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Judges 16

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Judges 16

Topics.

- The Gazites set an ambush for Samson.
- The Philistines entice Delilah to seduce Samson and discover his secret.
- Delilah discovers the secret to Samson strength.
- The Philistines blind Samson and put him in prison.
- Samson calls on the LORD and brings the house of the Philistines down.
- Samson died in the rubble, he ruled Israel twenty years.
- Snapshots of Solomon's life and lessons to learn.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Israelites forgot the LORD, and worshipped false gods, so the LORD removed His protection and blessings from them, which resulted in them being oppressed by their enemies and crying to the LORD for deliverance. In answer to their prayer the LORD raised up twelve Judges to deliver them, but not Judges as we think of Judges today or preachers of righteousness, but rather military leaders and fighters, that led Israel to triumph over their enemies and delivered them from their wicked behaviour. Most suppose that Samuel (considered by some to be the last Judge) wrote some parts of the book, while other parts were written at a later time by someone of his generation or a later generation. The primary purpose of the Judges is best articulated in the following words, "The LORD raised up Judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. (Judges 2:16). For an overview of the entire book see the title:

- Overview of the Book of Judges (at the beginning of the index).

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

Samson found out his wife was given to his best man, so he sent flaming foxes into the Philistine's grain fields. The Philistines burnt Samson wife and her father, so he struck down a great number of Philistines then takes refuge at Etam. The Philistines went up to Etam and bound Samson, he broke loose and struck down 1000 Philistines.

GAZITES SET AN AMBUSH FOR SAMSON

JUDGES 16:1-2

- **Judges 16:1-2:** Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute (harlot in KJV), and he went in to her. ² The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, "Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him."

Gaza: is near the Mediterranean Sea, about 88km from Jerusalem, it was the chief and largest city of the Philistines, in the very heart of their country.

Samson saw a prostitute (harlot in KJV): (v1) it is possible a long period of time after his last encounter with the Philistines had passed before Samson made this trip into Gaza. Although the Hebrew word for harlot also means a woman that keeps an inn, it is clear that this woman was a literal prostitute (harlot in KJV).

Reasons Samson went to Gaza: though we are not told why he visited Gaza (perhaps during the night) in such dangerous times, especially for him, because it was a perilous exposure of his life to be in a Philistines city, following are a few reasons commentators have suggested why he may have gone to Gaza:

1. To visit an inn of prostitutes (common at this time), and when he saw one that he was attracted to he was captivated and embraced her sexually.
2. To attend to something, we are not told of, having no intention of lying with a harlot, but upon seeing a seductive woman, he succumbed to the temptation and his lust.
3. To seek revenge on the Philistines for an event we are not told of. After having experienced supernatural and extraordinary strength and experiencing God's assistance, he would have had no fear of the Philistines.

It was told the Gazites: (v2), because Samson had slain more than a thousand Philistines by his own hand, his name and fame would have spread throughout Palestine, and brought a certain level of fear to the whole country. This is why the inhabitants of Gaza, as soon as they recognised that he was in their midst told the leaders of the city, and why they organised Philistines forces, no doubt fully armed with weapons to surround the city and wait at the gate ready to capture him when he came out in the morning.

GAZITES SET AN AMBUSH FOR SAMSON

JUDGES 16:3

- **Judges 16:3:** But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron (before Hebron in KJV).

We are not told how Samson knew the Philistines were lying in wait to capture him, he may have seen such a great force of Philistines gathering or someone may have warned him. Whatever the case matters little to the story.

Ponder for a moment: the Philistines already had a great fear of Samson, and now they see him coming out with such extraordinary strength (because his hair had not been shaven), not only uplifting the city gates and its posts out of the ground, but also being able to carry them, no man could do this without supernatural strength.

Carried the gates to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron: (v3), the key words here are, "in front of Hebron" (before Hebron in KJV). For though the strength of Samson was a supernatural gift arising from God calling him from birth for a specific purpose, which means with God's Spirit upon him it is certain he could have walked the 80 kilometres to Hebron, with the gates and bars on his shoulders, but it would serve no purpose to do so. The idea is that he carried them to a hill in the direction of Hebron. Since the gates of the city, were built to protect a city from enemies, it would have been a great humiliation to the Philistines, to have the gate of their fortified city carried away by their enemy, especially on the shoulders of a single man.

