

The Dynamic of Power Relationship in Judges 16:1- 22 and Its Relevance in the Indonesian Context

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Abstract

Judges 16:1 – 22 prominently presents a dynamic power relationship between the characters in the particular narrative of Samson, Delilah, the Philistines, and YHWH. This article aims to explore a number of tendentious and dynamic power relations in this text using the method of interpreting narrative criticism. From the perspective of narrative criticism, the text of Judges 16:1-22 was a dramatic story between Samson and Delilah that was interpretable. This text elaborated every element of the story, whether plot, setting, time and character, into a dramatic and meaningful narrative. The interpretation of this text was studied by searching gaps in the story as well as between actors and bridging them with discursive studies. Because sometimes the interpreter ignored the gap in the narrative as an important part of the narrative interpretation. If the story gap was interpreted critically, it produces and constructs powerful theological values. The identification of this story gap was initiated by conducting a structural analysis of the text. The results of this exegesis would be able to form a theological value formulation that had relevance in the current context. The author tried to dialogue the theological values in the narrative of Judges 16:1-22 with contextual realities in Indonesia. The result of this research shows three important theological values, namely: *first*, every actor in the story has the potential to power and use his power. The power relation is built from the strengths and weaknesses of each actor. *Second*, the narrative of this story presents a thematic plot that moves from judgment to restoration. *Third*, the dynamic of the power relationship is depicted in the Indonesian context through the fact of patriarchal manipulation of women's bodies.

Keywords: Judges; Narrative; Interpretation; Story gap; Actor; Simson; Delilah; Power Relations; Knowledge; Indonesia Context.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to interpret the text of Judges 16:1-22 in a narrative criticism and to make it relevant in Indonesia contexts. The author attempts to identify and explore the dynamic of power relationship in the text between Samson, Delilah, the Philistines and YHWH. I am interested in interpreting the text of Judges 16:1-22 in the narrative perspective, for several reasons, namely: *first*, story of Samson is unique because it combines different narrative elements with an incredibly complex structure that are sacred and secular.¹ *Second*, Samson, the last judge who is anomalous in the sequence and paradoxical to the previous Judge's narrative. Samson has unique qualities with multiple characters. He is passionate with low ethics, He is very modest and funny, therefore many readers share the thoughts, feelings, and actions of his heroic.² *Third*, the story of Samson and Delilah is unique because it expresses the tension of Samson's dual struggles. On the one hand, Samson's struggles between loyalty to his parents, nation and God with and loyalty to foreign women. On the other hand, it represents a struggle between worship of YHWH and worship of foreign gods This text describes the thematic relationship from judgement to restoration. In this paper, I will interpret this text in four parts, namely: *first*, I will analyze the genre and structure of the text in a narrative perspective' in the context of the entire book. *Second*, I interpret Judges 16:1 - 22 in narrative criticism by identifying and bridging the narrative gaps of Samson and Delilah. *Third*, constructing theological themes from the interpretation of the text. *Fourth*, dialogue the theological theme of the text with the contextual reality in current time.

In this study, the author will use narrative criticism to interpret Judges 16:1-22. Basically, narrative criticism analyzes the formal characteristics of biblical narratives: point of view, plot, character, setting, style, standards of judgment, and rhetoric. An analysis of the formal features of Judges 16:1-22 has shown that this narrative is very complete: the narrator maintains a unifying point of view; uniform assessment standards; the plot is coherent; characters are introduced and developed with consistency; patterns of survival

¹ Lilian R. Klain, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, (New York: Almond Press, Sheffield, 1989), 110

² Ibid, 109

through the story; and there is an overall satisfying rhetorical effect. Recurring designs, overlapping patterns, and interwoven motifs create a rich texture of narrative.³ Most of study of Book of Judges based on narrative criticism ignore elements of gaps in the story. This narrative interpretation focuses on studying the gaps in the story as well as between actors and tries to bridge them with discursive studies. The story gap becomes a critical and meaningful space for interpretation to construct theological values. It is important to investigate the narrative study of each episode to show how integral each episode is in the overall narrative design of Judges 16:1 - 22. The purpose of this study is to interpret the power dynamics that develop between actors in the story and their relevance in the Indonesian context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a narrative study, in this section the author will present two things, namely: *first*, structural analysis and *second*, exploration of the narrative text. The exploration of this textual narrative formulates two important themes, namely: *first*, the power relationship between Samson and Delilah and *second*, from judgement to restoration.

