Dividing the Blame:[1] Saul's Curse and Jonathan's Breaking of It in 1 Samuel 14:24-45

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Abstract:
The narrative of 1 Samuel 13-14 tells how Saul and Jonathan begin to free Israel from the power of the Philistines (cf. 1 Sm 9:16). The narrative concludes, however, with the remark that 'Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place' (14:46). The victory over the Philistines was not big enough to keep them from coming back again and again. Who is to blame for this? Early Jewish and Christian sources tend to blame either Saul or Jonathan, although some look at the hesitant attitude of Saul's army. The sources are read in their historical environment: each environment triggers another way of reading this story and thereby another person to blame.

Keywords:
1 Samuel 14, Saul and Jonathan, fasting, perjury, oath, curse

Introduction

The narrative of 1 Samuel 13-14 tells how Saul and Jonathan begin to free Israel from the power of the Philistines (cf. 1 Sm 9:16). The narrative concludes, however, with the remark that 'Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place' (14:46). The victory over the Philistines was not big enough to keep them from coming back again and again. Who is to blame for this is one of the themes of chapter 14. Is it the army who heard Saul's curse, but did not warn Jonathan before he ate from the honeywell (cf. Lv 5:1)? Is it Jonathan who keeps his father at a distance and therefore accidentally falls under his curse? The outcome of the drawing of lots seems to suggest so (14:42). Or is it ultimately Saul's fault because he had pronounced a curse on eating and thereby endangered both the army and Jonathan? This is the opinion of Jonathan seeing how exhausted the people are (14:29-30), although it should also be noted that the author seems to support Jonathan's opinion by noting only one verse later that the people are even 'extremely exhausted' (14:31).

[1] This article is an improved and expanded version of a lecture given during the conference 'The Bible, the Language and the Context: Recontextualisation of the Hebrew Bible in Antiquity', held at the University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, 26th-28th February 2024.

At the end of the narrative the reader is left wondering what had actually happened and certainly how the author thought God would have viewed this. Could God have been pleased with the outcome, while Saul did not keep his curse and his oath, and while Jonathan acknowledged his guilt but was not punished in any way? Should the story not have ended with some kind of atonement ritual, for example with a sin offering[2] or financial compensation[3] for Jonathan's guilt? Why is it that Jephthah felt obliged to sacrifice his only daughter because of his oath and Saul can get away with doing nothing in exactly the same situation?[4] These issues around guilt and redemption have been the research questions of this lecture. I will follow the lead from the Hebrew text to ancient Bible translations and Josephus, and then further to early Jewish and Christian authors reflecting on this narrative.

Ancient Translations and Josephus

The translation of the Septuagint does nothing to diminish Jonathan's guilt, but the part of the narrative focusing on Saul's curse and all its consequences (14:24-46) starts by framing Saul as the guilty one: 'And Saoul was ignorant with great ignorance[5] in that day, and he laid an oath on the people…' (14:24).[6] Saul did not realise, according to LXX, what he was doing when he forced his army into a fast on the day of this battle. While Jonathan was just ignorant of the oath, Saul's ignorance surpassed Jonathan's by far. The LXX makes Saul's curse even more difficult to accomplish by adding that all the land ate their meal at that time (14:25). The Greek story ends with two interventions by the people. First, they claim the right to decide what happens to Jonathan on the basis of their achievements: 'The Lord lives; shall a hair of his head fall to the ground?—for the people of God wrought this day' (14:45). Second, they pray for Jonathan (14:45), suggesting that his guilt must somehow be reconciled before, or forgiven by, God.

Some elements from the Greek translation are integrated into Josephus' retelling of this narrative, but in an exaggerated way.[7] Saul is blamed at the very start, although Josephus also tries to explain his stupidity:

> whether through exultation at a victory so unexpected—for men are apt to lose control of reason when thus blest by fortune—or through ignorance, he rushed into a dreadful and very blameworthy deed. For, in his desire to avenge himself and to exact punishment from the Philistines, he invoked a curse upon the Hebrews…[8]

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[2] The suggestion seems to be implied in BT Sabbath 95a; Bava Batra 80b.