There is a partly isolated hill, about half-an-hour southeast of Gaza, that stands out from the various hills that surround Hebron, that has been given the name: "Samson's Mount," however, there is no evidence that this is the actual hill that Samson carried the gate to.

PHILISTINES ENTICE DELIAH TO SEDUCE SAMSON

JUDGES 16:4-5

- **Judges 16:4-5:** After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. ⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce (entice in KJV) him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him (afflict him in KJV) him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

The valley of Sorek: (v4) the Hebrew word Sorek means Vine. It is one of the largest, most important drainage basins in the Judean Hills, and the border between the ancient Philistines and the tribe of Dan. The exact location of where Delilah lived in this valley is unknown, but it seems it was a place, famous for its vines.

He loved a woman: (v5), the name Delilah means tender or delicate, because we are only told, "He loved a woman," it is not clear if she was a Jewess or a Philistine, or a harlot, as the woman of Gaza was:

- Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. (Judges 16:1).

Or his wife, as the woman of Timnath was:

- Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife."³ But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? (Judges 14:2-3).
- Samson's wife was given to his companion. (Judges 14:20).

Because of this lack of information Delilah could have been either of the following:

- A lawful matrimonial love, whereby he fell in love with her, and courted and married her.
- A woman who played the harlot among the Philistines, based on the confidence the Philistine lords had in her, and their many meetings with her, and the whole course of her heartless flatteries and seductions towards Samson, and her cold, deceitful and treacherous betrayal of him, and the fact he did not take her home, but dwelt in her house, it would seem more likely that she was an immoral, shameless Philistine harlot, and not a wife.

The lords of the Philistines: (v5), though the five individual governments of the principal Philistine cities, that Palestine was divided into at this time were probably not united, it appears from (Judges 3:3), that after they heard that Samson was keeping company with Delilah, they came together against their common enemy.

Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies: (v5) the Philistines realised something was giving Samson supernatural strength, they may have thought it was some type of amulet or charm etc., that they could remove, or perhaps by the use of some magic art, or thought he was in possession of some secret by which he had acquired his extraordinary strength. They were basically asking her to entice him, and persuade him with soothing, seductive and flattering words, and when he was in a passionate and affectionate mood take every opportunity to seduce him to tell her his secret.

We will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver: (v5), that's eleven hundred silver shekels. It is estimated that a silver shekel was around one to four days wages depending upon the era, the nation and the country. This means if Delilah betrayed her husband, she stood to gain 1100 to 4,400 days wages or around 3 years or 12 years income. This was clearly an enormous bribe for this era, especially for a woman such as Delilah. This huge reward shows how important it was for the Philistines to capture Samson.

That we may bind him to humble (afflict in KJV) him: (v5), they intended to severely punish him, which they did, but they express it in milder words, so that the horror that they planned to afflict upon him would not cause Delilah to refuse to betray him because of a sense of pity she might have felt for him.

FIRST TIME DELILAH ASKS SAMSON HOW HE MAYBE BOUND

JUDGES 16:6-9

- **Judges 16:6-9:** So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you."⁷ Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man."⁸ Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them.⁹ Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

It is unlikely Delilah's stated the question, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you," so openly to Samson for then he may have suspected that she had some agenda against him. It is far more likely these few words express the sum of what Delilah aimed to discover, rather than her very words, and that, she wormed it out of him by little by little, as opportunities arose, by flattery, caresses, soothing words, and seduction over a period of time, and perhaps asking when he was somewhat inebriated during times of drinking wine and strong drink, so that Samson would have no cause of suspicion.

If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings): (v7) (seven green withs that were never dried in KJV), referring to pliable vine branches easily bent, flexible twigs and certain platted vegetable stalks, which are used in many Eastern countries even today for ropes.

Then I shall become weak and be like any other man: (v7), the fact Samson told Delilah a lie, clearly shows that he did not trust her, and that he was in full control of his mind, and on his guard concerning the secret of his strength.

Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber: (v9) after Delilah had discovered the secret to Samson's strength (or at least thought she had), she told the lords of the Philistines who in turn arranged to have men hide in her chamber, probably in a very large closet or an adjoining room. It appears the Philistines desired to take Samson alive rather than kill him, probably so that they could make a public display of him, for it would have been a very easy thing to kill him while he was sleeping,

The Philistines are upon you, Samson: (v9) taking an opportunity, very likely, when Samson was asleep and perhaps drunk, she bound him, after which she would have signalled the men in hiding to come out, and then pretended to warn Samson saying, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" Samson arose and easily snapped the bowstrings. We are not told here, what happened after Samson arose.

However, verse twenty (the fourth time this happens) tells us that immediately after Delilah said to Samson, "The Philistines are upon you," he said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." This carries

the idea that he would go out and fight against the Philistines that had come out of hiding, which shows that the Philistines that were hiding in Delilah's chamber did come out against Samson, when she cried, "The Philistines are upon you," and that he fought against them.

Since it appears Samson was visiting Delilah at her house, and not living with her, she may have used sex as one of her weapons, in that she refused to sleep with him unless he told her his secret. It is also very likely that Samson was unaware that Delilah had arranged for the Philistines to attack him, its far more likely he thought a servant, or someone had seen him enter her house and told them he was there, and believed she was genuinely warning him, for it seems hardly likely he could be deceived another three times if he knew she had deliberately arranged for the Philistines to attack him. The exact detail of events matters little for the important thing is that the secret of his strength was not yet known by Delilah, or by the Philistines.

SECOND TIME DELIAH ASKS SAMSON HOW HE MAYBE BOUND

JUDGES 16:10-12

- **Judges 16:10-12:** Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound."¹¹ And he said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man."¹² So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

Its certain Delilah, would have allowed some time to pass before making this second attempt to avoid any sense of suspicion. It is also likely she may have told Samson that the previous chamber incident:

- Was a playful tease.
- Her desire to know the secret to his strength, simply stemmed from loving curiosity.
- If he really loved her, he would tell her the truth, rather than mock her in such a deceptive manner.

It is also very likely he was totally oblivious to the very real threat she was to her life.

New ropes: (v12) we are not told what materials these ropes were made of, but from them being dried, it is likely they were a type of thick pliable twig that was strong and flexible, perhaps similar to the previous bands or three cords twisted together, that had never been used.

Second scenario: being very desirous of getting such a large sum of reward money, Delilah took these new ropes, bound Samson and repeated the same scenario as she had done the first time, she bound him. (See notes following v6-9) above.

THIRD TIME DELIAH ASKS SAMSON HOW HE MAYBE BOUND

JUDGES 16:13-14

- **Judges 16:13-14:** Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man."¹⁴ So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

We would be safe to suppose Delilah waited until sometime had passed, and she felt it was a suitable time to confront Samson for lying and deceiving her these two times, before she rebukes him for lying to her and again attempts to push him to tell her the truth, which he almost did, by linking his hair to his strength, nevertheless, he deceives her once again, which shows that he was still in control of his mind.

Seven locks of my head: (v13) at this time the sacred long locks of Samsons hair, did not lie curling about his broad shoulders, but were plaited into seven long braids, many in the East chose to plait their hair in this way.

Delilah wove the seven locks of his head into the web: (v14) the meaning of this group of verses seems to be that Samson seven long plaits were to be woven into a single web which was done on a loom, which was a frame with a wooden revolving cylinder (called a beam in KJV) fixed to it, as various cloths were woven, they were rolled onto this revolving cylinder. It appears as Samson slept, Delilah wove his seven locks into a single web, and then pinned (i.e., fastened) his hair down with a wooden peg or something similar.

Delilah called: (v14), "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" He awoke, and immediately freed himself. It is very likely the circumstances here were much the same as they were when Delilah bound Samson the first time with seven fresh bowstrings: (seven green withs that were never dried in KJV), (v8). (See notes following v6-9) above.

