



Samson's Suicide: Psychopathology (Grossman) vs. Heroism (Jabotinsky)

Netta Shoenfeld¹ and Rael D. Strous MD^{1,2}

¹Beer Yaakov Mental Health Center, Beer Yaakov, and ²Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel

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Abstract

The biblical story of Samson may be understood at various levels and from different perspectives. Since the story of Samson in the Bible is sketchily drawn, the interpretations of the narrative are numerous. One version, according to David Grossman, a contemporary writer and liberal Israeli political activist, regards Samson critically, viewing him as a tormented individual who opts to end his life in order to end his suffering. Another version is that of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a twentieth century author and nationalistic Jewish political activist, who regards Samson as a heroic figure exemplifying the ultimate Jewish hero who killed himself to help his people. While suicide is considered a tragic event, viewed as the outcome of an unstable state of mind from a psychopathological point of view, and a controversial issue in Judaism (as in other religions), there is value in examining how each of these authors explains the act. Since the personal and political opinions of the authors influenced their interpretations, the discussion will briefly expound on their biographies. A comparison between their two versions of the narrative will be made. A word of caution is introduced regarding the merits and demerits of artistic and creative analysis of the biblical narrative.

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"Suicide," as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary [1], is "an act of taking one's own life, self-murder." It is often a desperate act and may reflect a continuum of behavior ranging from suicidal ideation and self-harm to death by one's own hand. Suicidal behavior may include any deliberate action with potentially life-threatening consequences, such as taking a drug overdose or deliberately crashing a car. Suicide is invariably distressing to those hearing of it; and for those close to the individual the shock and pain are overwhelming since it challenges the very essence of one's existence and has ramifications for the bereaved far beyond normal grief. As such, suicide features prominently in the arts and literature, often explored, sometimes romanticized, but always feared. Suicide is strictly prohibited by most religions, including Judaism, yet the Talmud mentions a few suicide cases and does not condemn them (such as the priests and Levites who jumped to their deaths in the Temple and the 400 captured children who drowned themselves to avoid incest).

In his article on suicide in the Bible, Shemesh considers there to be six prominent suicides [2]. These include Abimelech son of Gideon (Judges, 9:54), Samson (Judges, 16:25-31), Saul

(Samuel 1, 31:3-4), Saul's assistant (Samuel 1, 31:5), Achitophel (Samuel 2, 17:23), and Zimri (Kings 1, 16:18-19). Arguably, the most prominent of these and the most well known is that of "the hero" Samson.

While it is difficult to know precisely what Samson's true motives were for his suicide, in all likelihood he decided to end his life because he could not find a better reason to continue living, or did not consider this life more important than his objective at the time. Samson's death in the Bible is unique in that he did not die alone; through his actions he ended the lives of many Philistine enemies alongside his own. Menninger [3] claims that taking one's life is not just a reaction to difficult life conditions, but rather to the situation that is enforced on the individual committing suicide. Thus, in order to understand suicide, inner motives require exploration. Menninger states three conditions that usually bring an individual to commit suicide: the will to kill, the will to be killed, and the will to die. The will to kill is declared when Samson asks for revenge against the Philistines. Simultaneously he expresses the wish to be killed, by his willingness to surrender himself to the Philistines. And eventually, the will to die is expressed in his well-known exhortation: "Let me die with the Philistines" (Judges 16:30). So why did Samson kill himself? Since a psychiatric examination of Samson is not possible, for clinical and even ethical reasons it is impossible to state with any certainty; however, inferences, notwithstanding their limitations, have been made. Several hypotheses have been proposed including physical distress due to his blindness, mental distress due to his heartbreak over Delilah, and national pride.

While the answer to the question remains ultimately unknown, two prominent thinkers and writers, David Grossman and Ze'ev Jabotinsky, have proposed compelling analyses, albeit very different, based on examination of text and contextual analysis. The first is explicated in David Grossman's 2005 book *Lion's Honey: The Myth of Samson* [4], the second in Ze'ev Jabotinsky's 1926 book *Samson* [5]. We will present a brief background and then by means of comparison explore the two approaches to Samson's life and death.

Samson according to the Bible

The period described in the Book of Judges is one of recurrent sinning by the people of Israel against God, with God deliver-

ing them into the hands of the Philistines. The people of Israel pray for mercy and redemption, and God sends them a savior, Samson. Samson was born to Manoah and Z'ipporah from the tribe of Dan. They lived in Zorah, located in the lowland of Judah, a buffer zone between Israel and Philistia. According to Perry [6], Samson is "the story of a man who functions with a national agenda behind his back, unknowingly, while he himself is busy with other matters, until the day he dies. He is a judge who never judged a savior that did not know he had been one and never cared about saving anyone."