Structural Analysis

In narrative perspective, the plot structure of Samson's notes consists of four plot levels, namely:⁴

- Plot A: YHWH's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines through Samson (13:1-7, 8-23, 24-25; 14:1-3, 4-6, 11, 12-19; 15:1-17, 18-20; 16:1-6, 7-10, 11-12, 13a, 13b-14, 15-21, 22-31),
- Plot B: YHWH's provision of a son to the barren wife of Manoah (13:2-7, 8-23, 24a),
- Plot C: Samson's quest for a Philistine wife from Timnah (14:1-3, 5-6, 7, 8-9, 10 -11, 12-20; 15:1-2, 6) and,
- Plot D: Philistine plot to kill Samson in retaliation for his exploit at Gaza (16:1-6, 7-9, 10, 11-12, 13a, 13b-14, 15-21, 23-27, 28-30a).

³ Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, (Fortres Press, 1978); David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark, 411 – 434.

⁴ Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, (Leiden, New York, Koln: E.J.Brill, 1996), 203-204

Analytically, the plot structure of story of Samson is the same as that of Jephthah's account. However, unlike the plot structure of Gideon's, Abimelech and Jephthah's accounts, the sub-plot of Samson's account (Plots B, C and D) does not extend beyond the resolution of the situational crisis that was introduced in the exposition of Plot A.⁵ The story of Samson presents a double exposition, namely: "situation" (10:7b, 13:1) and "character" (13:2-24). Its development has been interrupted sporadically (13:25; 14:4-6, 8-9, 12-19a; 15:1-2, 6, 9-14; 6:2,7-9, 11-12, 13b-14, 22, 28 - 30a) and a series of sporadically interrupted partial resolutions (from situations: 14:19a; 15:3-5, 7-8, 15-17; 16:3, 30a; characters: 15:20; 16:30b-31). Interrupting plot A are repeat complications (13:8-23; 14:1-3, 7, 10-11; 15:18-19; 16:1, 4-6, 10, 13a, 15-21,23-27), most of which are developments within either Plot C or D.⁶ Plot D is contained entirely within Ch.16 and traces the Philistine plot to kill Samson in retaliation for his exploit at Gaza. Its exposition (16:1 - 3) presupposes that the Philistines already had reason to retaliate against Samson (16:2). However, after Samson humiliates the Gazaites by his feat of strength in carrying off their city gates (16:3), they become preoccupied more specifically with discovering the secret of his strength so that they, in turn, might humiliate him (16:5; cf. 16:6-7).⁷

In structural analysis, characteristic of dramatic story of Judges 16 is a Hebrew non-discursive technique with a climactic sequence. The sequence, that is, set in a certain number pattern leading to a climax of the narrative sequence. This number pattern can also transcend the series sequences and produce new series.⁸ The grouping of favorite groupings in Hebrew as well as in other languages specifically for the North West Semitic group is using multiples of threes and sevens. Basically, the use of numbers in Judges is schematic rather than realistic. As an indicator of evidence, story of Samson has three cyclical "moment" plots that include relationships with three Philistine women and both series being climactic. Next, Samson has 30 companions for whom he must provide 30 garments (14:11-12); He parleys with 3,000 men from Judah (15:11), and the same number perishes in the temple (16:27);

⁵ M. Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels*, trans. P. Hackett, (1985).

⁶ Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 204

⁷ Ibid, 219-220

⁸ This is what A. Olrik called "Achtergewicht". See his *Epische Gesetze der Volksdichtung*, pp.4ff, applied to biblical material by W. Baumgartner, "Ein Kapital vom hebr. Erzählungsstil," *Eukar Gunkel*, (1923), 145-157.

