

## A New Bible translation: “The Syntactic Translation”?

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### *ABSTRACT*

*Over the past decades various versions of the Biblical text have appeared. Many appeared in response to the need to update the language of an older, yet popular version, such as the King James and the old Afrikaans translation. Thereafter versions appeared in which the translation *per se* was not altered, but notes were added of an encyclopaedic or homiletical sort. These were frequently labelled “study Bibles.” The variety of translations and the inserted notes have in some sense assisted the average user of the Bible, whether preacher, teacher or reader, but have also further complicated the situation of understanding the text, since the new translations differ in their rendering and in the quality of the additional notes. In the light of these developments and the fact that standards of proficiency in the reading of Hebrew are often less than satisfactory among current church leaders, has the time not come for Biblical scholarship to provide clearer guidance in the syntactic structure of Hebrew prose and poetry in order to enhance the understanding of the text? Would a translation that reflects the Hebrew not fill a very glaring gap in the research tools that are available to students of the text?*

### **A The status quo**

Over the past two decades attempts have increasingly been made to provide the average reader of the Biblical text with information that will enhance the understanding of that text. So-called “study Bibles” of various sorts have appeared with the obvious intention of assisting the reader in at least two possible respects. In the first instance, the additional information supplied in a version might be homiletical and therefore directed at personal aspects of faith and practice. Secondly, such information might be more objective and encyclopaedic, which is obviously intended to satisfy the intellectual needs of a reader. The seriousness with which editors have begun to view the need to provide not only attractive but necessary aids to reading and appreciating the Biblical text was perhaps most comprehensively expressed in the project that accompanied the publication of the New English Bible. Rather than expect the reader to find a suitable commentary, the Cambridge series of commentaries was composed. These commentaries treat the Old Testament text both in its Hebrew form and in the form in which that Hebrew has been rendered in the New English Bible. The series of commentaries was accompanied by three separate volumes of a more general character that were aimed at answering questions concerning the

relevance of the Old Testament,<sup>1</sup> the process of composition and gathering of the Old Testament and Apocrypha,<sup>2</sup> plus a volume of illustrative material such as maps and charts.<sup>3</sup> In more modern study Bibles, such information is usually included (perhaps in somewhat more limited fashion) in the version itself. *The Archaeological Bible*<sup>4</sup> contains a wealth of archaeological and historical information, with beautiful and relevant pictures of archaeological artefacts and locations, plus useful time charts, a glossary of archaeological terminology and a subject index to the articles that are presented at specific points of the translated text. The visual effect of this edition is impressive. Perhaps less impressive visually, but equally informative on many issues that are not normally treated in Bibles used in churches, is the *Jewish Study Bible*<sup>5</sup> (1999). Each book of the Tanakh has an introduction and is accompanied with notes composed by various scholars who were not forced into any type of regimented thinking. The commentary on the text is therefore quite varied and may include use of medieval rabbinic literature as well as very modern views. At the end of this single volume Tanakh are over 300 pages of articles written by various experts in subjects such as forms of ancient and modern Jewish Bible interpretation, the history of the text, ancient and modern translation and a host of other subjects that are of specific interest to Jewish readers, plus charts and maps, a glossary of technical terms and a very detailed index of subjects treated. The reader of such modern study Bibles is fortunate indeed to have such a wealth of information that can be consulted immediately, without recourse to other books.

Despite their useful variety, these “Study Bibles” all suffer from a failure to bring the reader closer to the language of the text. It is commonly acknowledged that something is lost in the process of translation. Indeed the variety of Study Bibles may be construed as a tacit acknowledgement of this fact. When it is understood that the world of the Old Testament is separated from us by huge cultural and historical chasms, then only part of the strangeness of this book, the Bible, is acknowledged. It should also be realised that the various writings of which this exotic book consists were written in a script that was written in the opposite direction to which modern Western scripts are written, and that the texts produced were without the sort of formatting and highlighting to which modern Western readers are accustomed. More of the strangeness of this book would be revealed and explained if the repetitious syntactical struc-

