

### Samson, Delilah, and the Philistines Judges 15 and 16

Samson lived most of his life in the town of Zorah. It was a city on the hillside overlooking the valley of Sorek. This valley is a direct route between the Israelite hill country near Jerusalem and the Philistine plain. This area was dominated by the Philistines.

The Philistines held a huge advantage over their enemies because they had iron, while others did not. They used the iron for their farming tools, army weapons, and horse-drawn chariots. With their "iron-power," they dominated and oppressed the Israelites.

More is written about the judge Samson than any of the other judges. Also, he is the last judge recorded in the book of Judges. We see the downward path of the nation.

#### Outline of Judges 15-16

- I. Samson's Marital Problems and the Philistines – Judges 15:1-9
- II. Samson's Arrest by His People – Judges 15:10-13
- III. Samson's Astounding Victory Over the Philistines – Judges 15:14-19
- IV. Samson's End - Judges 16:1-31

#### I. Samson's Marital Problems and the Philistines – Judges 15:1-9

It seems that *after a while* Samson wanted to fix things with his wife. At the time of wheat harvest, he decided to visit her, taking a young goat. However, her father met him at the door and would not allow Samson to see her, saying *I really thought you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.* Samson was not pleased, and he showed his displeasure in a very unusual way.

Samson caught 300 foxes (jackals), tied torches between their tails, and lit the torches on fire.

He let the foxes go into the Philistines' standing grain, vineyards, and olive groves. When, the Philistines asked *Who has done this*, they were told that Samson had done it because his wife had been given away. In return, the Philistines made a decision to burn both Samson's wife and her father to death! Samson saw further cause for revenge, so he attacked the Philistines with the jaw of a donkey and piled up their dead. After, he did not return to his mother and father's home, but instead went down to live in a cleft rock. The Philistines did not give in or give up. They encamped in Judah and prepared to attack at Lehi.

#### II. Samson's Arrest by His People – Judges 15:10-13

*Why have you come up against us?* The people of Judah were confused by the sudden arrival of Philistines. *To arrest Samson*, was the reply. Not wanting to upset the Philistines any further, three thousand Judeans went after Samson. When they found him, the question they asked him shows how far removed the people had become from their knowledge of God. They said to Samson *Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?* Notice that they did not recognize that the Lord was their true Ruler. How often do you misjudge your Ruler? Do you ever find yourself worried about homework or what your friends are thinking? When God is your ruler, you do not need to worry. He says *Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved* (Psalm 55:22).

The Judeans did not even try to resist the Philistines' demand. Instead, they cowardly agreed to turn over one of their own to the enemy. They could have said, "If you want him, come and get him yourself." But they weren't concerned with what was right, just what was

safest. There is something very wrong with God's people when they no longer despise their true enemies. It was God himself that put **enmity** between man and evil (Genesis 3:15). We are commanded to hate evil (Psalm 97:10). How do you show others that you despise evil?

### III. Samson's Astounding Victory Over the Philistines – Judges 15:14-19

When Samson came to Lehi, the Philistines came at him with shouting. *The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson.* He flexed his muscles and broke the bonds. The enemy outnumbered him giving them an advantage, but there is no greater advantage than having God on your side. Samson looked around for a weapon and took hold of a donkey's jawbone. He fought off his attackers until there were none left. Without the help of any other man, he killed one thousand men, because he was empowered by the Spirit of God.

Samson liked to play with words as we have seen before (Judges 14:14,18). He made up a poem using a play-on words again. In Hebrew, the word for donkey [chamowr (kham-ore')] and heap [chamurah (kham-o-law')] sound very alike. Samson memorialized the place of supernatural victory. His poem is part of scripture, and he renamed the place Ramath-Lehi, the hill of jawbones, or literally Jawbone Height.

However, Samson was not yet victorious. Suffering from desperate thirst, Samson cried out to God saying, *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?* Many times now, we have seen Samson's extraordinary power. But, here, we see most clearly, he was not self-sufficient. Samson relied on God. Sadly, before this, we have not seen Samson seek after God, and even now it seems as though it is because he is desperate. Be on guard that you do not have a relationship with God that only seeks Him when you feel desperately in need. Know God in all circumstances, *when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise*

*up* (Deuteronomy 6:7b). God mercifully and miraculously gave him water, so he named the place "Spring of the Caller." How have you celebrated God's blessings to you in the past? Do you record answers to your prayer requests in your Bible or a journal? If not, today is a good time to start.