With the description of Samson's life, it has been suggested that he had a dominant mother and an ineffectual father. From a psychodynamic perspective, it may be proposed that such a background leads to an entrenchment of infantile narcissism underlying omnipotent fantasies leading to discounting of reality. When narcissistic Samson realizes the truth about the world and his own vulnerability, he becomes prone to later suicide.

David Grossman, a popular writer and activist, argues that Samson killed himself in a selfish act, in an attempt to sever himself from the world he had never felt he belonged to. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the nationalistic leader, argued that, as his final act, Samson chose to give his own life for the better of his people, while killing their worst enemies, the Philistines. His death was a final heroic act, the culmination of a heroic life. An analysis of each viewpoint is required to do the subject justice.

Lion's Honey: The Myth of Samson, David Grossman 2005

David Grossman, born in Jerusalem in 1954, is an Israeli novelist, journalist and children's storywriter, who has examined in some of his works Jewish-Palestinian relations in the "territories." Grossman received the Israel Prize in 2004 for his special contribution to society and the State of Israel. Politically a liberal, Grossman resigned in 1988 from his radio post to protest journalistic restrictions. In the same year, Grossman received the Har Zion Prize in recognition of his efforts to enhance peace and understanding between Arabs and Jews. In 2001 he was awarded the Sappir Prize for Literature. More recently he experienced personal tragedy when his son, Uri, fell in the Second Lebanon War.

Grossman's interpretation of Samson is true to his own beliefs. The constant quarrels with the Philistines only brought Samson's imminent death closer. Grossman views Samson as a tragic figure who lived a tragic life and found his peace in death. According to Grossman, Samson's mother's greatest betrayal was not of her husband but rather of her only son, when she contemplates the death of her unborn child following the prophecy that the child will be a Nazirite, i.e., consecrated to God, "to the day of his death." Samuel's mother promised to dedicate him to God, saying, "There shall no razor come upon his head" (I Samuel i. 11). Perhaps Samson's mother distances herself because she feels that the child growing inside her is a stranger, more a child of God. She replaces unknown feelings of fear, disappointment and sorrow with distancing herself from her unborn child. Grossman proposes that a child who has been eulogized by his mother



prior to his birth will forever be somewhat of a stranger and awkward in his relationships. He will always lack the gift for natural touch and will never be "like any other man" (Judges 16:17). Is there a latent wish that she will cut off his hair and make him "like any other man"? Grossman points out that Manoah also had his share of estrangement. Instead of referring to his child as "my son," which would be the appropriate reaction from a father, or any other reference that would indicate joy or excitement, Manoah states: "the child that shall be born." Thus, both Samson's parents felt that the son they were about to have was to be different, and they chose, perhaps as a form of defense, to distance themselves from him.

Repetition compulsion and Grossman's Samson

Early trauma, including estrangement by his parents as Samson experienced according to Grossman, can lead to a syndrome called "repetition compulsion" [7]. Gazely [8] claims that the cliché of being in a healthy love relationship is possible only if one loves oneself is true. But in order to love oneself, one has to be truly loved and cherished first by one's parents. Whenever a child feels abandonment from one or both parents he or she internalizes the hurt, resulting in a feeling of not being worthy of love. It is a feeling of shame. Later, the child might realize on a conscious level that he or she is lovable and eventually desires real love. Consciously love is sought after, but these individuals seek people who are incapable of loving.

Repetition compulsion is the compulsive need to repeat a destructive interpersonal action, but without the ability to learn from the pain or the damage deriving from the action. Kutz [9] notes that the roots of the phenomenon lie in psychoanalytical theory, more specifically object relations. Freud maintained that emotions that may not be remembered or expressed will fulfill themselves in actions. Thus, the neurotic individual becomes obliged to repeat the suppressed material in the present, in-

stead of remembering it as something relevant to the past. The repetition can take the form of dreams, hallucinations and acts. Naturally, the repetition does not solve the problem it was “designed” to solve and other problems are created. These emotions, which are repressed because they are too painful to remember, unrecognizable or forbidden, reflect a relationship with primary caregivers.