<sup>1</sup> O. Jessie Lace (ed.). *Understanding the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Enid B. Mellor (ed.). *The Making of the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Clifford M. Jones (ed.). *Old Testament Illustrations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> NIV *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> *The Jewish Study Bible*. Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

tures and sounds were somehow actually reflected rather than alluded to in our translations. It is these meaningful features of language that are not conveyed in modern translations, except by means of occasional foot-notes that refer to an instance of paronomasia. The older, more literal translations of past generations were perhaps in places unclear and even confusing because they adhered so closely to the Hebrew syntax and rendered its vocabulary in a stereotypical fashion. But in so doing they actually brought the reader closer to the form of the source text – even though this was sometimes achieved at the expense of blurring the message. The modern study Bibles fail dismally in this respect and use has rather been made of an existing translation. Thus the text of the Archaeological Study Bible is that of the New International Version, and the Jewish Study Bible makes use of the translation of the Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* (1985, 1999). These translations are frequently very lucid, but even in the area of meaning they will fail when, in particular texts, the meaning of the Hebrew is inherent in the structure of the language. Most modern translations format prose in continuous, full lines, but try to reflect the supposed parallelism of Hebrew poetry. Direct speech is also sometimes indented. Such distinctions can be useful, but they do not reach the heart of the matter, which is the syntax that characterises Hebrew generally and the specific syntax of Hebrew narrative as distinct from Hebrew poetry.

It is common knowledge that the word order of Hebrew is generally VERB-SUBJECT-OBJECT (VSO).<sup>6</sup> In Hebrew narrative that word order is mainly *waw* consecutive + Verb (Imperfect) + Subject + Object - that is, basically VSO, but specifically the imperfect form of the verb, preceded by the *waw* consecutive. Of what practical value is such information, however, or is this a fact that is merely of theoretical interest to linguists working with language typology? Actually very little use has been made of this information in modern Bible translation. Yet to all who can read a narrative in the Hebrew text, the evidence supporting this linguistic information is overwhelming.<sup>7</sup> What should also be noticeable to an observant reader are those sentences in which this conventional word order is not adhered to, that is to say, those sentences in which a word order other than VSO occurs. For if the conventional

<sup>6</sup> GK 142 a-g (especially f and g) and B. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An introduction to Biblical Hebrew syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 129.

<sup>7</sup> R. E. Longacre, “Left shifts in strongly VSO languages,” in *Word order in discourse* (ed. P. Downing, & M. Noonan, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 333-34 argues that “If the storyline clauses in narrative discourse in a given language are VSO, then that language should be classified as a VSO language.” In support of this assertion he cites three reasons: First, monologue discourse is a better guide to language typology than dialogue, since repartee is inclined to lead to departures from the standard word order. Secondly, narrative is the “preeminent” type of monologue discourse, since it is the most universal and most structured of monologue discourse. And thirdly, the storyline is the strongest feature and is indispensable to the entire structure of narrative discourse.

word order is VSO, then it is by design, that is, by authorial intent, that there is a departure from the conventional sequence. The same question arises concerning this phenomenon, however: Of what practical value is such information? Again, no obvious and consistent use has been made of this information in modern Bible translation. Everett Fox made strong appeal for the recognition and restoration of the Hebrew features of Old Testament literature in translation. Yet his rendering of the text of the Pentateuch shows no consistent recognition on his part of these syntactical features.<sup>8</sup>

## B A NEW POSSIBILITY

It is actually a relatively simple matter to reflect the features of Hebrew syntax in an English translation. By means of five margins, whether indicated by means of lines, or the mere indentation of the relevant clauses, it is possible to reflect the syntactic structure of any narrative in the Hebrew Bible and to transfer that five-margin / indented format into the English translation of that passage. I propose that aligned to these five margins should be the following types of clauses and clause structures:

- ***Margin 1***

The storyline, indicated by sentences of the conventional VSO word order and occurring with the narrative structure, *waw* consecutive + imperfect of the verb + subject + object

- ***Margin 2***

Sentences comprising direct speech

- ***Margin 3***

Sentences comprising embedded direct speech, that is to say, speech that is reported by a party other than the original speaker, in which report the original speech is repeated in precisely (or almost precisely) the same form in which it was first pronounced

- ***Margin 4***

Sentences that are introduced by a syntactic particle, that is to say, those sentences that would be traditionally labelled sub-ordinate clauses

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<sup>8</sup> E. Fox, *The five books of Moses*. The Schocken Bible. Vol. 1 (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), ix-xxvi. For a fuller discussion of Fox's work, see the forthcoming article of this author, "The significance of form and sound in the reading of Hebrew texts" in *Journal for Semitics*.