FOURTH TIME DELIAH ASKS SAMSON HOW HE MAYBE BOUND

JUDGES 16:15-20

- **Judges 16:15-20:** And 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 you have not told me where your great strength lies."¹⁶ And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.¹⁷ And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."¹⁸ When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands.¹⁹ She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.²⁰ And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

Delilah's question, "How can you say, I love you?" show that Samson was telling her that he loves her. Though he had previously undergone Delilah's wiles and experienced her deceptions when she enticed him to tell her his riddle (Judges 14:16), and now after three other similar seductions, flatteries and deceptions, when he told her his strength would be taken:

1. If they bound him with bowstrings that had not been dried. (v8).
2. If they bound him with new ropes that had not been used. (v11).
3. If they weaved his seven locks into a single web. (v13).

After all these deceptions, Samson had still not learned wisdom. It is very likely Delilah took the opportunity to entice him to tell her his secret while he was caressing her and telling her he loved her, during these romantic moments she, being very cunning, would have taken the opportunity to urge him to tell her his secret, firstly, by making him feel guilty for lying to her and secondly, by pretending to love him, while with an extremely deceptive heart, and perhaps in a loving gentle tone saying, while

caressing him, "You have mocked me three times," (15). Her words, "your heart is not with me," carry the idea, that his love is only shown in outward (i.e., sexual) expressions and not in affection, that stems from an open and honest heart toward her, as a man who truly loves would do and as one true friend does to another.

His soul was vexed to death: (16) after being deceived three times, it is natural to wonder, how is it that Samsons mind was still blinded to Delilah's deceptions? Perhaps the following will help, Samson never knew she had plotted with the Philistines to come out against him. (See notes following v6-9) above. This is one of the reasons she called out, "Samson the Philistines are upon you," so he would not realise her evil plot against him. Delilah was an evil greedy and cunning woman who used all types of deceptions and seductions to discover Samsons secret. He was completely enslaved by his passion for her, which is why she was able to overcome him with a succession of flattering arts, until she discovered the secret she would be so richly paid for. Added to this, because we read of these events, in a matter of minutes, one after another, it should be kept in mind, that between each one sometime would have lapsed.

Vexed unto death, the statement, "Samsons soul was vexed unto death," carries the idea that he was torn between two contrary passions, the first being his desire to gratify Delilah, and the second his fear of betraying his Nazarite vow, these two opposing tensions robbed him from enjoying his life. It means that because he was so strongly torn between his passion of love and his fear of breaking the Nazarite vow, he could hardly bear to live.

On the one hand, he could not bring himself to leave her, which would have removed all his difficulties, and on the other hand, he feared he was in danger of losing his strength if he told her his secret, for he had never told anyone.

A razor has never come upon my head: (17) we have no account of Samson being told that he would lose his supernatural strength if he broke his Nazarite vow by shaving his head, however, it is certain that God had revealed it to him, either by the Angel of the LORD telling his mother and father when he visited them prior to his birth, or by a dream or in some other manner.

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He now tells Delilah far more than he ever did before, and since God was the one giving him his extraordinary strength it would have made much more sense to her. His head had never been shaved since he was born; which was the order of the angel that foretold his birth (Judges 13:5), and it had been carefully observed to that time:

It was, a law of a Nazarite vow that a man was not to shave his head, which Samson had strictly observed. However, Nazarites were to keep other laws, one of these was to abstain from wine and strong drink. Some feel this means that Samson would have never been in a state of drunkenness, because his Nazariteship would have been made void and his strength affected accordingly.

But this is not necessarily so for there were other things that Nazarites were obliged to keep, which Samson didn't observe. It seems that because he was called from birth to be a perpetual Nazarite, and that the principal thing he was to observe, and that affected his strength was that he was not to shave his head, was the only discretion that affected his strength.

When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart: (16), it would appear that Delilah perceived the truthfulness of what Samson was telling her, probably from the tone of his voice and by the seriousness and earnestness with which he spoke, and no doubt by the change of his countenance. It is also certain she concluded he had told her the truth, when he mentioned he had been a Nazirite to God from his mother's womb, for she would know that he would not take God's name in vain or lie about such a sacred thing.

She called for the lords of the Philistines: (18), after perceiving Samson had told her the truth and being very desirous of having the money the Philistines had offered her, she again calls for the Philistines to come once more, and tells them that Samson has now finally told her the truth.