The victory brought enough peace for Samson to exercise his judgeship. He judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines. See Judges 13:1 and 16:31.

### IV. Samson's End - Judges 16:1-31

After 20 years of judging Israel, Samson *went to Gaza, saw a harlot, and went in to her.* This little verse records a couple of big mistakes. First, he went to enemy territory without a good cause. Second, he went to a prostitute and disobeyed God's law regarding marriage. The men of Gaza surrounded the house at night and waited to kill Samson in the morning. But Samson outsmarted them and at midnight sneaked out of the city, taking the city gates with him!

Next, Samson loved a local woman named Delilah. We do not know whether she was a Philistine or an Israelite, nor whether he married her or not. She is, however, the only woman mentioned by name in the story of Samson. Sadly, she was more interested in money than she was in Samson. Three separate times Delilah tried to get the secret of Samson's supernatural strength from him. First, he claimed it would take seven fresh bowstrings; second, it would take new ropes; third, his hair must be woven in a loom. Each time, she betrayed Samson by trying to undo his power according to his words. She then would wake him, calling out *the Philistines are upon you.* Of course, Samson easily broke free each time.

Delilah accused Samson of making fun of her and not loving her. She nagged at him daily with her words and tears. At last, *his soul was vexed to death* (16:16). He foolishly told her of his lifelong Nazirite vow and explained that his

hair had never been cut. Samson believed if his hair were cut, he would be weak. Actually, his strength was not in his hair, but in the will of God for his life. His uncut hair was the only sign of his vow that was left. Delilah, believing he was telling her the truth, called the Philistines. She was paid, and they cut the sleeping Samson's hair.

The Scripture says, *She began to torment him, and his strength left him* (16:19). This time when she cried, *the Philistines are upon you, Samson*, he found that he was helpless, for the Lord had departed from him. Samson had **forfeit** God's presence because he did not give God the respect and honor which belongs to Him. Samson is an example of Israel's pattern. He was "raised up out of nothing, richly gifted, **panders** around with other loves, and yet, apparently, always expects to 'have' **Yahweh** (Judges: Such a Great Salvation, Dale Ralph Davis).

Once captured, Samson suffered his **folly**. The Philistines shamed and dishonored him in capturing him; they tortured him with blindness when they put out his eyes, then humiliated him further placing him to work at the grinding mill, a job usually done by women.

The hair of Samson's head began to grow again. One day, the Philistines gathered together to celebrate their pagan god, Dagon, and rejoice over Samson's defeat. The people praised Dagon. They called for Samson to come and perform for them. There were at least three thousand men and women present. Samson asked to be allowed to *feel the pillars which support the temple (to) lean on them*. Then he called out, *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*. He felt the pillars, leaned against them, believed God would answer his prayer, and prayed again. *Let me die with the Philistines*. He pushed with all his might, and God answered his prayers. The temple collapsed killing more Philistines in his death than he had killed in his lifetime. God was never far from Samson. In fact, he

was only a prayer away. When you feel as if no one cares, remember that no one can press the pause button on God's concern for you.

Some ask why God would even choose a man such as Samson. The answer is that He is God and He chooses whom He will. Perhaps the most remarkable difference between Samson and the other Jews was this: he at least knew who God's enemies were and made them his own enemies also. While many Jews were content to live under the Philistines, Samson was not. Are God's enemies your enemies? Do you stand up for what is right, or do you try to go unnoticed? When Christians do not speak up and object to sin, they are sinning themselves (James 4:17). It is the sin of omission. In the American judicial system, it is known as withholding evidence. The technical term is aiding and abetting, punishable by as much as a year in prison. It is encouraging or helping someone to do wrong. If you are not standing up (speaking up) for Christ, you are aiding and abetting His enemies. Will you make a decision to speak up and stand for God's truth and nothing less today? †

### Prayer

Ask God to bless you with boldness for His truth.

### Memory Verse

*In the day when I cried out, You answered me and made me bold, with strength in my soul.*  
Psalm 138:3

### Vocabulary

**enmity** - a very deep unfriendly feeling, deep hatred

**forfeit** - to lose or lose the right **hostile** - having or showing unfriendly feelings

**barren** - not able to produce children or offspring

**conceive** - to become pregnant

**womb** - muscular organ where young develop before birth

**bear** - to give birth to

**QUESTIONS FOR JAMES/JUDGES LESSON 12**

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

**DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.**

1. a. What impressed you most about Samson's life?

b. What qualities of Samson's would you like to have?

c. Which of his weaknesses would you like to avoid?