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- **Margin 5**

Sentences that by authorial intent do not follow the conventional word order of VSO, but by means of a different word either continue the storyline or provide a contrasting piece of information to the storyline. All sentences aligned to this final margin have been highlighted by this means.

The above classification is to a large degree a simple matter of identifying observable linguistic features on the page, but in certain instances the process is actually less mechanical than that. These issues require explanation.

First, a distinction should be made between various structures in which the verb *הָיָה* might occur. This verb can occur in precisely the same form as any other verb, that is, with *waw* consecutive + imperfect. However, if this verb occurs in the *Qal* 3 masculine singular form *יָיַה*, and is immediately followed by another verb in the form of the infinitive construct, then this particular verbal form does not continue the story line but is purely stylistic and rather than mark the progression of the storyline, it is part of a construction that provides background information to the storyline, which information is commonly of a chronological nature.

Secondly, since the conventional word order in Hebrew narrative is VSO, it is necessary to consider treating all non-VSO sentences as highlighted information, even when such sentences are introduced by a syntactic particle, that is to say, even when such sentences constitute subordinate clauses. It is then logical that if non-conventional word order is an indication of the highlighting of information, even non-verbal clauses that display a non-conventional word order should be considered highlighted information. Consequently, so-called circumstantial clauses would normally be treated as “stage-setting” information and therefore aligned along the fourth margin with other subordinate clauses. If, however, they display an obvious reversal of the expected word order, in which the predicate precedes the subject, they should be treated as intentionally highlighted and therefore aligned with Margin 5.

The limitations of such an analysis should also be recognised. In the first instance, it is not the task of the editor or translator of a text to provide exegetical explanation of important syntactic features. Furthermore, it might not be possible, from our modern standpoint, to determine the significance of all sequences. For example, there are instances in which a VOS sequence might occur. To suggest a further category for such constructions would require an additional complication, for which there may not be adequate clarity from the text that this is, in fact, a significant deviation from a recognised norm. Furthermore, some elasticity ought to be allowed to cater for idiolectal possibilities – we do not all speak using precisely the same syntactical format, although a conventional format would obviously characterise an effective system of communication. Nor do speakers always intend some special significance to the

words that they utter in different sequences. Even computer assisted searches should not be allowed to refine the proposed analysis to the point where the fragmentation of syntactical data becomes exegetically incomprehensible. The object of this exercise would thereby be defeated. Although such refinements might yield a linguist's paradise, it would probably no longer be a readable text for the average teacher and reader of the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup>

### C A TEST CASE

The proposed approach has been tested in the initial chapters of Genesis 1- 20 and the entire book of Judges (chapters 1-21). Obviously space will not allow all this material to be displayed here. Instead the introductory chapter of Judges and portion of the story of Samson may serve as a test case.

Our proposed approach is an attempt to adhere as far as possible to the Hebrew/Jewish tradition by which this text was transmitted over the centuries. Thus in contrast to the approach of modern editors of the Hebrew text, as well as translators and modern commentators, the syntactical analysis should include recognition of the traditional divisions of the Hebrew source text. Although the editors of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) have faithfully indicated the sense divisions inherited by the Masoretes, modern commentators and translators appear to generally disregard these traditional divisions in the text. The significance of the “open” (אָמֵנָה) and “closed” (אָמָנָה) paragraphs is not fully understood and these divisions do not occur in precisely the same point of the text in all manuscripts. However, the ancient use of these divisions can be demonstrated by reference to the Dead Sea scrolls and their later more consistent appearance at various points of the text is demonstrable from the manuscripts of Nahal Hever and Wadi Muraba’at.<sup>10</sup> If the intention of a translation is to convey the Hebrew character of the text, these divisions should also be adhered to, together with the proposed syntactical analysis. In addition to

<sup>9</sup> L. J. de Regt, “Word order in different clause types in Deuteronomy 1-30,” in *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic syntax* (ed. K. Jongeling; New York: Brill, 1991) 152-172, conducted a computer based analysis of the word order in different clause types in Deuteronomy 1-30. The results are reflected in spread sheets covering four pages of the publication. The translation of these tables of figures into verbal explanations of the position of the subject or object requires such qualifications as “more often,” “most,” “only slightly more,” “very few” and “only 10.6%.” Such analyses are necessary for the specialist linguist and hopefully will yield more concrete results for the average reader in the future, but I see little use for such refinements in the analysis currently under discussion. The dominant word order in main and subordinate clauses remains VSO.