[3] So R. Eliezer in Midrash Shmuel 17.3.

[4] For the similarities and differences in theme, storyline, and groups of characters (father, child, community), see Kyung-ji Ha, 'An Intertextual Study of Jephthah's Community ('Judges 11') and Saul's community ('1 Samuel 14')', *Literature and Religion* 25.4 (2020), 139-161.

[5] The wording of Saul's ignorance bears no allusion to LXX Leviticus 5:15, whereas the ignorance of Jonathan will be linked to this Torah verse in Jewish sources.

[6] All the English LXX quotations come from Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), in this case 258-59.

[7] The retelling of chapters 13-14 is found in Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, VI.95-129. Michael Avioz, 'Josephus' Retelling of the Jonathan Narratives', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudephigrapha* 22.1 (2012), 68-86, esp. 75, concludes that Josephus used both the MT and the LXX tradition.

[8] Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, VI.116-117. English translations are taken from H.St.J. Thackeray and Ralph Marcus, *Josephus Jewish Antiquities, Books V-VIII* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press & London: William Heinemann, 1988).

At the same time, King Saul is also depicted as very pious:[9] *he* summons the priest to inquire of God instead of the other way around (VI.122) and he quotes Isaiah 65:24 in his explanation of God's silence (VI.123). His oath to kill the perpetrator is made because he wants to 'propitiate God', not only to revenge himself (VI.124) and he is said to 'respect his oath more than the tender ties of fatherhood and of nature' (VI.126).[10] Jonathan is depicted as noble and magnanimous in surrendering to his father's wishes (VI.127), which made the people 'move to grief and sympathy' (VI.128). Jonathan's speech shows his willingness to die on behalf of his father and in order to secure a victory over the Philistines. This is one of the many instances of glorifying martyrdom in the works of Josephus.[11] Jonathan himself diminishes his guilt by answering Saul's question on what he had done: 'Of nothing, father, save that yesterday, all ignorant of that imprecation and oath of thine… I tasted a honeycomb' (VI.126). In the end, it is the people who objected, 'not only to protect the heroic son of the king, but also to restore the king to his own values': Saul himself had refused to execute his opponents after his victory over the Ammonites with the words, 'it would be improper to defile by bloodshed the victory God has given and to celebrate the festival by the mutual murder of their relatives'.[12] The people, therefore, pray for the young man—as was stated in the Septuagint—and Josephus explicitly adds the aim of their prayer: 'that [God] would grant him absolution from his sin' (VI.128).[13]

Another picture is sketched in Targum Jonathan, which translates rather literally, except for some small details. The start of the narrative on the curse seems to shift the blame to the people. They 'kept themselves at a distance' and therefore Saul made them swear the curse that is also in the Hebrew text, pressing the people to take ownership of the revenge on their enemies (TJ 1 Sm 14:24).[14] The end of the narrative takes the blame away from Jonathan, at least according to the people. They swear: 'As the Lord is the existing One, there shall not a single hair of his head fall to the ground, for it is revealed before the Lord that he did so accidentally (בשלו) this day' (TJ 1 Sm 14:45).[15] The lack of any compensation or prayer seems to imply that his accidental breaking of the curse does not count. And since the people were the owner of the curse, they could also decide to withdraw the curse or to refrain from its consequences.

In short, the early Greek versions look to Saul as the ultimate guilty one: he started with his curse and thereby endangered the people and his own son Jonathan. Also, Targum Jonathan takes the blame away from Jonathan. The two translations strengthen the position of the people by making them owner of the victory (LXX) or owner of the curse (TJon). There is a difference of opinion concerning Jonathan's guilt: the Greek sources state that there was guilt and it had to be forgiven, while the Aramaic source uses Jonathan's ignorance as a sign of the absence of guilt.