The marriage feast lasted 7 days, divided into 3 and 4.⁹ Judges 16 used this technique with a closely knit and continuous relationship and, from 16 follows a rigorously conceived structural plan:¹⁰

- a. Verses 4 - 9 are the first Temptation: 7 bowstrings.
- b. Verses 10 - 12 are the second Temptation: new ropes (no number).
- c. Verses 13 - 14 are the third Temptation: 7 locks of hairs.
- d. Verses 15 - 21 are the climax: shaving of the 7 locks and breaking the vow.

Each of the three narrative episodes is built up in a regular and formulaic way. In this original oral recital, there is a series of seven formulas following each other regularly but were broken dramatically in deceive climax of vv.15-21. Based on the non-cursive technique, the following narrative sequences for Judges 16 were formulated: 1). The Philistine Approach to Delilah (v.5); 2). Delilah's approach to Samson: "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can tie up and subdued" (v.6, 10, 13, 15); 3) Samson's approach to Delilah, "I'll become as weak as any other man" (v.7, 11, 13, 7); 3). Delilah's actions (v.8, 12, 14); 4), "The Philistines are above you, Samson!" (v.9, 12, 14, 20); 5). Samson's actions (v.9, 12, 14); 6), "So the secret of his strength was not discovered" (v.9, 14).¹¹ The whole recital ends with a climax outside the ternary series with good illustrations with a dramatic effect of sudden diversity. This is a basic feature of Old Testament literary art that produced of Israel's sacred and secular history in heroic times.

The Power Relationship between Samson and Delilah

From the narrative perspective, I will explore and bridge the gap in the text of Judges 16:1-22 on the story of Samson and Delilah. I find three central actors in the text, namely Samson, Delilah, and YHWH. The three are connected in a unity narrative about the dynamics of power relations.

First, "what is Samson's strengths and weaknesses?" This question relates to a common theme in the story of Samson, namely dynamics of power relationship. Generally, the story in Judges 13-16 is considered a disjointed series of episodes. The reason may be that this narrative comes from a different source, but the narrative is addressed to one

⁹ Koing Notes that the seven days of the feast are in fact in accord with custom; Cf. Gen.29:27-29; Tob 11.18. See his "Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik" in *Bezug auf Die Hebr Literature*, (1900), 51

¹⁰ J. Blenkinsopp, "Structure and Style in Judges 13-16" in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 82. No.1 (March 1963), 73

¹¹ Ibid, 74.

character, namely Samson.¹² These distinct characters and separate fragments are connected artistically and logically in the unity narrative. However, the others have seen an overall unity in Judges 13-16 and have looked for unifying themes and motifs.¹³ “Its fragmentary character should not deceive us: in fact, the fragments have been connected artistically and logically, giving rise to a unitary narrative.”¹⁴ The narratives deal with the dynamics of power relationships.¹⁵ This theme focuses on exploring Samson's motives of power and the use of power in Samson and Delilah's stories (Ch.16). Its main task is to examine the different types of powers of different characters for the effects of their use and abuse. Each character in the narrative has their own strengths and weaknesses. Generally, the story of Samson and Delila is viewed by the context of a double contestation, namely: *first*, the power between the powerless Israelites and the dominant power of the Philistines. In the perspective Deuteronomist editors. YHWH turned them over to the Philistines because of their sin. *Second*, there is a power struggle between YHWH and Dagon. This is shown in the final climax scene in Judges 16, when Samson, with YHWH's help, pulls down the temple of Dagon around the ears of his enemies.¹⁶ In the narrative, it is identified that Samson has two types of power, namely:

1. Throughout the story of Samson emphasis on the great physical strength, which enables him to perform prodigious acts of gratuitous violence. This kind of strength yield on kind of power. This amazing physical strength is granted to Samson by YHWH, and it related to his having been dedicated as a Nazirite from birth. In the strength of Samson, we can see the power of YHWH. Like all Judges, Samson is said to have been moved by “the spirit of YHWH” (Judges 13.24 - 25). In the final great act of physical strength, Samson destroying the Philistine temple by pushing apart two of its supporting pillars. This was after he prayed to his God for help (Judg. 16:28). The "Spirit of YHWH" became a source of power, which was directly related to deity. YHWH's power is manifested in the spirit which is only given on conditions.¹⁷

