact that Saul was anointed by God; see D.V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSup, 121; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 284-85.

9. Abimelech, who killed his brother on a stone, was killed by a stone; on this see Boogaart, 'Stone for Stone', p. 51.

10. On the different versions regarding the death of Saul, see C.T. Begg, 'The Death of King Saul According to Josephus', *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 16.2 (1999), pp. 485-505; M. Malul, 'Was David Involved in the Death of Saul on the Gilboa Mountain?', *RB* 103 (1996), pp. 517-45; C.Y.S. Ho, 'Conjectures and Refutations: Is 1 Samuel XXXI 1-13 Really the Source of 1 Chronicles X 1-12?', *VT* 45 (1995), pp. 82-106; W. Zwickel, '1 Sam 31,12f. und der Quadratbau auf dem Flughafengelände bei Amman', *ZAW* 105.2 (1993), pp. 165-74; S. Zalewski, 'The Purpose of the Story of the Death of Saul in 1 Chronicles X', *VT* 39 (1989), pp. 449-67; Y. Amit, 'Three Variations on the Death of Saul: Studies in the Fashioning of the World, in Reliability and in the Tendentiousness of Biblical Narrative', *Beit Mikra* 30 (1985), pp. 92-102 (Hebrew); A. Frisch, '"For I feared the people, and I yielded to them" (1 Sam 15, 24): Is Saul's Guilt Attenuated or Intensified?', *ZAW* 108 (1996), pp. 98-104; *idem*, '"The Glory of Israel does not deceive

of the discussion concerns the way the king's death is described. According to the account in 1 Samuel, Saul commits suicide by falling on his sword. However, the account in 2 Samuel states that the Amalekite lad kills him. In 1 Samuel, Saul asks his arms bearer to kill him, but the arms bearer refuses, whereas in 2 Samuel, Saul asks the Amalekite to kill him, and he agrees.

However, when closely examining the various accounts, we find that the stories are not contradictory but rather complementary. It is customarily assumed that Saul asks his armor bearer to stab him, and after he refuses, Saul falls on his sword. Severely wounded and close to death, Saul then addresses the Amalekite, who happens to pass by, asking him to dispatch him. The Hebrew verb, *motet* ('to slay'), which is used by the Amalekite (2 Sam. 1.9-10, 16), means 'to dispatch, finish off', and it also appears in the description of the killing of Goliath. First David 'kills' Goliath with the stone (*vayemitehu*, 1 Sam. 17.50), and then he 'dispatches' him (*vayemotetehu*, 1 Sam. 17.51) with his sword. The Amalekite accedes to Saul's request and dispatches him.

All the versions mention Saul's decision to take his own life, for fear of falling into the hands of the Philistines. The versions in 1 Samuel and 1 Chronicles state that as the archers are quickly approaching Saul, 'he was sore wounded' (1 Sam. 31.3; 1 Chron. 10.3). The Hebrew verb used, *vayahel*, which appears to explain Saul's feelings, has been interpreted in several ways.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the RSV translation cited here, it can be taken to mean fear, as used in Psalms: 'My heart is sore pained (*yahil*) within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me' (Ps. 55.4-5).

Clearly, Saul is afraid to fall into the hands of the Philistines. Alternatively, taking the verb to be derived from *halah*, 'to be wounded', as it is rendered in the Septuagint, and as in 1 Kgs 22.34, it emphasizes the urgency of the wounded Saul's request. Death is preferable in his eyes to the cruel treatment he expects at the hands of the Philistines. He asks his arms bearer to kill him. However, the arms bearer is frightened and refuses the king's request. Therefore, Saul decides to fall on his sword. When it appears to the armor bearer that his master is dead, he kills

or change his mind": The Reliability of Narrator and Speakers in Biblical Narrative', *Prooftexts* 12.3 (1992), pp. 201-12.