The “symbolic” solution cannot resolve the actual conflict, so it repeats with futile and frustrating results that prevent success. Kutz [9] explains that repetition compulsion can occur when there is an incompatibility between basic emotions and cognitive sets. In a normal healthy upbringing, positive emotions are linked to kinship, and painful emotions are linked to estrangement and rejection. The child learns to attract the benefactor and exclude the harmful. This is called “basic trust.” However, faltering parents create conditioning processes in which positive emotions and needs are linked to negative behaviors, such as rejection. The basic need to acquire love and trust is then saturated with the wish to be rejected and humiliated. The thrill in love is experienced only when mixed with lack of trust and doubts.

Relevant to Samson, Gazely [8] states that when a child feels abandoned by one or both parents, he understands that he is unworthy of love. On reaching maturity, he searches for people to love who are incapable of loving him back. Consequently, he finds true love unsatisfying and yearns for people to treat him badly, which justifies his feeling unlovable. These individuals become addicted to abusive relationships and feel that they cannot live without them. The pathology in repetition compulsion is reflected in the lack of understanding that using the same unsuccessful way of solving a problem is harmful. Instead of looking at the problem in a different way and discovering a new way to respond, the person reattempts the same approach, which results in repeated failure and frustration.

Kutz [9] proposes that Samson’s repetition compulsion behavior manifested in repeatable relationships with women who betray his love and trust. The betrayal is always accompanied by narcissistic injury, followed by enormous rage directed at the “world,” but eventually revolving around himself. Evidence of this behavior may be noted in the three stages of Samson’s life, with examples from the three “relationships” he had with women and reflected as well in his conflicts with the Philistines. More specifically, these refer first to the betrayal by his wife from Timnath, who, upon being tortured, revealed an answer to a riddle Samson put to the Philistines. The second betrayal was after a meeting with the harlot in Gaza. The harlot would obviously not hesitate to turn him over to the Philistines. Samson humiliates the Philistines – by carrying the portal of the city wall on his shoulders – after being betrayed by a woman who gave herself to him just moments before. A further dramatic example of Samson’s potential “need” to feel betrayed was his arrest by the tribe of Judah, who, out of fear, turned Samson over to the Philistines. He willingly acquiesced to this betrayal by his own people, whom he was born to save. The third and final betrayal, this time fatal, involved Delilah, the only woman Samson ever referred to with love and the woman who commit-

ted the ultimate betrayal. She therefore represents the definitive reflection of his repetition compulsion. Once again Samson trusts a woman who is openly willing to betray him and lead him to his death. Delilah was a particular challenge since she became an object of love for Samson. While Delilah is clear about her intentions to rob Samson of his power, Samson cooperates. He knows that providing her with information regarding the source of his strength – namely, his hair – is the equivalent of suicide. It may be suggested that Samson’s true state of mind at the time was suicidal. He had lost the desire for life, as he demonstrated in repeated attempts to release himself from a stubborn, deep and lethal pain, which left him vulnerable to Delilah’s supplications. Eventually, Samson loses his strength and is captured by the Philistines, who first pluck his eyes out and then humiliate him. Soon after this Samson concludes his chaotic life, and puts an end to the repeated betrayals.

The true nature of Samson’s repetition compulsion is in the seeming love experience and the betrayal by a woman, resulting in a trail of rage and self-destruction. A probable source of repetition compulsion is the disappointment and the discrepancy between a child’s needs and the primary caregiver’s responses. Samson’s parents had been distanced and estranged from him even prior to his birth. With his unusual birth circumstances and his parents’ responses, Samson may have been a lonely child, probably experiencing difficulties coping with his tender feelings and his unusual physical strength. Arguably, the first woman to betray Samson was his mother. God will give her a child, and she will return the child to God. This could be seen as a mother’s betrayal of her son, since she preferred to actualize her own wish and have a child, instead of considering the child’s best interests and offering her son a normal home. The respect Samson pays his mother in spite of her betrayal demonstrates his way of linking positive emotions of love with negative responses of rejection and estrangement. It may be proposed that Samson’s relationship with his mother is a prototype for his future relationships with women, and the force pushing him into a repetition compulsion pattern. As Grossman suggests, Samson is always looking for that elusive goal where there is never full satisfaction or real intimacy, and especially – no real love.

Antisocial personality and Grossman’s Samson

Justicia et al. [10] note that such family environments and child-raising styles can trigger antisocial behavior, since they directly affect the child’s self-regulation and reactivity. Negligence, lack of affection from parents and maternal hostility are, among others, child-raising styles that may contribute to antisocial behavior.