¹² J. A. Sogin, *Judges*, 2nd Ed, (OTL, London: SCM Press, 1987), 230-231

¹³ Carol Smith, “Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power”, in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (1997), 50

¹⁴ J. A. Sogin, *Judges*, 2nd Ed, 231

¹⁵ Carol Smith, “Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power,” 50

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, 51

2. Samson's strength is knowledge of the source of his strength and how it is to be sustained. For Samson, (exclusive) "knowledge is power". When this knowledge is wrested from him, then the power passes to his enemies since they can use it to subdue him. In fact, both the secret of Samson's strength and the secret of his weakness was in having knowledge of its source.¹⁸ In the following, Samson mentions "mother's womb" regarding the secret of his strength. This mention indicates that He will become a child again. He transfers his allegiance from his real mother to his substitute love-mother. Samson not only reveals the secrets of himself and his mother, but also entrusts himself to Delilah as a child might trusts his mother. Evidently, when he sleeps upon Delilah's lap (some texts read, "between her knees"), he lost his manly hair and his manly strength. Samson, overpowered by a woman, and captured by the Philistines.¹⁹

Samson is not only helpless physically and mentally when he passed on the knowledge of the source of his strength to Delilah, but also, he no longer has exclusive knowledge. Samson proved his love by making himself vulnerable, Samson provided Delilah with knowledge of the source of his strength. Delilah used it as a weapon against Samson. Delilah's task was to subdue Samson's mind. Dominance of mind followed by subjugation of Samson's physical body.²⁰ Exum comments: "Samson proves his love by making himself venerable by furnishing the woman with knowledge that gives her power over him... She uses this knowledge against him."²¹ Samson's power is contrasted in Judges with his weakness. Samson's powerful passions are portrayed in the text as both his strength (when he is rampaging against the Philistines) and his weakness (when he constantly falls for 'unsuitable' women). Evidently, Samson was unable to refuse the women's desires. Delilah is seen as a woman ready to deceive and betray. She whines and wheedles to get her own way.²² Klein comments on Delilah's behavior: "Delilah, the woman (Samson) loves, betrays him for the lowest of purposes: a price."²³ Delilah is the complete antithesis of the perfect Israelite wife. The downfall of Samson is an anti-hero image, in which all his physical, mental, and intellectual strength are weakened. The power of Delilah and the power of the

¹⁸ Ibid, 51-52

¹⁹ Danna Nolan Fewell, "Judges" in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, Ed. By Carol A. Newsom & Sharon H. Ringe, (USA: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 73-74

²⁰ Carol Smith, "Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power", 51

²¹ J. C. Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, JSOTS, 215, (GCT.3: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 220

²² Carol Smith, "Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power," 52-53

²³ Lilian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, (New York: The Almond Press, 1989),

Philistines are united. The power and champion of Delilah is the power and victory of Philistines. This text contrasts the power of the Delilah and of the Philistines with that of Samson, Israel, and YHWH. The power of the Philistines came from their superior culture, whereas the power of Samson and Israel came from YHWH.²⁴