11. S. Bar-Efrat, *I Samuel: Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Mikra Leyisra'el, 1996 [Hebrew]), p. 370.

himself (1 Sam. 31.5).<sup>12</sup> The version that appears in 2 Samuel describes Saul leaning on his sword in his last moments of life, when the Philistines are about to reach him. At that moment Saul asks the Amalekite lad, who happens to pass by the place, to dispatch him because he does not wish to fall into the hands of the Philistines. Each in its own way, the different versions all emphasize that Saul is liable to fall into the Philistines' hands imminently: 'and the archers hit him' (1 Sam. 31.3), 'the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him' (2 Sam. 1.6).<sup>13</sup>

Among the characters that take their own life, Saul is the only one who knows for certain that he is destined to die in battle. Samuel reveals his destiny to him at the time of his visit to the witch of En-dor (1 Sam. 28.19). Saul only seeks to hasten his already nearing death. Saul, like Samson, had been destined to rescue Israel from the Philistines. Saul is afraid that the heathens will come and abuse, mock, and ridicule him (1 Sam. 31.4). The Philistines abuse Samson: they pierce his eyes, bind him with brass fetters, he becomes the grinder in the prison, and he is even forced to entertain them. Saul dies when God leaves him, whereas Samson dies when God returns to be with him.<sup>14</sup> Following his death, Saul is buried honorably in the tomb of his father Kish (1 Sam. 31.12-13; 2 Sam. 21.12-15).

The counselor, Ahithophel, also takes his own life: he hangs himself (2 Sam. 17.23). The biblical author does not explicitly state why Ahithophel kills himself, but it seems that he prefers death to a confrontation with David. His desire to defend his personal honor clearly emerges from the story. Absalom rebels against his father. King David departs from Jerusalem but leaves spies behind: Ahimaaz and Jonathan, the sons of the priests, and his friend and advisor, Hushai. David sends Hushai to thwart

12. On the role of secondary characters to shed light on principal protagonists, see U. Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik; Ramat-Gan: Hotsa'at Universitat Bar-Ilan, 1997 [Hebrew]), pp. 317-24.

13. Scholars have various views and estimations of Saul's deed. See A. Carmi, 'Live Like a King: Die Like a King', in A. Carmi (ed.), *Euthanasia* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1984), pp. 3-28; D.M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of Biblical Story* (JSOTSup, 14; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), p. 111; R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* (Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History, 2; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 224.

14. S.S. Brooks, 'Saul and Samson Narrative', *JSOT* 71 (1976), pp. 19-25. For an analysis of the tragic elements in the character of Saul compared to those of Isaac and Samson, see J.C. Exum and J.W. Whedbee, 'Isaac, Samson, and Saul: Reflections on the Comic and Tragic Visions', *Semeia* 32 (1985), pp. 5-40 (23).

the rebellion planned by Absalom with the help of Ahithophel's advice. Hushai tries to persuade Absalom that Ahithophel's advice is bad this time. Hushai does not attack Ahithophel's status or function. Rather, he tells Absalom that this one time, his advice is poor. Hushai offers different advice, which delays the action against David.<sup>15</sup> Hushai knows that Ahithophel's advice is good, but he offers contrary advice, the purpose of which is to impress Absalom, and at the same time, to allow David to organize and prepare to resist Absalom's attack. The reader is told: 'the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom' (2 Sam. 17.14).

Ahithophel, the wise counselor, understands that Absalom will probably fail in his rebellion. He prefers to kill himself rather than appear in public as a rebel against David's kingdom. Ahithophel understands that the rebellion will soon be quashed and that his disgrace will be revealed, when it is learned that he had been a turncoat and supported Absalom's bid for power. To prevent public humiliation, Ahithophel decides to make arrangements for his household and to prepare a will. In a series of verbs, the biblical author emphasizes the planning of the deed: 'he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father' (2 Sam. 17.23).<sup>16</sup> As opposed to Samson, Ahithophel knows his life is in danger and so he has no choice other than to try and provide for his family; he does not plan his death but rather plans around his death. Samson, on the other hand, plans the actual form of his death.

Zimri, the captain of half the chariots, takes his own life by fire. Zimri's death follows the siege laid by his opponents on his city of Tirzah. Zimri's plight results from the murder he carries out on Elah the son of Asa, the king of Israel, and the extermination of his entire household, in hopes of seizing the monarchy. Indeed, he succeeds in gaining rule over Israel, but he does not enjoy public favor. The people, who are encamped at

15. P.A.H. de Boer, 'The Counsellor', in M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (eds.), *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (VTSup, 3; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955), pp. 42-71.