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[9] For the ambivalent character of King Saul in Josephus' writings, see Louis Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Saul', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 53 (1982), 45-99, esp. 56: 'In case of Saul, Josephus was faced with the problem of trying to reconcile the praise of one hero with an even greater praise of his mortal foe, David…'

[10] Although this might seem a negative assessment of Saul, Philo of Alexandria in his *Special Laws*, 1.315-316, exhorts his readers to punish false prophets, even of their own blood 'taking little thought for the ties which bind us to him'. Obeying God is better than giving in to the 'tender ties of fatherhood'. Gratitude is due to Sarah Pearce, who pointed out this fragment from Philo to me. See also the assessment of Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Saul', 83.

[11] Michael Avioz, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Books of Samuel* (Library of Second Temple Studies, 86; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 50.

[12] Ibid., 47. Josephus' quote comes from *Jewish Antiquities*, VI.82.

[13] See also Avioz, 'Josephus' Retelling,' 75.

[14] See Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel* (SAIS, 1; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 312.

[15] Translation from ibid., 317. The Aramaic word is similar to the word for 'sinning accidentally' in Targum Onkelos Leviticus 5:15 as well as Targum Neofiti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan in this verse.

Rabbinic Discussions

A few places in the Babylonian Talmud show references to the story of Saul's curse and its consequences. There is a discussion on the question of whether Saul's curse counts as an oath or not (BT Shevuot 36a). In the lists of haphazard requests Saul is mentioned, not with regard to his curse, but with regard to his promise to give his daughter to the soldier who would conquer the giant Goliath (Genesis Rabbah 60:3; BT Taanit 4a).[16] It is remarkable that the lists put Saul and Jephthah in succession, but do not draw the parallel between their children, who were both threatened to be killed by their father.[17] The guilt of Jonathan is acknowledged, even if he acted unwittingly: he is mentioned as an example for someone 'who removes honeycombs, even if he did so unwittingly on Shabbat' and is therefore 'liable to bring a sin-offering' (BT Shabbat 95a).

Later Jewish literature also acknowledges Jonathan's guilt, for example, Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (eighth-century Italy[18]) in the context of 'the ban' (חרם). Saul is described as a wise and pious king, who saw that 'the Philistines [were] returning against Israel, and he knew that Israel had trespassed in the matter of the ban'.[19] He could see in the twelve stones of the twelve tribes that Benjamin was guilty, because 'its stone was dim'. When 'he took his sword to kill his son', the people saved Jonathan by saying 'O lord king! It was an unintentional sin (שגגה)!' The last word is an allusion to Leviticus 5:15. PRE seems to follow the reasoning of Targum Jonathan, except that R. Eliezer explicitly acknowledges Jonathan's guilt and has the people bring a burnt offering on behalf of Jonathan's sin—not a guilt offering, as Leviticus prescribes.

Midrash Shmuel, discussed here because it is an amalgam of earlier and later quotations,[20] quotes Rabbi Eliezer, but instead of referring to an offering he supposed that the people paid Jonathan's weight in gold (משקלו זהב) to redeem him from his guilt. After this quote, Midrash Shmuel cites a discussion, in which R. Johanan appears to deny Jonathan's guilt, because he ate honey and no bread (לחם)—and Saul only mentioned the word bread (לחם) in his curse (1 Sm 14:24). R. Shimon ben Lakish responds that Jonathan did eat something against his father's intentions, implying that he needed redemption.[21]

Although early Jewish sources acknowledge that Jonathan sinned unintentionally, they also come to the conclusion that atonement must be made for Jonathan. Three solutions were offered for this atonement (sin offering, burnt offering, compensation), but no one adopts the LXX solution of prayer. No one is blaming Saul for cursing or swearing too fast. He is described in a neutral way or as a pious king.

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[16] See Klaas Spronk, 'Jephthah and Saul: An Intertextual Reading of Judges 11:29-40 in Comparison with Rabbinic Exegesis', in Klaas Spronk and Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *Hebrew Text in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica, 69; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 23-35, esp. 26.

[17] See all the parallels between the two narratives in ibid., 33-35.

[18] Joseph Jacobs and Schulim Ochser, 'Pirḳe de-Rabbi Eli`ezer', *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12185-pirke-de-rabbi-eli-ezer.