While speculative, it may be proposed that antisocial personality disorder and repetition compulsion may contribute to suicidal behavior [11,12] and thus account to some extent for Samson’s suicide. Alstchuler and co-authors [13] propose that Samson manifests six of the seven criteria that must be met for the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. He demonstrated failure to conform to social norms as indicated by repeatedly performing acts that constitute grounds for arrest (after the girl from Timnath reveals the answer to Samson’s riddle to the Philistines,



Samson is enraged and kills thirty innocent people). Second, he demonstrated deceitfulness (Samson did not tell his parents that he had killed a lion, nor that the honey he gave them was from the carcass of a lion – thus violating their dietary laws). Samson also shows impulsivity when he burns the Philistines' fields. In addition, Alstchuler et al. propose that Samson demonstrates reckless disregard for safety of self and others, as he is reported to have killed a thousand Philistines singlehandedly. Disclosing to Delilah the secret of his immense strength, after her three previous attempts to uncover this secret, can also be considered a reckless disregard for safety. His lack of remorse is evident in his gloating after killing the thousand Philistines. In addition, Samson committed many of the actions listed in the criteria for conduct disorder – arson, cruelty to small animals, bullying, initiating physical fights, using a weapon, and stealing from a victim [13].

Jabotinsky's Samson

Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940) was born in Russia. Following the pogrom against the Jews of Kishinev in 1903 he committed himself to Zionist activity. He organized self-defense units and fought for Jewish minority rights. Throughout his very active life, he was involved in nationalistic endeavors for the Jewish people, spreading the Hebrew language and culture, worked for the establishment of the Jewish Legion and later on the Irgun in Israel (a militant Zionist group), was a member of the Zionist Executive leadership and worked toward the establishment of a Jewish State. He headed the youth movement Betar. In 1929, he left Palestine on a lecture tour after which the British administration denied him reentry, until his death in 1940. Throughout his life of intense political activity, Jabotinsky continued to write poetry, novels, short stories and articles on politics and social and economic issues. The plot Jabotinsky devised in his book *Samson* is very much influenced by his political views. Jabotinsky

praised Samson as the prototypical Jewish hero: a strong and courageous figure who was not afraid to use his power to achieve his goals. Jabotinsky admired Jewish power, and painted Samson accordingly.

Jabotinsky only made use of the skeleton of the biblical story for his depiction of Samson. He changed names, elaborated on entire scenes, and erased any trace of divine intervention or miraculous dimensions. Samson is depicted as a good speaker, a good judge, a good politician and a good leader, he is well respected and his verdicts are obeyed. Samson is never described as talking to God – every scene from the Bible containing a mention of God or a dialogue with God is omitted or ignored. Samson's strength is presented as a quality that Samson possesses independently of God. Therefore, Samson does not lose his power when his hair is cut off, nor does he regain it when his hair grows back. He is powerful throughout the whole ordeal. Samson's final message for his people on his death bed is "Store iron, have a king and learn to laugh." Jabotinsky places faith in physical strength as the principal means of attaining his people's long unfulfilled yearning for a Jewish state. Liptzin [14] states: "if all documents relating to Jabotinsky's Zionist philosophy were lost, its main tenets could be reconstructed from this novel" [p. 77]. Jabotinsky creates his Samson and his unique plot with the idea that a Jewish man, whether leader or not, should be strong and decisive. Jabotinsky believed that Samson was respected by the Philistines because power and authority are valued, even by one's enemies.

Samson the Jewish hero

According to Fishalov [15], Jabotinsky depicts Samson as a thinking hero, one who combines undeniable physical strength with the force of a sharp mind, thus creating the ultimate hero. Samson is the hero the Revisionist Zionist movement always wished for. Jabotinsky emphasizes the loneliness of a leader among his people, and expands it to include the tensions and feuds Samson had with the tribe elders. Jabotinsky himself felt at times that he was in a constant dispute with his "elders." His book was released in the 1920s, during which the split of opinions caused the departure of Jabotinsky from the general Zionist movement [15]. The most innovative aspect of Jabotinsky's novel is the emphasis and development of the national political dimension. With Samson, his behavior, values and the tensions between him and the people, Jabotinsky tried to create an example of the national hero [15]. Jabotinsky's Samson is the hero who knows how to resolve conflict and is willing to sacrifice himself in the process.