2. a. How was God faithful to Samson?

b. ♥ (Heart Question) How has God been faithful to you?

3. From page 3 of the notes, how was Samson an example of Israel's pattern?

**DAY TWO: Read Judges 17:1-4.**

4. a. In which tribe of Israel does this next incident take place?

b. ☆ (Memory Question) What do you remember about this tribe from past lessons?

5. Name the characters in this story and give one fact about each.

6. Which commandments were disobeyed? See Exodus 20:1-17 for help.

**DAY THREE: Read Judges 17:5-9 and skim Joshua 21:1-42.**

7. *In those days there was no king in Israel; and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* As a result, which of the following were things Micah did? Circle the correct answers below.

made an ephod

built an altar to God

went to Jerusalem to worship God

made household idols

married three pagan women

made one of his sons his priest

8. a. What was an ephod? See Exodus 28:1-2 and 5-12.

b. Who could be a priest? See Exodus 28:1; Numbers 3:9-10, 18:1, 7; Hebrews 5:1-4.

9. a. Which phrases in Judges 17:6 are repeated in 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25?

b. Do you think Christians today do what is right in their own eyes? Explain.

10. a. To what tribe did the young man from Bethlehem belong?

b. Where was he going?

c. From Joshua 21 verses 1-3 and 41-42, where could he have gone?

**DAY FOUR: Read Judges 17:10-13.**

11. a. What offer did Micah make to the Levite?

b. ? (Thought Question) How would this situation be against God's will:  
for Micah?

for the Levite?

12. a. How does Judges 7:13 show that Micah was acting from superstition and not from faith?

b. From the following verses how can you know that you have God's favor?  
Romans 5:1-2

Ephesians 2:8-9

Hebrews 11:6

**DAY FIVE: Read the following Scripture passages.**

13. What do you learn about idols and idolatry from:

a. 1 Samuel 15:22-23

b. Psalm 115:4-8

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c. 1 Corinthians 10:14

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d. 1 Corinthians 10:19-20

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e. 1 Thessalonians 1:9

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f. 1 John 5:21

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14. What kind of idols do people worship today?

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**VOCABULARY FOR JAMES/JUDGES LESSON 12**

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...  
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

**DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.**

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**DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.**

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**DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s).** (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

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|------|----------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1. . | <b>enmity</b>  | ..... | affection | ..... | hatred      | ..... | dislike               |
| 2. . | <b>forfeit</b> | ..... | lose      | ..... | give up     | ..... | conquer               |
| 3. . | <b>folly</b>   | ..... | mistake   | ..... | wise choice | ..... | thoughtless<br>action |

**DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.****Word****Definition****Yahweh**

lack of good sense or judgement

**folly**

to lose or lose the right as a punishment for an error, offense, or crime

**pander**

name of God, usually translated 'the Lord'

**forfeit**

a very deep unfriendly feeling, deep hatred

**enmity**

to do what someone wants although it is not proper or good

**DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.**

E B F S D C U V T H H N H L L  
 I U E L Q R O A I E Q S T N U  
 U G D A P E L N Y B E M S D S  
 U Q L B R Y X Z C L U H I I T  
 W Z D F U S O O F E O T V S E  
 E Y L Y D S P F X S I V U S V  
 O K O J Q I R M T Z M V Y U Z  
 A F K Q C A D I J K Z B E A L  
 U X C F H L L O R K Q V X D Z  
 K E B F U E Y E R X Y Y W E Z  
 S C L G E I H K E T Q K I K O  
 E P A U O F B E D I S Q O R F  
 T O A W O M B G N N Y F G C N  
 Q T N E R R A B I P L Z N D N  
 Z E M U M X R M H X L Y D P L

having or showing unfriendly feelings

not able to produce children or offspring

to become pregnant

muscular organ where young develop before birth

to give birth to

to get control of by using force, punishment, etc.

a strong desire for something

to convince someone not to do something

the sinful nature of human beings

to make slow or difficult

**WORD BANK**

Hostile

Barren

Conceive

Womb

Bear

Subdue

Lust

Dissuade

Flesh

Hinder