The Philistines came up to her and brought the money: (v18), The Philistines had offered Delilah an enormous reward if she betrayed Samson. In verse five each of the five Philistines offered to give Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver, which is a total of eleven hundred silver shekels. It is estimated that a silver shekel was around one to four days wages depending upon the era, the nation and the country. This means if Delilah betrayed Samson, she stood to gain 1,100 to 4,400 days wages or around 3 years or 12 years income. This was clearly an enormous bribe for this era, especially for a woman such as Delilah. This huge reward shows how important it was for the Philistines to capture Samson.

She made him sleep on her knees: (18) perhaps they had been drinking wine or strong drink and it was late at night or she secretly gave him some kind of sleepy potion or by feigning love and fondness toward him she lulled him to sleep while gently caressing his hair. Whatever method she used; he fell asleep on her knees. She called a barber, no doubt who she had secretly standing by, and he shaved of the seven locks of his hair. It is very likely the circumstances here were much the same as they were when Delilah bound Samson the first time with seven fresh bowstrings: (seven green withs that were never dried in KJV) (See notes following v6-9) above.

He did not know that the LORD had left him: (18), meaning his extraordinary supernatural strength had gone, for this was a gift of the LORD. God justly departed and withdraw His gift from Samson, because he put his life in the power of a very deceptive and seductive woman, showing that He regarded the caresses of a beautiful woman more than God's favour, and the safeguarding of his extraordinary supernatural strength.

The Philistines are upon you, Samson! (v20), Delilah awakes Samson as she had done many times before, he awakens and says, "I will go out and shake myself free," as he had said three times before. This carries the idea that he would go out and fight the Philistines off, which shows that the Philistines that were hiding in Delilah's chamber did come out of hiding to take Samson and that he fought them off. Samson's excessive affections toward Delilah caused him to lose God's gift of strength, and become a slave to those who he should have ruled over.

NOTE: Samson's hair was not the cause of his extraordinary strength, but because it was the chief condition of the covenant that God had called him to, shaving his head was a violation of this covenant, which is why God withdraw His help.

THE PHILISTINES PUT SAMSON IN PRISON

JUDGES 16:21-22

- **Judges 16:21-22:** And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles (with fetters of brass in KJV). And he ground at the mill in the prison. ²² But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

Gouged out his eyes (put out his eyes in KJV): (v21), The savage culture of Samson's time used blindness as the easiest way of rendering powerful and dangerous enemy's harmless. They did this in one of the following ways:

- By using the thumbs to force the eyes out of their sockets.

- By putting fire or a red-hot iron rod to the eyes.
- By digging or scooping out the eyeballs with a knife or dagger.

This was done as an act of revenge and to make it impossible for Samson to cause them any future harm, while they prolonged their triumph, revenge, mocking and celebration over him. To blind a man was a one of the most effective ways of humiliating kings and great warriors. Samsons great weakness was his wanton eyes for it was his eyes that lead him into sin and great affliction, and now as a result his eyes have been put out.

They brought him to Gaza: probably for the following three reasons:

1. Gaza was a strong Philistine city along the Mediterranean Sea coast, and some distance from Samson's own people.
2. To restore the honour of Gaza, because of the scorn he had brought upon its rulers and principal men.
3. He would be a greater distance from the Israelites, should they think of rescuing him out of their hands, and because it was a very strong fortified city.

He first went to Gaza of his own will, and acted to his own shame and pleasure by going into a harlot. (v1). Then he carried off their city gates, to the shame and disgrace of the city's inhabitants, and now, he is brought in triumph into the city, against his own will to be punished and tortured.

He ground at the mill in the prison: (v21), it was usual to use one or more slaves, or prisoners or beasts to move the mill grinder around. This was degrading and monotonous work that slaves were given to do. It is certain they would expect a great amount of work from such a strong man as Samson. Sadly, Samsons weakness made him a slave to beautiful seductive women, and now he has become a slave to his enemies.

Bound him with bronze shackles (with fetters of brass in KJV): (v21), meaning he was bound with chains of brass, rather than leather, like other captives, and since the word is plural in number, it most likely means there where at least two of them.

