

The Judges: Samson Defeats the Philistines

Preview: Samson, Samson, Samson . . .

Hebrews 11:1, 32-33: 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions

Lesson outline: What Samson had, what Samson did, what Samson lost, and what Samson learned

Read & Explain (What does it mean?): Judges 13-16 (Author = Samuel?)

Keep in mind while reading the passage that God desires to free the Israelites from the bondage of the Philistines. He will do this even in spite of Samson's sin.

Judges 13

The Birth of Samson

1 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. 3 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean. 5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. 7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'" [This was a lifetime vow of consecration that was not his decision]

8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!"

11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, “Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?”

And He said, “I am.”

12 Manoah said, “Now let Your words come to *pass*! What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?”

13 So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. **14** She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe.”

15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You.”

16 And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know He *was* the Angel of the LORD.)

17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What *is* Your name, that when Your words come to *pass* we may honor You?”

18 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?”

19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on— **20** it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground. **21** When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He *was* the Angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!”

23 But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time.”

24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. **25** And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Samson: The Early Years (from the [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

Nazarite: a consecrated one

(1) the strictest abstinence from wine and from every product of the vine;

(2) the keeping of the hair uncut and the beard untouched by a razor;

(3) the prohibition to touch a dead body; and

(4) prohibition of unclean food (Judges 13:5-7; Numbers 6, 1 Samuel 1:11)

What Samson Had

Samson had a **believing** mother with faith (Judges 13:6). Samson had a **godly** father with fear or respect (Judges 13:19). Gideon's father built altars to Baal. Samson's environment was a godly environment.

Judges 14

Samson's Philistine Wife

1 Now Samson went down to Timnah [a Philistine-controlled land], **and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."**

3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren [your tribe/nationality], or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"

And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." [Samson has not yet broken his Nazarite vow]

4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

5 So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah.

Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. 6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. [Samson is walking down his own path and he has now broken his vow]

7 Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. 8 After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. 9 He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. [Samson violates his vow again]

10 So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast [a drinking feast—a banquet] **there, for young men used to do so. 11 And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.** [Samson is getting further and further off the path because he is now hanging out with the uncircumcised Philistines]

12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. **13** But if you cannot explain *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."

And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it."

14 So he said to them:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,
And out of the strong came something sweet."

Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? *Is that not so?*"

16 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained *it* to me."

And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained *it* to my father or my mother; so should I explain *it* to you?" **17** Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. **18** So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down:

"What *is* sweeter than honey?
And what *is* stronger than a lion?"

And he said to them:

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
You would not have solved my riddle!"

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes *of clothing* to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. **20** And Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, who had been his best man.

Judges 15

Samson Defeats the Philistines

1 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into *her* room." But her father would not permit him to go in.

2 Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. *Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.*"

3 And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!" [this is a very poor attempt at self-justification] **4** Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. **5** When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.

6 Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?"

And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

7 Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease." **8** So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. **10** And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?"

So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?"

And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."

12 But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines."

Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

13 So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. **15** He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey [another dead thing], reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. **16** Then Samson said:

"With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men!"

17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

18 Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD [up to this point, we have no indication that Samson has ever made an attempt to talk to God] **and said, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”**

19 So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines. [And if their leader behaved this way, imagine how poorly the people behaved]

Samson: The crazy teenage years

- He married a **non-believer**
- He touched a dead body
- He ate unclean food
- He chose the **wrong crowd**
- He gambled
- He murdered
- He stole

Samson: The angry middle-aged man

- He was betrayed
- He took **revenge**
- He murdered
- He hid
- Touched another dead body
- Killed some more
- Took credit
- Kind of **prayed**
- All this and he still led Israel

What Samson Did

Strayed from his walk. Married a Philistine, a non-believer. Partied, alcohol involved. Touch dead bodies and ate unclean food. Gambled, killed, and stole. At least he still has his hair.

Judges 16

Samson and Delilah

1 Now Samson went to Gaza [a Philistine-controlled land] **and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 2 When the Gazites were told, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is**

daylight, we will kill him.” **3** And Samson lay *low* till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put *them* on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah [we are not sure if Delilah was a Philistine or not, but she was able to be controlled by the Philistine lords, so the question is moot]. **5** And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and find out where his great strength *lies*, and by what *means* we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

7 And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. **9** Now *men were* lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with.”

11 So he said to her, “If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with.”

And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom”—

14 So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

15 Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies*.” **16** And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, **17** that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me,

and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.” [Even though Samson thought his hair was the source of his strength, God was really the source of his strength]

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.” So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. **19** Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks [braids] of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. **20** And she said, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him [one of the saddest verses in the entire Bible].

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes [it can be argued that Samson lost his vision far sooner, though], and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. **22** However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

Samson Dies with the Philistines

23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon [a fertility/grain god] their god, and to rejoice. And they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands
Samson our enemy!”

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy,
The destroyer of our land,
And the one who multiplied our dead.”

25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. **26** Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.” **27** Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines [their leadership] *were* there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

28 Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” **29** And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. **30** Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

31 And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought *him* up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

Samson: The Golden Years

- A prostitute
- Delilah
- He was **indifferent**
- He was captured and blinded
- He prayed
- He died

What Samson Lost

Samson throughout his life did not appear ever to lead the life you would expect from one specially chosen by God to lead Israel. The Lord focused on Samson continually blessed and strengthened him. Samson continually lost his focus on God. In the end, Samson did not even realize that he lost the presence of the LORD (**Judges 16:20**).

What Samson Learned

He realized that he had misused the blessings of the Lord. He realized that he was a sinner (**Judges 16:28**). He saw that he must repent and asked for forgiveness. He learned that God can and will forgive and restore.

Apply (What is the point?)

1. Samson took advantage of and wasted so many blessings
2. He had a "I can do it alone" attitude
3. His best was not good enough
4. God is the hero

Personalize (What do I do with that?)

1. Understand we are all sinners
2. Never "handle" things alone (recognize God's presence)
3. It is never too late for forgiveness

When finishing the lesson, my thoughts kept going back to Samson's parents: his mother and her faith in the Lord and his father who wanted a logical answer to the angel's message. I was trying to apply this to parents of today and what our children gain from mothers and fathers. Even though I feel that Samson personally succeeded through most of his life, it was covered in his personal failures. However, in the end, he came to understand his spiritual loss. With that thought, I kept going back to **Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.**