The character of Mahbanai Ben Shuni, which Jabotinsky added, is reminiscent of the stereotype of the exiled Jew, both with respect to his nomadic lifestyle and his principles of national policy. Mahbanai's approach to the relationship with the Philistines is one of compromise and concession, of finding a way to coexist, which confirms and eternalizes the status quo of subjugation and absence of national statehood. Jabotinsky is appalled by this standpoint and condemns it. The message that Samson left for his people represents Jabotinsky's solution

– Iron, King, and Laughter. Without iron (weapons), the people will not be able to survive. The second element – a king, is influenced by Samson’s profound admiration for the Philistines’ leader. The Philistines’ conduct is characterized by unity in action, by discipline, and by the lack of personal identity in homage to a single leader. It takes a great man to be able to see the merits of the enemy and to learn from his conduct. The third factor in Samson’s motto, laughter, is more complex. Laughter creates a tension between the first two parts of the message, the iron that represents military strength and the king who represents unity, rigidity and obedience. Laughter is subversive, anarchistic and ironic. It seems that the answer is concealed in Jabotinsky’s wish that the people of Israel would be wise enough to synthesize between the two poles: the vital force that would assure victory and the laughter that would assure a way of life that is worth the victory. Sabag and Gibori [16] suggest that since Samson’s admired and respected the Philistines, he especially had a need to fight them and keep them away from the people of Israel.

According to Shemesh [2], Samson’s motive in suicide is revenge, thus Samson’s suicide was not his goal but rather the result of his wish to kill his enemies. Samson takes this drastic step not out of fear of the future (physical pain or life of shame) but with rage directed at what his enemies had done to him and his people. Samson’s death is in complete accord with his entire relationship with the Philistines – perpetual counter-revenge.

At the moment that Delilah stands in front of Samson with the clear intention of ridiculing him, Samson realizes that he can be on good terms with the Philistines and enjoy their admiration of his strength even though he is not one of them. Nor could the Philistines and his people coexist in harmony. Herein lies his greatness. Samson himself could have lived with the Philistines since they respected him, unlike his own nation. In Jabotinsky’s novel, Samson is a national and cultural model of a hero, largely because of his last words, which constituted both revenge and victory – “Let me die with the Philistines” (or Jabotinsky’s version – “Let me die with you”).

Grossman’s Samson vs. Jabotinsky’s Samson

If a comparison is to be made, the natures of the two authors need first to be taken into consideration. David Grossman, who takes more of a psychoanalytical stance, maintains a crystallized opinion as to how the country of Israel (embodied by the character of Samson) should treat the delicate situation that exists between itself and the Palestinians (embodied by the Philistines). Grossman, a well-known proponent of more “liberal” political ideology, believes that peace is the principal goal of Israel, and that attaining it justifies the waiving of territories. In context it means that instead of battling the enemy, differences should be resolved by negotiation. His Samson, who insists on fighting his enemies, is a tragic character and not a hero. Grossman extends his analysis and considers that perhaps Samson is mentally ill.

In contrast, Ze’ev Jabotinsky was a conservative and nationalistic thinker who believed that Jewish strength is essential in any attempt to create a Jewish state. He was pro-militant, and believed that sacrifices had to be made prior to goals being met.

Hence, his Samson is a warrior whose actions are not criticized but rather glorified. He is a hero who dies a heroic death, sacrificing himself for the greater good.

The two Samson versions were written eighty years apart, with realities of the general climate in which they lived and wrote influencing their approaches. Grossman’s tolerant approach is influenced by the fact that we do have a state and we are not facing any immediate danger. By the same token, Jabotinsky’s approach may have been influenced by the immediate threat to Jewish existence at the time, and more specifically by the rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany.

Grossman’s Samson is not only a tragic hero; he is also reserved, introverted, melancholic and selfish. His “job definition” was Nazirite, but he never functioned as one and appeared not to care about the people he was supposed to lead. Jabotinsky’s Samson was precisely the opposite. He was a true hero, unafraid and aggressive, yet sympathetic enough to realize the consequences of his deeds. He was sharp, admired by all and above all a romantic.

As for the women in Samson’s life, Grossman’s Samson describes three women of limited significance. The woman from Timnath only “pleased” him, but he did not love her. The harlot from Gaza provided only temporary sexual pleasure and was only a means to fool the Philistines; and Delilah, although loved by Samson, was in effect his executioner. She fulfils his death wish and turns him in. The betrayal in this version is immense. Jabotinsky’s Samson had only two women in his life, but they played a much more significant role. The first one was Smadar, the woman from Timnath, who he married, then divorced, but always loved. The second woman was Smadar’s sister, Elinoar (also known as Delilah), who was in love with Samson but was always disappointed that he had not chosen her over her sister. In this version Samson had no wish of betrayal, and the role of the women in his life was only to emphasize his mortality. He was in love, “like any other man,” and did foolish things in the name of love. On the surface it might seem that Samson’s suicide was caused by his anger with Elinoar, but in truth that was just the last straw that made him realize he had to make a choice – between his friends, the Philistines – and his people, the Tribes of Israel. And as a heroic figure he chose his people.