The hair of his head began to grow: (v22) Samsons hair began to grow as it naturally would, however, it is likely it grew in an extraordinary short time and became as it was prior to being shaved. Naturally his strength did not lay in his hair, but his strength probably increased as it grew, and it is certain he would have been aware of his strength returning, which is why he asked the young man who held him by the hand (v26), to place him between the two pillars.

THE PHILISTINES MOCK SAMSON

JUDGES 16:23-25

- **Judges 16:23-25:** Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand."²⁴ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us."²⁵ And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars.

The lords of the Philistines: (v23) the gathering together of the five lords of the Philistines would not have been immediately upon Samson's being taken and placed in prison, but more likely some months later.

The Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god: (v23), Dagon was the Philistines national god:

- When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.
² Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. (1 Samuel 5:1-2).
- And they (the Philistines) put his (Saul's) armour in the temple of their gods and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. (1 Chronicles 10:10).

There was also a temple for Dagon at Ashdod, which was another of the five principal cities of the Philistines. It is supposed that the upper part of the image of Dagon was in human form, while the lower part was like a fish, perhaps one of the sea-gods of the heathen. The Philistines believed Dagon had given them victory over Samson, which is the reason they assembled together to give honour to their idol, for their triumph over an extraordinary man of such strength who loathed their idolatry and their cruel oppression of his countrymen.

On the return of a great victory, it was a common practice amongst heathen nations, to make a public display of their war prisoners, especially at their religious festivals, during such times, they would offer grateful honour to the gods who they believed had given them triumph over their enemies, while at the same time heap upon their prisoners all kinds of indignity to shame to utterly humble them.

Our god has given Samson our enemy: (v23), though Delilah had done it and they had paid her for it, they attribute their victory over Samson, to their god, which is the same principle that we as believers in the true God, do when He does great things for us, for it is right and proper that the God of all creation should be given the glory, but to give false deities that have no foundation for their existence, honour and glory is not only foolishness, but also extreme spiritual blindness.

When the people saw him, they praised their god: (v24) it was usual for the heathens to feast with eating, drinking, dancing and music in their temples, especially on occasions such as this. When their hearts became merry with wine they brought Samson, blinded and chained before the people, and they praised their god saying, "our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravage (destroyer in KJV) of our country, who has killed many of us." (v24).

He may entertain us (he may make us sport in KJV): (v25) this does not mean that Samson would entertain the Philistines in the sense that he would deliberately do anything to entertain his enemies or make them merry, but rather that they would make him the object of their scorn:

- By taunting, mocking and insulting him.
- By having their champion warriors displaying how weak and helpless their great enemy now is.
- By being made to submit to the peoples mocking and insults.
- By beating him with a rod, slapping his face, pulling his beard and spitting on him.

It would have been a great joy for the Philistines to see their great enemy blinded and in chains, being led by a young lad (v26)

SAMSON CALLS ON THE LORD

JUDGES 16:26-28

- **Judges 16:26-28:** And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

²⁸ Then Samson called to the LORD and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.”

We do not know the exact architecture of Dagon’s temple, except for what is mentioned in these verses. We are told that it had pillars and a flat roof, which was common for houses in Canaan, Phoenicia and surrounding places. But the roof of Dagon’s house was massive, for it could hold three thousand people, so this is not a small building. It is likely that those standing on the roof as well as the spectators under it could see what was being done on a stage or an area in front of them. Those sitting under the roof would have been the five lords of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron and principal persons, for it was the prime position because of the shade the roof gave.

It is very likely that these chief Philistines celebrated a sacrificial meal, while the people were assembling on the roof above, which would have been surrounded by a balustrade. Though it mentions two pillars, it does not necessarily mean that there were only two, especially since there were three thousand people on the roof. It is far more likely there were a row of pillars and that only two are mentioned, because Samson only leaned against two (v29). It is easy to understand that if the two middle pillars were crushed the whole structure would collapse, especially when there was such an enormous number of people on the flat roof.

