

Samson- Strong in Body, Strong in Faith



After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, but before they had kings ruling over them, Jehovah set up a temporary arrangement for their protection. **Judges 2:11-16**

In total there were 12 Judges used by Jehovah. However, the Israelites still alternated between faithfulness and unfaithfulness toward Jehovah. So he abandoned them to the Philistines. **Judges 13:1**

This would have made life very hard for them. Jehovah though, did not completely give up on them. He raised another judge to help them.

Samson's story began about 1165 BCE in the town of Zorah, 15 miles west of Jerusalem. Jehovah's angel appeared to the wife of an Israelite named Manoah and informed her that she would give birth to a son. He was to be a Nazirite and "take the lead in saving Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." **Judges 13:2, 3, 5, 24**

Jehovah determined that Samson, from his birth onward, was to be singled out for a special kind of sacred service, as a mighty Judge over Israel.

One day about 1145 BCE when he was old enough to marry, Samson came to his father and mother and requested that they get a Philistine woman for him as a wife.

Imagine their surprise. Instead of freeing Israel from the hands of the Philistines, their son wanted to form a marriage alliance with them. Taking a wife from a pagan nation was against God's Law, so the parents objected. But Samson insisted. Why? It was in harmony with the direction of God's spirit, because it was to provide opportunity for Samson to fight against the Philistines. **Judges 14:4**

Then, en-route to collect his bride, a lion confronted Samson. Empowered by God's spirit, he tore the animal in two with his bare hands. **Judges 14:5-7**

Samson must have realized that such unusual power was not his. It must have come from God. He could rely upon Jehovah to assist him in the work ahead. Then he continued on his way and met up with the Philistine woman whom he wanted as a wife.

Sometime later Samson, with his parents, went to bring his wife-to-be home. On the way back he came across the corpse of the lion that he had killed earlier. **Judges 14:8, 9**

Based on this event, at his wedding, Samson posed a riddle to 30 Philistine attendants **Judges 14:14** If they guessed the meaning of the riddle, Samson would give them each a reward. If not, they would have to give him a reward. The Philistines were baffled by the riddle for three days. On the fourth day, they resorted to threatening his bride. **Judges 14:15**

Frightened, she pressured Samson into disclosing the answer. Then displaying a lack of love and loyalty to Samson, she told the Philistines. They had the answer to the riddle, but Samson knew why. **Judges 14:18**

This gave Samson the incentive he had been waiting for. He travelled over 20 miles to the seaport of Ashkelon and attacked the Philistines. **Judges 14:19**

Sometime after, the father of his wife gave her to another man and did not permit Samson to see her. Now he had reason again to act against the Philistines. **Judges 15:4, 5**

Using 300 foxes, he set the grainfields, vineyards, and olive groves of the Philistines on fire, destroying their three main crops for the year.

How did the Philistines react? **Judges 15:6**

By this act the Philistines once more gave Samson reason for avenging himself upon them. He slew many of them. **Judges 15:7, 8**

Seeking revenge against Samson, the Philistines approached his home. Did the Israelites help and offer any resistance? Hardly. To avoid trouble, they sent 3,000 men to arrest Samson and surrender him to his enemies. **Judges 15:11-13**

Excitedly, the Philistines prepared to seize Samson. But look what happened - **Judges 15:14-16**

What happened next? Samson was determined to continue his fight against the Philistines. He went to Gaza 35-40 miles away. **Judges 16:1, 2**

His staying at the house of a prostitute at Gaza was for the purpose of fighting against God's enemies, not for any immoral reasons. Samson needed an unsuspecting lodging place for the night in an enemy city, and the Philistines would not expect an Israelite to stay with a prostitute. **Judges 16:3**

He left the woman's house at midnight, grabbed the city gates and the two side posts, and carried them to the top of a mountain near Hebron, which was some 37 miles away.

Afterwards Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. **Judges 16:4**

The five axis lords of the Philistines — rulers of five Philistine cities — were so eager to eliminate Samson that they enlisted her help. **Judges 16:5**

The offer of 5,500 shekels was a huge bribe, and Delilah accepted it. So she kept questioning him about the source of his strength.

Three times Samson gave Delilah misleading answers to her inquiry, and three times she betrayed him by trying to deliver him to his enemies. But she continually pressured him. Samson finally revealed the truth—his hair had never been cut. Were it to be cut, he would grow weak and become like all other men. **Judges 16:15-17**

That was Samson's downfall. Delilah maneuvered him into a situation to have his head shaved. **Judges 16:18-21**

Samson's power, however, was not literally in his hair. His hair merely represented his special relationship with God as a Nazirite. But because of the shaving of his head, and breaking his life vow 'Jehovah departed from him.'

About the year 1125 BCE, whilst Samson languished in prison, the Philistines arranged for a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. Great crowds, including all the axis lords, were assembled in the temple of Dagon. **Judges 16:23, 24**

The Philistines had Samson brought out of prison to provide amusement for them. They parade him before thousands of onlookers and make fun of him. Samson knew the reason for his downfall, but he had repented of his failure. Meanwhile his hair had grown longer, perhaps having been in prison for many months, or longer. Upon his arrival, Samson, being blind, asked the boy who was leading him to let him feel the pillars that supported the structure. He then prayed to Jehovah before he acted. **Judges 16:26-30**

Samson caused the temple to collapse. This resulted in his own death and that of more Philistines than he had killed in his entire lifetime. Thus Samson died faithful to Jehovah after having judged Israel for 20 years.

For physical strength, Samson was without equal among men. His mighty acts were notable indeed. But most important, Jehovah's Word counts Samson among those **strong in faith**. **Hebrews 11:32-34**

(Insight Vol 2 pages849-850; WT 2005 15 March pages 25-28)