Second, “what is the uniqueness of Delilah in the story of Samson?” The first major difference with Samson's previous affair women was that this time the woman is named. It is indicated, other women are anonymous or nameless, not identified. The meaning of the name “Delilah”, דִּילִילָא is uncertain. Etymologically, the name Delilah is translated as "loose hair", "lover" and "worshiper."²⁵ There is a link with the Arabic, *دالتوم* (*dallatum*) meaning, "flirt", and therefore "flirtatious", while the latest idea of interpreting it from Akkadian, *dalālum* is "to praise, to glorify". In the Hebrew context, the name דִּילִילָא (*Delilah*) sounds very similar to הלילה (*hallaylā*), the Hebrew word for "night". This word has occurred four times in verses 2 and 3 in connection with Samson's visit to the prostitute in Gaza. With Delilah darkness starts to close round Samson again, and other traps that the Philistines will set for him. In view of her Hebrew-sounding name, it is possible that Delilah was an Israelite.²⁶ Delilah's ethnic background became polemic, whether she was Hebrew or Canaanite who had contact with Philistines or Philistine women. Yet many narrative references and preferences identify Delilah as a Philistine woman. Delilah is the main center of the story with special qualifications and qualities. She is a notorious antagonist (16:4). Usually considered by interpreters to be the *femme fatale par excellence* that led to Samson's downfall as a heroic figure of Israel and the chosen people of YHWH. Delila is more than just a supporting actress, in this part of the story, the spotlight is her. The character Delila drives and dominates the plot, Samson is merely only a respondent.²⁷ There is not much information about Delilah, only that her house is located somewhere in the Sorek valley, the valley that surrounds Timnah and Zorah. Delilah's identity has no male attachment, no father, no husband, no family, no protector.²⁸ Delilah is introduced to the character of a

²⁴ Ibid, 53

²⁵ Terry L. Brensinger, *Judges Believers Church Bible Commentary*, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1999), 163

²⁶ Barry G. Webb, *The New International Commentary on The Old Testament – The Boof of Judges*, (UK: Wb. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, 2012), 398

²⁷ Danna Nolan Fewell, “Judges” in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, 93

²⁸ Roger Ryan, *Judges*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phonex Press, 2007), 121

smart, opportunistic, and independent woman where she has the initiative and can take care of herself. The second major difference is the simple statement, Samson loves וַיִּהָב (wayye'ehab) Delilah. Samson did not reveal his love for the prostitutes previous in this episode. It says Samson only “saw,” “went in,” and “lay” with her (16:1-3). In his brief marriage in chapter 14, "love" occurs only as a reproach on the lips of his wife's: "you don't love me לוֹא־הִבַּתְנִי (lō' 'ahabtānī)", and not Samson's feelings.²⁹ Love blinded him from the dangers of his life and faith in YHWH. Delilah had her love affair with Samson and her business dealings with the ruler of the Philippines. Delilah used her sexual appeal to overpower Samson.³⁰ The narrator tells that “He fell in love with a woman.” How Delilah feels about him is not revealed. Samson's interest in Delilah shows a deepening level of sexual attachment. Delilah realized Samson's strong desire for her, then she used the art of "seductress" to subdue him with business motives with the Philistine nobility.³¹ By implication, the entire Philistine hierarchy was involved in resistance to Samson, as a Danite. This text does not clearly reveal Delilah's profession. Interpretation of Delila's behavior is the key to knowing her profession. As an analogy, Delila is a businesswoman, a woman who uses the allure of her feminine sexuality as a means of social, political, and economic control. Delilah manipulates Samson's love into the motive of a business deal with Philistine nobles to ensure her survival. Evidently, Delila disappears at the end of the story, having enjoyed a lifetime of financial stability.³² Many commentators call this the "tainted" power of Delilah. Delilah's depiction of weakness with the tainted stereotype of being a seductive woman and a liar becomes Delilah's manipulative strength over Samson. Delilah's actions are viewed positively, she is a strong and effective woman, her strengths emerge as her weaknesses. Delilah also received the support of the surrounding men, namely the Philistine nobility. They were Delilah's secondary force in conquering Samson.³³ Delilah not only gets the reward, or the sex provider, but also has the "name" and "love" of Samson.