[19] *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 38, translation from Sefaria, accessed 14th February 2024, https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.38.20?lang=bi.

[20] To be dated before Rashi (1040-1105), because he quotes from it. Wilhelm Bacher and Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 'Samuel, Midrash to', *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10809-midrash-shemuel describe it as 'a collection of sentences found in (…) midrashim and referring to the books of Samuel. The editor arranged the sentences in the sequence of the Scripture passages to which they refer.'

[21] So Midrash Shmuel 17.3, Sefaria, accessed 14th February 2024, https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Shmuel.17.3?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en. Rashi used Jeremiah 11:19 to prove that the word 'bread' includes all food.

Chrysostom's Sermons

Similar to the Jewish lists of haphazard requests, John Chrysostom (c.345-407) gives a list of oaths in the Old Testament after which people suffer the consequences of this oath. In his thirteenth homily on Acts, Chrysostom mentions the tribe of Benjamin (Jgs 21), Saul (1 Sm 14), and Joshua (Jo 9).[22] He concludes by saying that Saul perjured himself.

Swearing and perjury are topics that are mentioned in almost every single sermon of Chrysostom's series of homilies on the statues.[23] This series of homilies was held during Lent of the year 387. In that year Emperor Theodosius I imposed a tax, but people in the city of Antioch revolted, culminating 'in the overturning of the imperial statues'.[24] Afterwards, the populace feared that the emperor would command the entire city to be destroyed. It was only in the third week of Lent that people heard that the sentence was not total destruction, although many members of the city council 'were arrested and tried, some being condemned to death, others to exile'. Some monks sent a petition to Theodosius begging for mercy, but it was 'not until just before Easter that Theodosius' full pardon becomes known and complete calm returns to Antioch'.[25] These events gave Chrysostom plenty of material for his series of homilies during Lent.

The fourteenth sermon of the series is entirely devoted to the prohibition of swearing, because people swore too easily and too quickly, leading to grief for the one who pronounced the oath—'both when violated and when kept'.[26] Chrysostom starts his sermon with a simple example to show how perjury is an easy result of quick oaths:

> Thus, oftentimes when we are dining at home, and one of the servants happens to do amiss, the wife swears that he shall be flogged, and then the husband swears the contrary, resisting, and not permitting it. In this case, whatever they may do, perjury must in any case be the result; for however much they may wish and endeavour to keep their oaths, it is no longer possible…[27]

The rest of the sermon consists of a retelling of 1 Samuel 14:24-45. Since Chrysostom was very much opposed to swearing (based on Mt 5:34), he starts his retelling by blaming Saul, because he 'did that which was altogether opposite to what he desired, by swearing that no one should eat any food until evening, and until vengeance was taken of his enemies. What, I ask, could have been more senseless than this?' Having explained that soldiers need food in order to be able to deliver their physical work—and thereby taking Jonathan's viewpoint from the narrative—he continues by explaining that Saul created a pitfall for both his soldiers and for his son Jonathan, because in the end it is Saul who 'impelled Jonathan to the trespass'.[28] It is at this point of his retelling that he makes the comparison with Jephthah who fell into his own pitfall by his oath.[29]

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[22] At the end of Chrysostom, *Homily 13 on the Acts of the Apostles*, New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/210113.htm.

[23] Frans van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues: An Introduction* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 239; Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1991), 5. At the same time Gregory of Nazianzus is opposed to taking oaths, for example, in his *Carmina Moralia* I.2.24; see Moshe Bildstein, 'Swearing by the Book: Oaths and the Rise of Scripture in the Roman Empire', *Revue genevoise d'anthropologie et d'histoire des religions* 12 (2017), 53-72, esp. 68-69.

[24] Van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom*, xxi. See pp. 21-23 for more about the revolt.

[25] Van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom*, xxi.

[26] Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*, 14.3, New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/190114.htm.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 14.8.

[29] Ibid., 14.7.