Concerning Samson’s biological father we also find different perspectives. Grossman believed Manoah to be Samson’s biological father. Since feeling estranged or alienated from his own people, Samson sought ways to belong. This failed, and to ease his pain his life ended in suicide. Jabotinsky, on the other hand, declares that Samson’s biological father was in fact a Philistine man with whom his mother had a romantic relationship. This way Samson’s attraction to the Philistines is explained on a natural, biological basis. Samson is half Philistine and half Jewish, with his Philistine half attracting him to his Philistine friends, and his Jewish half driving him to sacrifice his life for his people. Being half Philistine and half Israeli, Samson had to choose. He chooses Israel.

Grossman depicts a sad, pathetic, defeated and humiliated Samson, blindly led into the Shrine of Dagon to indulge the

large Philistine crowd that came to celebrate his arrest. He cannot see but finds his way to the pillars with the aim of pulling down the building, and makes a deal with God to restore his strength once more. Samson entered the world thanks to a deal his mother had made with God, and by the same token, he leaves the world thanks to a deal he made with God – God will grant Samson the power to kill himself if he can kill his enemies too. Jabotinsky creates a different scenario. His Samson is not a captive, nor is he humiliated or hurt. Indeed, his eyes had been put out, but only as a Philistine defensive measure. If Samson had his vision, he would have killed them (since his power had not disappeared with his hair). When Delilah enters the Shrine and ridicules Samson, he realizes that he can no longer live on the border between the two nations, that the moment of choice has arrived. He chooses Israel.

The ultimate question remains: why did Samson kill himself? Was he performing a heroic act? Or was he mentally ill? Grossman intimates that Samson demonstrated features of both repetition compulsion syndrome and antisocial personality disorder. Personality disorders are a well-known risk factor for suicidal behavior. At least a third of those who commit suicide, and up to 70% of those with suicide attempts, exhibit personality disorder. Since Samson may have suffered from antisocial personality disorder, and fully acknowledging his share of adverse life events, it may be suggested that Grossman's Samson had a "suicidal wish" and did commit suicide as a result of his mental condition. Jabotinsky's Samson, on the other hand, shows no sign of any psychiatric condition. On the contrary, almost every decision he makes is calculated and planned. Accordingly, it would be hard to believe that his final act of suicide was a poorly conceived one. Rather, Jabotinsky's Samson made a calculated decision to be great. His statement "let my soul die with the Philistines" meant that he was willing to do that for the honor of Israel, and for the ultimate goal of killing the Philistines [17]. Jabotinsky's Samson was a hero executing a heroic act and reviving the words of Jabotinsky's close friend, Joseph Trumpeldor: "Never mind, it is good to die for our country."

One man, two very contrasting stories. Although very different, perhaps both are valid. The two versions are only imaginative renderings of the original authentic text, much praised as they may be – and their historic truthfulness may be of minimal consequence. Arguably, what matters is what one can personally learn from the depth of the narrative.

A word of caution

While, as stated above, biblical accounts may be understood at many different levels – some would even argue that this enhances their beauty – this should be done with caution. First, it should always be stated, as in the case of Grossman, Jabotinsky, Kutz, Altschuler and others, that their artistic rep-

resentation is but that – artistic. Thus while legitimate, any such creative reading of biblical text with interpretations on life should be accompanied by a disclaimer that the imaginative opinion is that of the author with no claim to being the authentic meaning of the original biblical text. This is required since the text is often not presented in its entirety and is thus potentially misunderstood without the accompaniment of centuries-old authentic rabbinical explanations of the text (*mefarshim*). Furthermore, since the "Barry Goldwater affair" in the United States during which psychiatrists were admonished for rendering professional opinions of political figures inappropriately, those in the field of psychiatry have been warned against the practice of personality analysis without examining the individual. Thus, although the desire to understand history in greater depth, be it biblical text or not, is admirable, one must be cognizant of the dangers therein. Otherwise, authors of such interpretations may be accused of insensitivity and misunderstanding at worst, and bad science at best.

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Correspondence: N. Shoenfeld.
email: netta.shoenfeld@gmail.com

Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.

P.J. O'Rourke (1947-), American political satirist, journalist, writer and civil libertarian