<sup>10</sup> Even in mediaeval manuscripts there is some inconsistency, however. See E. Tov, *Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 50-51 and P. H. Kelly, D. S. Mynatt & T. G. Crawford, *The masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 155-156 and 167.

preserving the Hebrew character of the text, adherence to these ancient sense divisions may have some effect upon the interpretation of a passage, since they imply an ancient understanding of the text. Similarly the sense divisions employed by modern translators and commentators are not decorative but interpretative in intent. Highlighted sentences within the ancient sense units might provide a somewhat different nuance to the narrative, compared to the nuance suggested in modern interpretations that are dismissive of these ancient indicators. To illustrate the difference between an “emic” approach to the division of text, in contrast to the “etic” approach of modern translators and commentators, use will be made of the NEB and the Cambridge commentary on the book of Judges.<sup>11</sup>

## 1      Judges 1:1-36

The introductory chapter of Judges is actually divided somewhat differently in the NEB from the divisions imposed by J.D. Martin in the Cambridge commentaries (1975:16, 24). The NEB only has four headings in its translated text, which four headings actually reflect the thinking of the translators concerning the composition of the book as a whole. The first section of the book, according to the translators of NEB is “The conquest of Canaan completed,” which heading covers 1:1 – 2:6. Martin also reflects these four sections, but he identifies smaller sense units in his citation of the NEB translation. He divides chapter 1 into the following divisions:

## 1:1-20 The settlement of southern Palestine

## 1:21-36 The settlement in central and northern Palestine

The masoretic divisions are quite different. They occur in relation to the report relevant to each tribe and so focus attention on the lone success of Judah (according to this narrator) in sharp contrast to the failures of Benjamin and the northern tribes. These divisions are as follows: 1:7, 15, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36. In each of these divisions the reader's attention is drawn to a particular aspect of the account by means of a non-VSO sentence:

1:1-7 יהודה יعلا (1:2)

כִּי אָרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב נִתְּחַנֵּן (1:15)

וְאֵת הַיּוֹם יִשְׁבַּת יְרוּשָׁלָם לְאַחֲרֵי בְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (1:21)

וְאֵת-הָאִישׁ וְאֵת-כָּל-מִשְׁפָחָתוֹ שְׁלַחוּ (1:25)

<sup>11</sup> The terms “emic” and “etic” are used above with the same sense in which they are defined by D. Crystal, *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989: 108).

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1:27-28	וְלֹא-הָזְרִישׁ מִנְשָׁה אֶת-בֵּית-שָׁן וְאֶת-בְּנוֹתָה (1:27)
1:29	וְאַפְרִים לֹא הָזְרִישׁ אֶת-הַפְּנִינִי (1:29)
1:30	זָבְילָן לֹא הָזְרִישׁ אֶת-יְוָשָׁבִי קָטְרוֹן (1:30)
1:31-32	אָשֵׁר לֹא הָזְרִישׁ אֶת-יְשָׁבִי עַפּוֹ (1:31)
1:33-36	נְפָתֵלִי לֹא-הָזְרִישׁ אֶת-יְשָׁבִי בֵּית-שָׁמֶשׁ (1:33) וְיְשָׁבִי בֵּית-שָׁמֶשׁ וּבֵית-עֲנָתָה קַיִלְתָּם לְמַס (1:33)