Saul further constricts himself with a second oath, 'even while the offender was not produced yet'.[30] When retelling the third oath by Saul, Chrysostom sighs: 'He did not learn self-control!'[31] And when the people swore that Jonathan would not die, he comes to his conclusion, parallel to his opening example: 'Of necessity then it followed, that the oath must in any wise be broken through. For it were impossible that all these should keep their oaths.'[32] The final result is that the Philistines were not conquered and the people of Israel continued to suffer under their attacks: 'the capture of their cities, as well as of their wives and children; the ravages of fire, the invasion of barbarians, the pollution of sacred things, and ten thousand other evils yet more distressing.'[33] His overall statement is that everyone—Saul, Jonathan, and the people—are guilty of perjury or breaking someone else's oath.[34]

In the end, Chrysostom compares abstinence from swearing with the abstinence from bathing that is imposed by the emperor, for one of the immediate punishments of the city had been the closing of the baths.[35] Chrysostom admits that not bathing is difficult[36] and can even be unhealthy, but not swearing which is

> exceedingly easy, and brings no injury at all; none to the body, none to the mind; but, on the contrary, great gain, much safety, and abundant wealth. How then is it anything but absurd, to submit to the greatest hardships, when an Emperor enjoins it; but when God commands nothing grievous nor difficult, but what is very tolerable and easy, to despise or to deride it, and to advance custom as an excuse?[37]

With a last reference to Ben Sira 23:10, Chrysostom strengthens the link between oaths and sin: 'For as a slave who is constantly under scrutiny will not lack bruises, so also the person who always swears and utters the Name will never be free from sin.' This is the line of his entire sermon: Saul uttered a curse and two oaths, and that caused the people to trespass against the prohibition to eat blood, Jonathan to break the fast, Saul himself to commit perjury, and the Israelites to suffer under the extended control of the Philistines. The lens of the forbidden oath, used by Chrysostom to explain this narrative, means that he adopts Jonathan's viewpoint and blames Saul. In the process, he neglects to pay attention to the question of guilt with regard to Jonathan.

Latin Church Fathers

A totally different perspective on Saul and Jonathan is given by Latin Church Fathers. Saul is the pious king in these writings, declaring a solemn fast, and Jonathan is the one violating it. Two authors even accuse Jonathan of gluttony, one of the capital sins.

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[30] Ibid., 14.11. In section 14.12 he explains how stupid it was to make the threat of the death penalty at that moment, because no one would be willing to produce the offender in this situation. Saul 'again does that which is directly contrary to what he desires'.
[31] Ibid., 14.12.
[32] Ibid., 14.13.
[33] Ibid., 14.14.
[34] Ibid., 14.7 and 14.13.
[35] Van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom*, 78.
[36] Chrysostom in sermon 18 mocks the people who say they cannot tolerate the closure of the baths: 'How many months, I ask, how many years have passed? You have not yet been shut out from the baths for twenty days, and you are so much distressed and discontented as if you have continued without washing for a whole year!' Van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom*, 347.
[37] Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*, 14.15.

Tertullian (c.155-c.220), in his treatise on fasting, refers to Saul as an example in that he had declared a fast until the end of the day. He then refers to Jonathan and describes him as having 'been convicted of gluttony, although of a simple kind'.[38] This is in line with the beginning of his treatise, where he accuses the Psychics of being against fasting because they are 'bursting with gluttony'.[39] Tertullian takes into account mitigating circumstances, such as Jonathan's ignorance and the little bit of honey he ate, but still Jonathan was only 'exempted from punishment through the prayer of the people'.[40] The reference to the people's prayer shows that Tertullian used the LXX tradition as his basic text. Likewise in his treatise against Marcion, Tertullian states that Jonathan's 'guilt of a violated fast' (*resignati ieiunii culpam*)[41] was forgiven by supplication. He continues by stating that God 'will have mercy rather than sacrifice, and a sinner's repentance rather than his death'.[42]

