

Pnina Galpaz-Feller. *Samson: The Hero and the Man: The Story of Samson (Judges 13-16)*. Bible in History, no. 7. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006. Pp. 334. ISBN-10: 082048041X. ISBN-13: 978-0820480411. \$63.95 USD, paper.

1. Pnina Galpaz-Feller is lecturer in Bible and the Ancient Near East at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. With this book, she has written an interesting study on the biblical figure of Samson. She illuminates the themes touched upon in the biblical story with numerous examples of similar stories from the Ancient Near East and practices in different cultures (i.e., India, African tribes, etc.). Furthermore, she explains Samson's behaviour with the help of modern psychological insights.
2. The book does not cover all parts of Jdg 13-16 equally. Galpaz-Feller concentrates on "moral, familial, and personal issues, including family and social relations, love and betrayal, life and death—issues with which man has wrestled since the beginning of time" (p. 2). She does not focus on theological questions, although she admits that the biblical author intended to transmit a theological message. In a way, this is characteristic for this study: Galpaz-Feller pays a lot of attention to matters the biblical text barely mentions (or sometimes not at all), whereas the main message of the text sometimes is neglected.
3. Galpaz-Feller states in the introduction that this study does not relate to the literary sources that comprise the story. No questions are asked about the history of the text, its date or place of origin or the position of the story of Samson within the book of Judges. This also means that no attention whatsoever is paid to textual criticism.
4. The different themes that play a role in Samson's marriages and other relationships with women receive much attention: the way in which a bride is chosen according to other biblical stories, legal and economic restrictions, age of marriage, bride price and dowry, the wedding ceremony, marital relations, harlots, unrequited love, etc. Typically, a chapter starts with an extensive description of customs in biblical stories, in the Ancient Near East or in other cultures, after which follows a description of Samson's activities. The former description is not always used to explain Samson's story.
5. Despite these somewhat critical observations, the present study offers some surprising and interesting eye-openers. Themes from the Samson-narratives are compared with other biblical and extra-biblical stories in a surprising way. In chapter 1 for example, the birth of Samson is not compared to other stories of birth announcements to barren women, but to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, focusing on the marital relationship of Manoah and his wife. Consequently she uses this to explain the behaviour of Samson. Using the psychological views of C. G. Jung, she states that the relationship of Manoah and his wife is the model into which the boy Samson will be born and raised, which explains why he will never be able to enter into an adult relationship or be satisfied with his life as it is. Throughout the book, this point returns frequently. Another interesting observation concerns Samson's supposed Nazirite state, of which she notes that often people expect certain behaviour of Samson, which he fails to live up to. Galpaz-Feller points out that those expectations do not correspond to biblical descriptions of Nazirism, but originate in the separation between body and spirit in Greek thinking and Christian ascetic ideals for a 'man of God'.

6. Although this study has nothing to offer concerning textual criticism, it offers a tremendous amount of information to those interested in comparing Samson's story to other biblical stories, to biblical or extra-biblical customs or in Samson as a man struggling to find love and fulfilment of life.

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