Third, “But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved” (v.22), what is the purpose of this text placed at the end of the narrative of Samson's arrest? It indicates the transition from the Samson Delilah scene in 16:4-21 to the narrative climate

²⁹ Barry G. Webb, *The New International Commentary on The Old Testament – The Boof of Judges*, 396

³⁰ Lilian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, 66

³¹ Carol Smith, “Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power,” 52

³² Danna Nolan Fewell, “Judges” in *The Women's Bible Commentary*,

³³ Ibid, 53.

scene made at 16:22, One of the productive sentences which is a mark of genius because it gives high expectations, perhaps Yahweh who forsook Samson when his hair was cut would return to him again?³⁴ Perhaps there may yet be “some great service” to crown Samson's career and restore his dignity?³⁵ That sentence is very productive because Samson's hair association as a mark of God's power and participation in Samson's life. Samson's long hair shaved is the *par excellence* sign of his separation from God in the task of liberating Israel from the Philistines. The power of God has left Samson as a Nazirite of God. In the Israeli tradition, there are three prohibitions for a Nazirite of God, namely no string drink, not cutting of the hair and not contact with death body (Numbers 6). Uniquely, only the prohibition on cutting hair was applied to Samson.³⁶ When Samson said to Delilah, “No razor has ever been used on my head because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man” (16:17). Samson associates his strength directly with his separation to God as symbolized particularly in his hair. If he renounces his separation to God by allowing his hair to be cut his strength will leave him. Samson is portrayed as acting irrationally in the grip of strong emotions. His supernatural strength is the one aspect of his separation to God that he has genuinely relished, but alone with Delilah he sees his strength as the source of all his troubles.³⁷ Yahweh withdraw: Samson was captured, blinded, and conquered, a grim irony. This downfall of Samson is the climax of all his "downsides" in the narrative. This text expresses Yahweh's unusual participation, there is no specific divine response in the concluding segment of the story. And there is no act of Yahweh and no spirit in response. A humble Samson prayed and begged Yahweh to give him his strength just once more. Yahweh honored Samson's true prayer and vow. Samson asked not to take revenge on his people, but for himself. Samson does find the strength to knock bring down the roof because "the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved" (16:22). Samson's new hair growth represents returning strength: a new “growth” of “belief.”³⁸ The

³⁴ James L. Crenshaw, “The Samson Saga: Filial Devotion or Erotic Attachment?”, *ZAW* 86, (1974), 501

³⁵ Barry G. Webb, *The New International Commentary on The Old Testament*, 168

³⁶ J. Blenkinsopp, “Structure and Style in Judges 13-16”, 65-76.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 169-189.

³⁸ Lilian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, (New York: The Almond Press, 1989), 128

symbol of Samson's Nazi consecration "began to grow again" and his dedication gave Samson the strength to do his will and Yahweh's will. Yahweh did not allow Samson to be like "the other," even though He had violated the ritual as God's Nazirite.³⁹ YHWH withdraw temporarily from Samson, not permanently. Samson remained nazir (separated) "until the day he died". He may want to be like "the other" but YHWH will not let him be like that. His hair is shaved, but to grow again, and the climax of the narrative, it is not only his hair is offered as a sacrifice, but also Samson himself. Prayer is key to Samson's narrative theology, and the destruction of Dagon's temple. Yahweh's answer to Samson's prayer. Prayers and a demonstration of Samson's strength suggest that "strength" comes from conviction and humility. With humble prayer and renewed dedication to YHWH, Samson find strength in himself. Samson as a representation of Israel finds strength in YHWH. YHWH, who had withdrawn from Samson and Israel, has returned to present the power of His glory. YHWH does not like pride, God attacks those who refuse to humble themselves and exalts those who are humble.

From Judgement to Restoration

The narrative of unity in Judges 16:1 - 22 is framed by the main theme of the dynamics of the relationship between power and love. This text presents the tension between horizontal love and vertical love. The dynamics of the relationship between the three main characters, namely: Samson, Delilah and YHWH. The three characters are connected in dynamic power relations with thematic movements from judgment to restoration. The narrative climax combines paradoxically, thematic relations: achievement and failure, blindness and recognition, hatred, and acceptance, in which Samson dies and Israel does not die. The narrative of Samson and Delilah is a living story, where the narrative describes not how things ought to happen, but how things are really happened. Delilah is an alternative figure to counter the oppressive patriarchal ideology. Based on the central theme above, this text has three theological themes, namely:

First, judgement. Samson's violation of a Nazirite's vow because of Delilah's temptations. Samson prioritized Delilah's love more than his love and obedience to God. Samson glorifies transactional love relationships. Samson changed his Nazirite identity to the other and was abandoned by YHWH. Samson betrayed his mother, his family, his people

³⁹ Barry G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges – An Integrated Reading*, 170

and especially God. Romantic relations that are injected with treason, intimidation, economic and political utility. Offenses were paid for with punishments that plunged Samson into a circle of chaos and darkness. Samson experienced separation from God and supernatural powers. Samson changed from a heroic character to an anti-heroic character who is helpless, impotent, weak, and exploited. God withdrew from Samson and he lost the protection of YHWH's privileges.

Second, restoration. God transformed the narrative of Samson, from the narrative judgement to the narrative of restoration and forgiveness, from the chaotic and darkness narrative to the peace and bright narrative, from the rejection narrative to the acceptance narrative. God responded to Samson's prayer and humility. God restore the role of the Nazirite of Simson that had been polluted, therefore he still died as the Nazirite of God. God give Samson the privilege of being a Nazirite of God from womb to tomb. God rewarded Samson with forgiveness, love, and acceptance. God brought glory to His power by restoring the dignity of Samson and Israel. Prayer drive YHWH to act to change the history of Samson and Israel. God changes transactional love relationships into unconditional love relationships. God gave love and justice to both Samson and the Israelites who were victims of Philistine oppression. God gives love and justice to the weak, marginalized and oppressed as a form of taking sides for the victims. God's power is not to oppress, but to deliver.

Third, the last theological theme is the politicization of the female body. Delilah exploited her sexuality as an economic asset and as a legitimation for political domination. In the Israeli tradition, the practice of politicizing and commodifying the sexuality of the female body is even regulated. The regulation states that a virgin child who has been slept with by a boy, must be paid 50 shekels of silver to the father as the person in charge. The daughter's body becomes the property of the father. The metaphorical politicization of the body is recorded in Ezekiel 16: 8 and Hosea 1:2. In Ezekiel 16:8, it records the image of God as male looking at the body and beauty of women lustfully. Imaginatively, the female body was politicized as the object of the gaze of men and the gaze of YHWH. Delilah gave economic and political utility to her body to dominate Samson. Samson's body was given a high monetary value through political negotiations between Delilah and the Philistine

nobles. The sacred value of his body as a Nazirite of God is transferred to a profane body as an economic and political tool.

The Relevance of the Text in Indonesian Context

In this section, the author will discuss this textual value with the reality of the context in Indonesia. My focus is on a third theological theme of the politicization and commodification of the body. How to identify and explore this theme in the current context. In social construction, the sexuality of the female body has two categories, namely sacred and profane.⁴⁰ In a sacred perspective, the use of the sexuality of the female body is legalized in the institution of marriage. The sacredness of sexuality is validated in religious ritual activities. The function of sacred sexuality is procreation. On the other hand, in the profane concept, sexuality does not need legitimacy and is not sanctified. Profanely, sexuality is ordinary, does not need legitimacy and is not sanctified. Profane sexual activity without religious rites and norms. The profane dimension justifies prostitution, homosexuality, and adultery, because it is free, without body discipline and procreation is not the primary goal. In this concept, Delila's attitude is categorized as body actualization in a profane, free and without legal regulations.

In fact, Indonesia has experienced intensive development regarding free sex. In a field study in Yogyakarta,⁴¹ the capital of the Special Region of Yogyakarta and the city of education, it was identified that 15% of 2,224 students in ten state and private universities had premarital sex. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Health Demography survey notes that the rate of unplanned pregnancies has increased quite high, reaching 22% of all pregnancies. It proves that the number of free sex behavior is very high. The number of premarital sex offenders in 2021 is increasing, even now teenagers love this behavior. The phenomenon of free sex is based on four specific areas, namely: *First*, urban areas. Free sex in urban society is considered normal. The phenomenon of free sex is also commonly found in private spaces such as boarding houses for students or employees, apartments, to public spaces such as cafes and cinemas. Public spaces now tend to be used for privacy activities such as kissing and cuddling in cafes, cinemas, and similar public spaces.⁴² *Second*, sexual activities can be