Jerome (c.342-420) also uses the LXX tradition[43] in his treatise against Jovinianus, where he defends abstinence in his second book. He mentions several examples of fasting from the Old Testament, among which is Saul's proclamation of the fast.[44] He ends his example by mentioning that 'the prayers of the people barely saved' Jonathan.[45] He also refers to Jonathan in his treatise against the Pelagians, where he argues that ignorance 'is not without sin' in his first book: '[Jonathan's] life was in danger because he acted through ignorance.' The prayer of the people led to his salvation: 'And he was subsequently delivered through the intercession and prayers of the people.'[46]

Maximus of Turin (c.380-c.465) places a reference to Jonathan in the context of Lent, clearly in a time of an impending war.[47] The forty days of fasting was 'most holy', as he states in his fiftieth sermon.[48] Fasting during Lent was obligatory:

> Just as fasting during the rest of the year is profitable, so not to fast during Quadragesima is sinful. For the one fast is voluntary, the other necessary; the one comes from free choice, the other from the law; to the one we are invited, to the other obliged.[49]

In sermon 69, Maximus compares fasting with a wall against the enemy. It may make the Christian physically weak, but the apostle Paul had already stated that he is strong, when he is physically weak (2 Cor 12:10). Maximus therefore exhorts his hearers to 'observe the fasts of 40 days without

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[38] Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 10, in John R. Franke, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, OT IV; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 249.
[39] Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 1, New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0408.htm.
[40] Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 10, in Franke, *Joshua*, 249.
[41] C. Moreschini, *Tertulliani Adversus Marcionem* (Milan: Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1971), 183.
[42] Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, IV.10, New Advent https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/03124.htm.
[43] Absent in his translation of 1 Samuel 14 of the Vulgate.
[44] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, II.15, in Franke, *Joshua*, 248-49.
[45] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, II.15,
[46] Jerome, *Against the Pelagians*, I.33, in Franke, *Joshua*, 251.
[47] Andreas Merkt, *Maximus I. von Turin: Die Verkündigung eines Bischofs der frühen Reinchskirche im zeitgeschichtlichen, gesellschaftlichen und liturgischen Kontext* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 45, supposing that the sermon on Saul and Jonathan was held in 402, when Turin was threatened by Alaric I of the Visigoths.
[48] Maximus of Turin, *Sermon*, 50.1, in Boniface Ramsey, *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin* (Ancient Christian Writers, 50; New York: Newman Press, 1989), 119.
[49] Maximus of Turin, *Sermon*, 50.1. Prayer, fasting, and alms were the three weapons of faith, frequently recommended by Maximus: see Ramsey, *The Sermons*, 63. Ramsey shows on p. 160 that the obligatory character of fasting during Quadragesima is based on biblical examples in the sermons.

intermission'.[50] At the end of his sermon, he mentions the example of Jonathan to illustrate how one person breaking the fast can affect an entire nation: '… and by the crime of one person weakness is produced in all, for the army's strength failed when the observance of the fast failed.' The people's weakness is, according to Maximus, not caused by a lack of food, but by Jonathan's breaking of the oath! Maximus praises Saul as 'obviously a good king, who overcame his enemies not so much by arms as by devotion and who fought more by piety than with spears'.[51] That Saul immediately recognised that God's silence was due to a sin means that he used to announce fasts during battle more often. This exemplary king did not want to spare his own son: 'See how religious was the behaviour of Saul the king, who desired to pacify the offended Lord even by the slaying of his kin!'[52] It is, therefore, that Maximus concludes that the guilt of a broken fast can 'only be punished by the shedding of blood'. That Jonathan was unaware of the proclamation of the fast did not count.

Pope Gregory I (c.540-604) agrees with Tertullian's assessment that Jonathan's sin must be seen as a form of gluttony. In his moral reflections on the book of Job he states that 'Jonathan indeed deserved the sentence of death from his father's mouth, because by tasting honey he anticipated the mealtime Saul had decreed'.[53] Eating too early is one of the five types of gluttony, states Gregory, referring to more biblical examples, such as Eli's sons who 'would not accept boiled meat… but demanded raw meat' in order to roast it (1 Sm 2:15). Gluttony is for Gregory one of the seven 'principal vices', which all are 'offspring' of pride, being 'the beginning of every sin'.[54] These seven principal vices have their own offspring: 'There is a chain of cause and effect wherein an effect in turn becomes a cause.'[55] Restraint is, therefore, a weapon in spiritual warfare, according to Gregory: 'When we bring our interior parts into subjection, we do battle against the external foes who are drawn up against us.'[56]