Let me feel the pillars: (v26) that I may lean (rest in KJV) upon them." Rest would seem to be the better translation, for it is clear Samson was aware that his strength (at least at some level had returned) and that he intended with the help of God to crush the two pillars, so it’s very likely he pretended weariness to hide from his enemies the fact his strength had returned. When the pillars were removed, the weight of 3,000 people brought the roof down and those above fell together with the stones and timbers upon the five lords, of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron and many other principal people below, as a result there was a great slaughter, with Samson himself perishing under the ruins.

Ponder for a moment: in Samson’s last display of supernatural strength, he not only destroyed three thousand Philistines, but also destroyed the five lords, of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, and a multitude of other principal people amongst them. This is why Samson is referred to as a deliverer of Israel, for though he didn’t raise up an army and deliver the entire nation, by his supernatural strength he destroyed all of the Philistines chief rulers and principal men, which inspired Israel to rise up against the Philistines, which history shows they did.

O Lord GOD, please remember me: (v28), prior to Samsons prayer, it is certain that many tears of repentance had fallen from his blind eyes, for he would have had much time to reflect upon his sinful actions, for his conscious as he stood between the two pillars was one of total dependence upon God as he leaned on these great pillars, praying, “God just once more.” He may have prayed this prayer in silence or expressed it aloud, either way the LORD must have by inspiration giving to the writer of this book the fact that Samson prayed, for there was no one left alive who may have heard it, to tell it to others.

Though we are only told Samsons prayed for strength that he would be avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes, there is little doubt that he was also motivated from a passion to destroy the Philistines to vindicate the God of Israel, who by making such a public show of Samson in the house of Dagon were publicly dishonouring God. The words, “with one final revenge,” do not express the spirit of the Gospel, but they do express an attitude natural to the age and culture of Samsons time, remember, he had never heard the message, “Love your enemies,” and, for his time, the destruction of Israel’s and God’s enemies was his duty.

Ponder for a moment: how Samson would have felt, when he felt the full power of Gods Spirit rushing back into his body, as he grasped the two pillars with his newly strengthened hands. It is very likely his last

words, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Were shouted aloud as he brought down the two supporting pillars, and the entire building crumbled to ruin as three thousand Philistines fall to their death and the five lords, of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron and many other principal men are crushed under the rubble. We would be safe to suppose that as Samson knew Dagon's house was crumbling down around him, he was satisfied to die with the knowledge he had brought so many of God's powerful enemies to destruction.

It should be noticed: despite the fact, that both the Philistines and Samson throughout the story had been acting from their own wills, it did not stop God from bringing about His purpose, which was to destroy the chief rulers of the Philistines and by doing so inspire Israel to rise up against them, which history shows us they did.

SAMSON BRINGS THE HOUSE OF THE PHILLISTINES DOWN

JUDGES 16:29-30

- **Judges 16:29-30:** And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. ³⁰ And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.

In an attempt to discredit the Scriptures, some skeptics use the fact that two pillars placed so close together, could not possibly support a building containing so many thousands of people, but this is foolishness, because the fact only two are mentioned, does not mean that there were only two, the reason only two are mentioned is because it was only two that Samson put his hands on.

Let me die with the Philistines: (v30) Samson was content to lose his own life, if it meant his death would destroy the lives of Israel's powerful enemies. It was not only Samson's will, but also God's will that he would die in this fashion, for if it was not God's will, He would not have answered Samson's prayer by strengthening him with a new measure of supernatural strength. For by it he destroyed the enemies of God and of Israel, His people.

Having a new surge of supernatural strength, Samson bowed between the two pillars with all his might, and the house fell so that the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life, for besides the five lords, of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, and a multitude of other principal people celebrating under the roof there were 3000 men and women on the rooftop, that were killed as the entire structure collapsed, some estimate that 4000 to 7000 may have been slain. In contrast to this we read only of him slaying 1000 with the jawbone, thirty men at Ashkelon, and the hip and thigh slaughter of which the number is not known.