Whilst it is not the duty of an editor or translator to interpret details of the text, it cannot be imagined that the average reader would appreciate the possible significance of the formatted text (see the appendix to this article). It would therefore be necessary to at least inform the reader that not every highlighted sentence, that is to say, sentences occurring in non-VSO sequence and therefore aligned with Margin 5, is theologically important. Highlighting appears to have been used both to draw attention to important, perhaps theological statements and simply as a literary device, to signal the end of a section. There is possibly therefore no theological significance intended in the highlighted sentences of 1:15 and 1:33 (second sentence). Theological significance is very possibly intended in the highlighting of all the other sentences listed above. In an earlier generation of scholarship, Judges was treated as a historical report on the period following Joshua's conquest of Canaan. The theological thrust of the book and the reason for its "place in the Canon" were said to be evident in the framework to the stories, which framework interpreted events as a succession of various tribes' transgressions and pleas for forgiveness. Israel's failure to conquer the inhabitants of Canaan demonstrated the consequences of unfaithfulness to the God of Israel. The book of Judges is now viewed as much more nuanced than that. It is rather to be viewed as a political statement that attributes to Judah a leadership role, which attribution is very significant in the light of the critical disruptions to royal succession in the Northern Kingdom and the eventual disappearance of the northern tribes.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the latter opinion is often based on a more recent re-reading of the text of Judges and theories concerning post-exilic (Deuteronomistic) composition of Biblical books, it is possible to gain a very similar view (at least of the leader-

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<sup>12</sup> The views of the following scholars reflect this shift in interpretation over the past fifty years: G. F. Moore, *Judges* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958); J. Gray, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth* (The Century Bible. London: Nelson, 1967); C. F. Burney, *The book of Judges and notes on the Hebrew text of the book of Kings* (New York: Ktav, 1970); R. Boling, *Judges* (New York: Doubleday, 1975); J. D. Martin *The Book of Judges* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); J. A. Soggin *Judges* (London: SCM, 1987); E. J. Hamlin, *At risk in the promised land: A commentary on the book of Judges* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1990) and M. A. Sweeney, "Davidic polemics in the book of Judges." *VT* XLVII (1997): 517- 529.

ship role of Judah) by means of the above evaluation of the syntax of Judges 1. That the author intentionally highlighted those sentences that reported the success of Judah in contrast to the failures of the northern tribes cannot be ignored and on examination is found to be helpful in understanding the book as a whole. It may therefore be very valuable to the average reader of an English rendition to read a translation that has been structured in such a way as to reflect precisely the syntax of the Hebrew. Whilst Martin's division of this chapter into two main sections, based on the geographical facts of the situation is sensible, the divisions of the masoretic parashiyoth oblige the reader to focus on each tribe individually. The coincidence of highlighted syntax and the masoretic divisions seems to underline the distinction between Judah's success and the failure of each of the other tribes.

The story of Samson also yields interesting feedback when the proposed formatting is applied. There are many sentences with a non-VSO sequence in Judges 13:1-16:31, in fact, too many to attempt to discuss all of them in this paper. The content of certain of these sentences is significant for the narrative as a whole. These particular sentences occur in the early phases of the story of Samson and are clearly theologically significant. They concern the instruction of the בָּנָה, אִישׁ הַנְּאָלָה, who appears to the wife of Manoah and announces the birth of Samson (Judg 13:1-5).<sup>13</sup> Note that it is not the miraculous aspect of the story, that is, the fact that this barren woman is to give birth that is highlighted. It is rather the instruction that the child will be a Nazirite that is presented in non-VSO sequence (13:5):

.5	וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
	וְמִזְרָחָה לְאַ-נְּצָלָה עַל-רַ-אֲשֹׁוֹ	
	כִּי-נְזִיר אֲלֵי הַיּוֹם יְהִי הַבָּרָךְ מִן-הַבָּטָן	
	וְהַיּוֹם יְהִי נְזִיר לְהַזְּשִׁיעַ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן-פְּלִשְׁתִּים	

The statement declaring the child a Nazirite from birth (and, by implication, to death) is repeated when the woman reports the matter to Manoah (13:7):

<sup>13</sup> The relevant passage is cited in full, in the proposed five-margin format, in the appendix to this article.

