

Judges 15-16

August 1, 2010

Samson, Part 2

I. Samson Continued

We saw Samson's beginning in the previous two chapters. In these two chapters, we will see some of his great works, but also his tragic ending. Movies have been made of his life, but this scripture is not intended to be solely a Saturday matinee. The question for each of us is what can we learn from his life so that we will not repeat his mistakes that will help us lead our own lives in a productive way?

II. First Battle: Judg. 15:1-5

Verse 1 Apparently, Samson's anger was overcome by his longing for his wife; so, he comes back to her. Rather than flowers or candy, Samson brings her a young goat.

Verse 2 The father intercepts him, and offers the younger daughter as a substitute.

Verse 3 Again, we see circumstances piling up resulting in God getting his way to start an insurrection against the Philistines.

Verse 5 He destroys standing crops, plus the vineyards and groves. With 300 foxes, he would have destroyed a lot of fields. More than a few people were probably burned as well.

III. Second Battle: Judg. 15:6-17

Verse 6 Did she return to her father's house a second time, perhaps spurned by her second husband? Samson's wife had betrayed him to protect herself from being burned, but it happens anyway.

Verse 7 Their reprisal to Samson's wife causes him to escalate his campaign.

Verse 8-9 Etam ("place of birds of prey") and Lehi ("jawbone") are both in Judah.

Verse 9 The Philistines escalate again by sending an army against this one man. BIG mistake!

Verse 11 We see the complacency of Judah in that they are afraid to fight what might be an inferior Philistine army. God had called the Israelites to take the land; now even the strongest tribe is afraid.

Verse 13 Samson wants revenge on the Philistines, but is not willing to bring wrath on Judah. The new ropes imply that there were strong ropes.

Verse 15 One would think that this would have been most of the Philistine army. It is doubtful that in a warrior culture any of the Philistines would want to report back home how they had "retreated" from one man.

Verse 15 Touching a fresh jawbone was likely a violation of the Nazarite oath.

Verse 17 "Ramath Lehi is literally the "height of the jawbone."

IV. Recognition: Judg. 15:18-20

Verse 18 The good news is that Samson realizes that his victories are from the LORD. The bad news is that we see confirmation of how self-centered

he is. Did the LORD bring the thirst on Samson to show him his dependence on the Almighty?

Verse 19 En Hakkore mean “spring of the caller.”

Verse 20 Samson “reign” might have overlapped with Samuel’s and might have been 1075-1055 BC.

We are not sure how long it took for chapters 14-15 to occur or exactly when his “leading” began, but he seems to operate as in this chapter for 20 years. It is hard to tell how many Philistines died. Until we see King Saul on the scene, we do not see any concerted Israelite activity against the Philistines and not until David that they are conquered. However, Samson was undoubtedly a symbol of rebellion against, a symbol that they could be defeated. Through Samson, God provides how to the Israelites.

V. **Third Battle: Judges 16:1-3**

Verse 1 There might have been years or even decades between the end of chapter 15 and the beginning of Chapter 16. We are not told from where Samson has come, but he is about 45 miles from where we last saw him.

Verse 1 Do we not see a trend for Samson? Both women and sinning. Each of the three battles is initiated because of an involvement with a Philistine woman.

Verse 2 The beginning of verse 2 is a sentence fragment which begins “To the Gazites saying.”

Verse 2 Apparently, the waiting was outside the woman’s quarters. The “place” is not designated; “surrounded” might really mean “gathered.”

Verse 3 Somehow Samson slips by the men laying in wait for them; we are not told how, but they did not seem to think that he would leave in the middle of the night and by now, Samson might have had a lot of experience evading Philistines. The men might have fallen asleep thinking that Samson was not going to leave until morning, with the locked city gates providing a bit of guarantee that he could not leave without them knowing it.

Verse 3 He picks up a huge gate, perhaps weighing a ton and carries it for perhaps 40 miles, generally uphill. He can do prodigious feats, but he is a spiritual midget, and women are his downfall.

VI. **Seduction by Delilah: Judg. 16:4-17**

Is Samson’s the stupidest hero in the Bible, or are all men this stupid in dealing with women?

Verse 4 Delilah is the fifth woman mentioned Chapters 13-16, but the first one named. Sorek means “choice [grape] vine.” NOTE: The meaning of the name Delilah is not fully known, although many theories exist for it.

Verse 5 We do not have to wait long for the action to start. Samson’s wife had been put under similar pressure, and she folded. How will Delilah react?

Verse 5 There are five Philistine cities. So, they offered her an astounding 5500 shekels. Abraham only paid 400 shekels for the field in Gen 24 and David only paid 50 shekels for the threshing floor in 2 Sam. 24; a slave costs 30 shekels in Ex. 21.