16. A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC, 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 215-16. Matthew's description of Judah's suicide (Mt. 27.5; cf. Acts 1.18) seems influenced by the story of the death of Ahithophel, see P.K. McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (AB, 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), p. 389.

Gibbethon, crown Omri, the general of the Army, and they besiege Tirzah with the intention of taking power. When Zimri sees that his capital is besieged and his opponents are closing in on him, he enters the palace and burns it around himself (1 Kgs 16.18).<sup>17</sup> Zimri realizes that his hopes for ruling are dashed. His city is captured, and within a short time he will probably fall into his opponents' hands. Zimri decides to take his own life by fire. Burning the palace with himself in it signifies that he chooses death rather than seeing his enemy, Omri, rule over all of Israel. Zimri chooses a death with overtones of revenge similar to those in the death of Samson. Zimri sets fire to his palace with himself inside it, like Samson who collapses the Temple of Dagon while he is inside it.

The deaths of the figures discussed above include the four types of death that the *Beit Din* (The Rabbinical Court) can inflict (*Sanhedrin* 49b): stoning—Abimelech and Samson; burning—Zimri; strangling—Ahithophel; and sword—Saul.

The four figures who take their own life hold high social positions and all act during a time of war against internal or external enemies. They all attempt to redeem their honor in the face of humiliation. Saul and Samson are weary of being tormented by the Philistines. In the deaths of both Samson and Abimelech a woman is involved. Zimri and Samson each avenge their enemies. Samson, Saul, and Ahithophel are buried in the tombs of their ancestors.

Yet despite these similarities, between Samson and the other figures, the way in which Samson dies is unique: Saul and Abimelech seek the help of their lads, whereas Samson turns to God. Samson asks God to give him strength in order to avenge the Philistines and only later in the story does it become apparent that his act of revenge shall lead to his own death. The other figures sense that their end is near: Saul encounters a prophecy regarding his death, Abimelech is injured and wishes to induce his death, Ahithophel understands that he shall be sentenced to death following his treachery, and Zimri knows he is to die at the hands of his opponents. Only Samson truly chooses to die and he is the only figure who carefully plans the deed: he first asks the boy to lead him to the

17. S.J. DeVries, *I Kings* (WBC, 12; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), pp. 198-200; J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1970), pp. 364-65. Sinshar-ishkun, the last Assyrian king, was said to have thrown himself into the fire of his burning palace when seeing that Nineveh was about to fall to the barbarians, see M. Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 10; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 413-14.

supporting columns of the temple. He then turns to God for assistance, and only then does he take his own life. The other figures kill only themselves, while Samson, in his death, takes the lives of thousands of his enemies as well.

Samson's plea before God and his killing many of the enemy add a theological aspect to his death. The biblical author emphasizes that only due to the interference of God is Samson capable of destroying the temple and taking the lives of his enemies along with him. Samson's last act of revenge upon the Philistines emerges from prayer. This description adds to the theological atmosphere surrounding the story and helps to glorify the Lord and his followers in their victory over the god Dagon and his worshipers.<sup>18</sup> In order to categorize Samson's complex character as a Judge of Israel, the author intentionally redirects the motive for Samson's death from the personal realm towards the national realm. As a result, Samson's deed is conceived as an act of heroism, sacrifice, and redemption.

*Summary Table*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Enemy</i>	<i>Requests Help From</i>	<i>Manner of Death</i>
Abimelech	King	People of Migdal	Arms bearer	Stoning
Ahithophel	Counselor	David and his supporters	—	Strangulation
Zimri	Captain of half the chariots	Those besieging Tirzah	—	Burning
Saul	King	Philistines	Arms bearer	Sword
Samson	Judge	Philistines	God	Stoning (collapsing a house on top of him)

18. Fuchs stresses that death of Samson realizes some important theological concepts: 'Only now does he leave the ranks of the uncircumcised, the Philistines; only now is he truly separated, a Nazirite. The vow is finally taken, but to what end? Not the life and seed promised the circumcised ones, but death, death alongside the uncircumcised' (E. Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* [JSOTSup, 310; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], p. 144).