נִיְאָמַר קָרְבָּן	וְיִלְתַּת בָּנוֹ	עַפְתָּה אֶל-מִשְׁתַּחַת יְבוּן וְשָׁכַר	כָּל-תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל-טְמָאָה	כִּי נִזְרֵר אֶל-הַיּוֹם יְהוָה הַנּוּר מִן-הַבָּטָן עַד-יּוֹם מוֹתָה:
תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל-טְמָאָה	וְיִלְתַּת בָּנוֹ	עַפְתָּה אֶל-מִשְׁתַּחַת יְבוּן וְשָׁכַר	כָּל-תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל-טְמָאָה	כִּי נִזְרֵר אֶל-הַיּוֹם יְהוָה הַנּוּר מִן-הַבָּטָן עַד-יּוֹם מוֹתָה:

When Manoah meets the woman, מלאך יהוה, all the instruction given to the woman is repeated to Manoah. All the instructions are in highlighted (non-VSO) sequence, including the instructions concerning produce of the vine and avoidance of what is ceremonially unclean (13:13,14):

נִיְאָמַר מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה אֶל-מְנוּחָה	.13
מִפְּלָאָה-אָמְרָתִי אֶל-הַאֲשָׁה מִשְׁמָרָה:	
מִפְּלָאָה-אָשָׁר-יֵצֵא מִגְּפֹן הַיּוֹם לְאֶת-אָכֵל	.14
וְיַיְן וְשָׁכַר אֶל-מִשְׁתַּחַת	
וְכָל-טְמָאָה אֶל-תְּאַכֵּל	
כָּל-אָשָׁר-צְוִיתִיךְ פְּשָׁמָרָה:	

When Samson betrays his secret to Delilah (16:17), his revelation is highlighted in non-VSO word order, just as it is in 13:5:

וְיִאָדֶל-לָה אֶת-כָּל-לִבּוֹ	.17
נִיְאָמַר קָרְבָּן	
מוֹרָה לְאֶעָלֶה עַל-רְאֵשִׁי	
כִּי-נִזְרֵר אֶל-הַיּוֹם אָנִי מִבָּטָן אָמֵן	
אָמ-גָּלְחָתִי	
וְסַר מִפְנֵי כְּחֵי	
וְקַלְיָתִי	
וְקַיִתִי כְּכָל-הָאָדָם	

## 2 Observations

It should be noted that when Samson finally divulges his secret to Delilah, his words are a verbatim repetition of the messenger's instruction concerning the shaving of the hair. Even more noteworthy is the fact that what pertains to the Nazirite vow occurs in this third instance again in highlighted (non-VSO) sequence. It is surely possible if not probable that the author thereby underlined the religious status of Samson as a Nazirite, and quite possibly intended to draw attention to the importance of Samson's deliberately breaking the vow made to God. This second aspect, namely of Samson's breaking his vow, in this highlighted sentence in 16:17 is in stark contrast to Jephthah's faithfulness in the preceding story, despite the serious complication of Jephthah's vow (Jg 11). These significant syntactical features are not evident in the NEB, nor in any other translation, nor are they discussed in the Cambridge companion commentary to the NEB text.

With reference to the scribal divisions and their possible usefulness, it should be noted that Martin (1975: 153-155) does not divide Judges 13:1-24 into smaller sections, but retains it as a unit entitled simply, "The birth of Samson." Scribal divisions of the text occur at 13:1, 13:7, 13:18 and 13:25. Thus 13:1 appears to be a bridging comment that resumes the story of Israel's repetitive sinning, after a brief allusion to other judges in the list of 12:8-15. The woman's encounter with the divine messenger (13:2-7) is treated by the scribes as a separate unit from Manoah's encounter (13:8-18) and the subsequent discovery of the messenger's true identity (13:19-25). Whilst this scribal division might initially be treated as irrelevant, it should be remembered that the instruction given to the woman, is repeated to the man. That these instructions are repeated to two different people, in two separate parashiyoth, and that a particular sentence is highlighted in both parashiyoth, are made more evident by the masoretes' distinguishing between these two sections. When the proposed syntactical analysis is added to the use of these scribal divisions, the Hebrew features of the text become evident in stark contrast to Martin's translation - that is, the rendering in the NEB – and to Martin's very general heading.

There is a considerable amount of text separating the instruction regarding Samson's Nazirite status - first to the woman and then to Manoah - from the report of Samson's divulging his secret to Delilah. Nevertheless, the fact that the words are in precisely the same sequence in both texts is a significant feature of which the average reader would be unaware, and which modern translations fail to bring to their attention. This short-coming in translations can be overcome by means of the proposed syntactical analysis and its presentation in the suggested format.