⁴⁰ Hatib Abdul Kadir, *Tangan Kuasa dalam Kelamin*, (Yogyakarta: INSIST Press, 2007), 21-24

⁴¹ Stephanie Creagh, *Pendidikan Seks di SMA D.I. Yogyakarta*, (Yogyakarta: Australian Consortium for in Country Indonesian Studies, 2004), 8

⁴² Hatib Abdul Kadir, *Tangan Kuasa dalam Kelamin*, 215 - 217.

found in isolated areas of Indonesia such as offshore oil mining. *Third*, tourist destinations. *Fourth*, free sex is also found in rural and isolated areas. Rural areas because of the non-partitioned room arrangement, traditional parties, and lax customary rules to punish the perpetrators.⁴³

Based on the factual description above, theological vision is expected to transform society and the church to minimize the practice of free sex. The function of sexuality must be converted from a profane to a sacred dimension. That sexuality is a human identity as the image of God; therefore, it must be utilized in a legal marriage institution. The value of human sexuality is high and noble as “image of God and should be used for the purpose of pro-creation in the legal and holy marriage institution. Therefore, recommended thoughts for the church and society are:

- a) Providing education about free sex formally and informally to the community by involving a network of the roles of all stakeholders and shareholders.
- b) The church provides pastoral counseling services on free sex to all categories of community formation, from teenagers to the elderly.
- c) Making public sermons about free sex to all people as an anticipatory step to break the chain of increasing free sex.

CONCLUSION

The narrative interpretation of Judges 16:1-22 presents significant theological value. This story produces theological value from the combination of narrative elements in the text, both characters, plot, time, place and events. In particular, the narrative text introduces a number of characters who are connected to one another in a fabric of meaning. In the perspective of narrative criticism, the gap in the story is not a vacuum, without meaning, on the contrary, it has the potential to produce meaning. Exclusively, Samson and Delila's narrative introduces multiple interpersonal and communal power relations. This multi-relational becomes a connector to establish gaps in the story. The gap in the story of Samson and Delila produces three important theological values, namely: *first*, every actor in the story has the

⁴³ Hatib Abdul Kadir, *Tangan Kuasa dalam Kelamin*, 223 - 224.

potential to power and use his power. The power relation is built from the strengths and weaknesses of each actor. Power is neutral, but its neutrality will change as it is exercised and used. Power will move in a negative or positive direction depending on its use. In the story, Samson, Delilah, the Philistines and YHWH each play a role with their potential power. This story presents a loop of repetitive power manipulation. The Philistines used their power to manipulate Delilah and Samson, Delilah used her sexual beauty to intimidate Samson, and Samson turned to use his power to defeat the Philistines. Samson's power represents YHWH's power. *Second*, the narrative of this story presents a thematic plot that moves from judgement to restoration. Israel's judgmental narrative is present, when power is abused and sinful. When Samson violated God's Nazarite, he temporarily formed a story of judgment for himself and Israel before the Lord. Punishment is God's reactive response to sin and transgression. YHWH does not end the judgement narrative, but turns it into a restoration narrative. The restoration narrative is God's appreciative attitude toward Samson's humility and sincere desire to improve his relationship with YHWH. The narrative of Israel's restoration is initiated from the restoration of Samson's relationship with YHWH. *Third*, the dynamics of power relations are portrayed in the Indonesian context. In the context of Indonesia, the patriarchal manipulation of women's bodies is depicted. Women's bodies are politicized for the sake of men's pleasure, or on the other hand women are willing to become objects of suffering from men's power over their bodies. This narrative of manipulation, intimidation and politicization of women's bodies must be ended and turned into a narrative of restoration and liberation. This effort is built by sharpening the sensitivity and awareness of all stakeholders and shareholders to play a role in carrying out transformative actions.

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