The Latin Church Fathers agree in many respects: they all take the narrative from Saul's point of view, sanctioning his announcement of the fast and respecting his severe punishment of the perpetrator. They all look to the narrative through the lens of abstinence and restraint. They blame Jonathan for his trespassing of the fast, even though unwittingly. Two of them link his trespass directly to gluttony (Tertullian and Gregory I) and two of them repeat the LXX solution of prayer (Tertullian and Jerome).

Conclusion

I come to a conclusion, albeit tentatively, because so little is known and because some quotes are particularly short. Still, some remarkable divisions arise from the data I recovered:

(1) There is a tendency to strengthen the people's role and the people's view on things in the early Jewish translations (LXX and TJon), while later, mostly Western, both Jewish and Christian, texts tend to adopt Saul's view (PRE and Christian Latin authors).

(2) Partly overlapping is the tendency to blame Saul and to adopt Jonathan's critical view on his father in the early Jewish and Eastern Christian texts (LXX, Josephus, Chrysostom) versus blaming

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[50] Maximus of Turin, *Sermon*, 69.3, in Ramsey, *The Sermons*, 168-171.
[51] Ibid., referring to the story of David and Goliath (1 Sm 17).
[52] This exclamation might be based on Josephus' estimation of Saul, who preferred keeping his oaths over the ties of kinship.
[53] Gregory, *Morals on the Book of Job*, 30.xviii.60, in Brian Kerns, *Gregory the Great. Moral Reflections on the Book of Job*, Vol. 6: Books 28-35 (Cistercian Studies Series, 261; Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2022).
[54] Mark DelCogliano, 'Introduction', in Kerns, *Gregory the Great*, 3.
[55] Ibid, 4.
[56] Gregory, *Morals*, 30.xviii.59.

Jonathan and adopting Saul's critical view on his son in Western texts (PRE and Latin authors). It is remarkable that the LXX accusation of Saul being ignorant (verse 24) is taken over by Josephus and Chrysostom, but not by Tertullian and Jerome, although it is clear from the rest of their text that they did consult the LXX tradition.
(3) With regard to the justification of Saul's announcement of the death penalty, the difference between the sources follow the same divide as the one blaming Saul or Jonathan: Josephus and Chrysostom regard the death penalty as strange or stupid, while Latin authors can live with it (Tertullian) or even agree with it (Maximus, Gregory I).
(4) Although early Jewish sources refer to prayer as a solution for Jonathan's trespass (LXX, Josephus), later sources show a difference between Jewish and Christian solutions: Jewish sources refer to sacrifices or financial compensation (BT, PRE, MShmuel), while Latin Christian sources take over the LXX solution of prayer (Tertullian, Jerome). It is remarkable that Targum Jonathan does not refer to any form of solution for Jonathan's trespass of the curse.
(5) It is remarkable that both Chrysostom and Maximus have discussed this biblical chapter during Lent, but come to an entirely different view on Saul and Jonathan. The difference between the Christian sources can be explained by the lens through which they looked at the text: Chrysostom fulminated against oath swearing, while the Latin authors were far more interested in abstinence and fighting gluttony.
(6) Finally, I have seen some influence of the LXX and the Targum where I expected it, but only in one instance have I seen a possible influence of Josephus in this respect, although Josephus was already known to Christian authors in the first centuries of the common era.[57] Only Maximus' observation about Saul as a religious king, who rather pacified the Lord than saved his own son, could have been borrowed from Josephus.

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[57] See, for example, Sabrina Inowlocki, 'Josephus and Patristic Literature', in Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers, *A Companion to Josephus* (Hoboken: Wiley-Backwell, 2016), 356-367; Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schubert, *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, Vol. 2: Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity (CRINT, 3/2; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 51-85 (Chapter Three: 'Josephus in Early Christian Texts').

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