### Appendix: Judges 13:1-7 according to the proposed five-margin format

<p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמֶּלֶךְ כְּנָעָן וְיִתְהַנֵּם יְהוָה בְּנֵיךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֶרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה:</p> <p>ב</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמֶּלֶךְ כְּנָעָן יְשָׁמֹן מִנְחָת וְאַשְׁתָּו עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת:</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת וְקִרְבָּת וְלִלְדָת בָּן וְעַפְתָּה הַשְׁמָרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתַּחַטְבֵּין וְשָׁכַר וְאַל־תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל־טָמֵא:</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת בָּן וְמִזְרָח לְאַיִלְתָּה עַל־רַאשׁוֹ כִּי־נִזְרָא אֶל־נֵיִם יְהוָה הַפְּנֵר מִן־הַבְּטָן וְהִיא יָחַל לְהַשְׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִדְיָן פְּלִשְׁתִּים:</p> <p>וְתַּבְּא אֶת־הַאֲשָׁה וְתַּאֲמִר לְאִישָׁה לְאִמְרָה</p> <p>אִישׁ כְּאַלְמִימָד בְּאַלְמִימָד וּמְרַאַתְּה כְּמַרְאָה מְלָאָן כְּאַלְמִימָד הַיּוֹם נוֹרָא מְאַד וְלֹא שָׁאַלְתִּי הָאֵי מִזְרָח הָאָה וְאַתְּ-שָׁמוֹן לְאַ-הַגִּיד לִי:</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת בָּן וְעַפְתָּה אַל־תִּשְׁתַּחַטְבֵּין וְשָׁכַר וְאַל־תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל־טָמֵא:</p> <p>כִּי־נִזְרָא אֶל־הַיּוֹם יְהוָה הַפְּנֵר מִן־הַבְּטָן עַד־יּוֹם מוֹתָה:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ב</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמֶּלֶךְ כְּנָעָן וְיִתְהַנֵּם יְהוָה בְּנֵיךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֶרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה:</p> <p>2.</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמֶּלֶךְ כְּנָעָן יְשָׁמֹן מִנְחָת וְאַשְׁתָּו עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת:</p> <p>3.</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת וְקִרְבָּת וְלִלְדָת בָּן וְעַפְתָּה הַשְׁמָרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתַּחַטְבֵּין וְשָׁכַר וְאַל־תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל־טָמֵא:</p> <p>4.</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת בָּן וְעַפְתָּה אַל־תִּשְׁתַּחַטְבֵּין וְשָׁכַר וְאַל־תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל־טָמֵא:</p> <p>5.</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת בָּן וְמִזְרָח לְאַיִלְתָּה עַל־רַאשׁוֹ כִּי־נִזְרָא אֶל־נֵיִם יְהוָה הַפְּנֵר מִן־הַבְּטָן וְהִיא יָחַל לְהַשְׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִדְיָן פְּלִשְׁתִּים:</p> <p>6.</p> <p>וְתַּבְּא אֶת־הַאֲשָׁה וְתַּאֲמִר לְאִישָׁה לְאִמְרָה</p> <p>7.</p> <p>אִישׁ כְּאַלְמִימָד בְּאַלְמִימָד וּמְרַאַתְּה כְּמַרְאָה מְלָאָן כְּאַלְמִימָד הַיּוֹם נוֹרָא מְאַד וְלֹא שָׁאַלְתִּי הָאֵי מִזְרָח הָאָה וְאַתְּ-שָׁמוֹן לְאַ-הַגִּיד לִי:</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלֹת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יַלְדֵת בָּן וְעַפְתָּה אַל־תִּשְׁתַּחַטְבֵּין וְשָׁכַר וְאַל־תְּאַכְּלֵי כָּל־טָמֵא:</p> <p>כִּי־נִזְרָא אֶל־הַיּוֹם יְהוָה הַפְּנֵר מִן־הַבְּטָן עַד־יּוֹם מוֹתָה:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ב</p>
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(The text above has been presented as it occurs in Codex Leningradensis (BHS), without any emendation.)

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