- Verse 6 She might have asked him a few times before he responded. In his defense, for this time only, we could see why a woman would want this information even if she is not going to use it for evil purposes.
- Verse 7 Why does Samson lie to her? Does he suspect her, or is he just being cautious?
- Verse 9 The Philistines try it out, but it does not work. Delilah seems to be on Samson's side by warning him but doing so a little too late.
- Verse 9 The fresh thongs would have been made from the sinews of dead animals which would have been a violation for a Nazirite per:

Num 6:6

6 Throughout the period of his separation to the LORD he must not go near a dead body

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- So perhaps Samson thought that this would work, absurd though it sounds to us! Of course, he broke this already with the dead lion's honey and with the donkey jawbone without having his strength compromised.
- Verse 10 What does Samson think about this second request? Does he know that she was complicit with the attempt to capture him in the previous verse?
- Verse 11 Maybe Samson does know what she is doing. Now, he tells her that "new ropes" will work, but we know from Judges 15:13 that this method will not work either.
- Verse 12 Samson must have been a deep sleeper. He sleeps through being tied up and men infiltrating into the room.
- Verse 13 Is Samson being made a fool by Delilah, or is Delilah being made the fool? Both appear to be the case.
- Verse 14 The logistics are difficult to imagine. Apparently, he fell asleep and did not wake up when she weaved with his hair. Did men also come into wherever they were at? In any case, when she rouses him, he merely pulls the pin and is released. Clearly Samson lies to her, but why does he involve his hair which is the true key to his strength?
- Verses 16-17 A man can take only so much from a determined woman. Why does he tell her the truth? He must have known that she would tell the Philistines.

VII. The End of Samson Judg. 16:18-31

- Verse 19 Seven being a holy number is probably not a coincident. Perhaps, Samson put more faith in his hair than in his relationship to God. He does not seem to realize that all his actions are important. He is willing to break the Nazirite vow—perhaps he has not taken it himself—in other ways, but his hair has become more important. In a sense, his inability to understand God better is consistent in all the people of Israel at this time. In some senses, he is faithful; in others, he does not have a clue of how to respond correctly to God.
- Verse 20 For much of the Scriptures relating to Samson, we have seen him playing with the gift given to him by God. Chances are he has previously broken all the restrictions for a Nazirite, but had kept his hair uncut. Now this restriction has been broken too. He has frittered away the gift given to him by God. Do we ever fritter away our gifts?

- Verse 22 Once cut, his hair can never again return to a state of never having been cut. But it can grow, and as his hair grow, so can his faith in God (or it). Could God have given him strength without long hair? Of course,
- Verse 22 God gives us many opportunities even though we might waste some of them. As He allows these new opportunities, we should grasp them and be dedicated to them. Samson's hair growing will give him a chance to reinstate acts based on his faith.
- Verse 22 "Began" is an important word in the Samson chronicle.

Judg 13:5

he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

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In Judg 13:25

25 and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

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- Samson was a beginning; he was not the conclusion.
- Verse 22 At this point, we do not know how much time has elapsed since Samson's hair was cut.
- Verse 23 Obviously, the Philistines keep the blind and weak Samson to ridicule him and through him all Israel. It also gives them the opportunity to exalt their god and through this idol to exalt themselves.
- Verse 26 The temple appears to have been built in layers with columns supporting the upper floors. One such temple was found with the columns being within three feet of each other. In such a temple, Samson might push over the two columns causing all the upper floors to crash down.
- Verse 30 Samson dies tragically. We should not view the final comment of this verse as being an indication that God approved of this act, as this act is clearly also self-serving and indicates sin that is consistent with sin performed throughout his life.
- Verse 31 Were these brothers the sons of Samson's mother? In a time of plural marriages, we cannot be sure without an explicit statement saying so. However, as with Samuel's mother, we might expect that God would bless Samson's mother in the same way with additional children.
- Verse 31 Why the entire family? Given Samson's notoriety, we can come up with a lot of theories. This note is probably a note indicating the honor that they held for him.

VIII. Samson's Legacy

Clearly, Samson was not a typical leader as the documented chronicle shows. We do not know how he led Israel as he is always a solitary figure, only that in some way he did. Remember that the man is listed for his faith in Hebrews 11; he might have done a great many things of which we are unaware. He shows both the weakness of the time in which he lived as we see him operating without seeking God's guidance, but we also see his faith.

What are some learnings from Samson's life for the person seeking to do God's will? In what ways do you duplicate Samson's errors? How can you correct sin in your life so that it will not become a shambles?