SAMSON RULED ISRAEL TWENTY-TWO YEARS AND WAS BURIED

JUDGES 16:31

- **Judges 16:31:** Then his brothers and all his family (his brethren and all the house of his father in KJV) came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

It is most likely that the statement, "his brothers and all his family (his brethren and all the house of his father," in KJV), not only embrace Samson's immediate family, but also the whole tribe of Dan, which would

be one of the reasons the Philistines, allowed them to searched through the rubble to recover the body of their champion, rather than oppose them, especially now that all their chief rulers and principal men were killed in the collapse of Dagon's house. They carried Samsons body to the hills of Dan, where Manoah his father slept. Here we leave the last of the judges to sleep in his grave.

He judged Israel twenty years: (v31) this had been stated in the previously chapter:

- He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years. (Judges 15:20).

It is perhaps repeated here, partly to confirm it and partly to show that the twenty years ended at his death. It is likely, that had Samson not had such a weakness for beautiful woman and passions unworthy of a man so gifted by God, and instead had a much nobler character, he may have been a far greater blessing to his country, nevertheless despite his human flaws, he was laid to rest with awe, wonder and mercy as true soldier of God and reckoned amongst the heroes of faith:

- And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets (Hebrews 11:32).

SNAPSHOTS OF SOLOMONS LIFE

Samsons powerful life was mournful, then in moments of time it lite up like a miraculous light, but soon dimmed, and at the end it was one of torture in a most brutal manner until his light was utterly extinguished long before its time. His great fall shines a brilliant spotlight upon the reason Solomon encouraged his son to get wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and treasure up the LORD'S commandments in his heart, for then he would be delivered from:

- The forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, (Proverbs 2:16). Whose house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; ¹⁹ none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. (Proverbs 2:18-19).

The book of Hebrews lists Samson in, "The Hall of Faith," amongst the great men of faith (Heb. 11:32), yet in this chapter we find him behaving in such an ungodly manner, that many questions whether he was a godly man or not. This should not cause confusion, for it shows how true the following words of Scriptures are:

- The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9).

The following four facts may also help give some understanding of Samsons behaviour:

- The brutal and ruthless culture of the era that Samson lived amongst may account for many things, that, if done in our time would be considered criminal.
- Over Samson's twenty years as a Judge, it is certain he would have done many good things for the people of Israel that are not recorded, and if they were, would perhaps reflect (at least at some level) a far better light upon his character.
- During Samson era there was no king in Israel: everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. (Judges 21:25).
- Believers can be exalted for their exceptional faith, even though their character falls short of what it should be.

Samsons story of a hero, who once was so strong, and became so weak, reflects the following lesson Moses taught Israel:

- Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things,⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. (Deut. 28:47-48).

LESSONS TO LEARN

- It is a principal of life, believers may sin, (i.e., David, Solomon and Samson etc.), but that does not always mean God withdraws his love, nor does it mean that God's plans and purposes will be thwarted, but it does mean they will suffer the consequences.
- The fact God accepted and gifted Samson despite his defects and impurity of character, shines a spotlight upon the reality God does not require qualities beyond the standard of the culture of the time in which His servants live, and that imperfections do not make service unacceptable.
- There may be moments in life when like Samson we act or behave in an ungodly manner, but unlike Samson who never learned from his past experiences, and as a consequence, suffered sorrow and loss because of his own lack of wisdom, we should learn from these ungodly moments, so we do not, like Samson, continue to repeat the same foolish and destructive behaviour.
- Samson's fall gave the enemies of God, valid reason to mock and blaspheme the God of Israel, which shines a spotlight on the truth, we should endeavour to live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ, to avoid giving unbelievers any reason to turn away from God or to mock Him.
- Like Samson, we may make choices that lead us down a wrong path, this does not always mean that God will withdraw his love or forsake us, but it does mean we will suffer the consequences as Samson did.

SYMBOLISMS IN THE STORY OF SAMSON

Samson's life can be seen as a mirror, of Israel's own history, in the following three ways:

1. Samson and Israel were both called of God and enormously blessed of God, on the condition they remained faithful to the Covenant they had with God.
2. Like Samson, the nation of Israel was strong amongst the nations so long as they kept the covenant of God.
3. Samson's love for Delilah, was love for a foreign woman, much like Israel's love for foreign gods, which love caused Samson and Israel the loss of strength amongst the nations.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
