



# SAMSON

## Lesson 8

### Judges 13 – 21

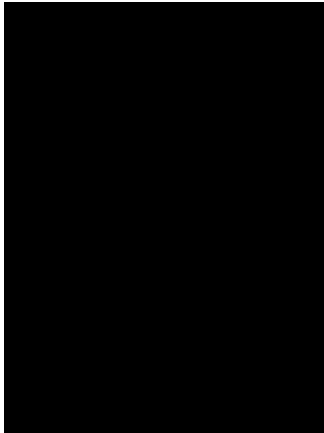


#### **What happened before?**

Israel's disobedience to God caused many problems for them. Every time Israel disobeyed, God allowed enemy nations to come against them. When Israel repented and cried out to God, God raised up deliverers to free them from their enemies. These deliverers were called judges. In our last lesson, we saw how God raised up Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites.

#### **BIBLE STORY**

Jephthah, by the hand of God, had delivered Israel from the Ammonites and had given them peace. Rather than serving the Lord, the Israelites turned back to their wicked ways once more. The Lord caused the Philistines to come upon them and oppress them for 40 years. They needed another deliverer.

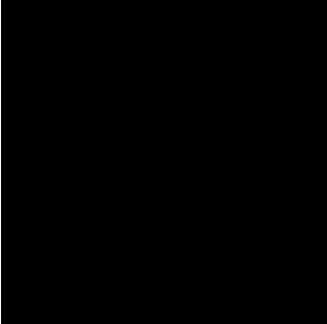


There was a man in the tribe of Dan named Manoah. Manoah and his wife had no children. One day an angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and told her she would have a son. The angel told her not to eat anything unclean nor drink any strong drink before he was born. Samson would be special to God—he would be a Nazirite.

Manoah's wife told Manoah all the angel's words. Manoah prayed that the Lord would send the angel back so they could learn more about how to raise this special son. The angel appeared a second time, this time to both Manoah and his wife. The angel repeated his instructions, assuring Manoah that his wife would have a son and he would be a Nazirite. The angel told Manoah to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. As the flame went up from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. Manoah and his wife were very much afraid; they fell on their faces to the ground. Manoah thought they would die because they had seen an angel. But his wife assured him that God was not going to destroy them, else the angel would not have spoken to them as he had.

When the son was born, they called him Samson. He grew strong and the Lord blessed him. As a Nazirite Samson was under a lifelong vow to the Lord to never cut his hair, neither drink wine nor touch anything dead. These three things would be signs of his devotion to God. God was going to use Samson to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Samson was a mighty man and a champion of the people, but, he had a weakness. He was easily tempted by women! In the city of Timnah, he saw a woman of the Philistines and demanded that his parents arrange for him to marry her. His parents were very displeased that he chose a wife from the Philistines rather than one from their people.



Samson was made very strong by the power of God. On one occasion, when he came to Timnah, a young lion roared against him. Samson killed the lion as easy as one might kill a lamb. He killed the lion with his bare hands. Later he found the carcass of the lion, and inside was a swarm of bees. Samson ate of the honey that the bees had produced. He also gave of the honey to his parents, but did not tell them where it came from.

It was time for the marriage feast. Thirty men were brought to the feast to be attendants. At the feast, Samson put forth a riddle. "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." He promised the men he would give them each new garments and clothing if they could solve the riddle. If they could not, each man had to give him new garments. They could not solve the riddle, but they told Samson's wife that if she did not find the answer and tell them they would burn her and her father's house. Samson's wife told Samson that if he did not tell her, then he did not love her! He told her the answer and she told the men. They gave the answer to Samson, but Samson knew his wife had revealed the riddle to them.

Samson was angry. He went down to the Philistine city of Ashkelon and killed thirty men and took their garments to pay his companions at the feast. After paying the men, Samson went back to his father's house without his bride. Some time later, Samson decided to go to his father-in-law's house and get his wife. But his father-in-law told Samson that she was no longer there. He thought Samson hated his wife, so he gave her to another man. Again, Samson was angry. He put torches on the tails of 300 foxes and set them loose in the fields of the Philistines, burning up their crops.

After that, the Philistines set out to capture Samson. Even some of the people of Judah were willing to help the Philistines. They feared that Samson would stir up the anger of the Philistines and it would make things worse for them. The men of Judah captured Samson and bound him with two new ropes. When the Philistines came, the ropes fell off Samson as if they were nothing. Samson found a jawbone from a donkey and killed 1,000 Philistines. After the battle, God refreshed Samson by causing water to come forth from a hidden spring. God brought a great victory over the Philistines by the hand of Samson.

Samson went to Gaza and the men of Gaza wanted to kill him. They hid and waited for him. But, at midnight Samson showed they had no power over him as he tore away the gates and doorposts of the city and carried them to the top of a hill.

While Samson was physically strong, he had a weakness for women. Samson loved a woman named Delilah. We don't know if Delilah was an Israelite or a Philistine. In any case, she was willing to work with the Philistines to find out the source of his strength. They promised her a great fortune if she could find the reason for his strength and tell them. She begged Samson to tell. Once he told her that if he was bound with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, he would become weak. While he was asleep, she tied him with the bowstrings. The Philistines were watching when she called out to Samson, "The Philistines are upon you." Samson jumped up and with no effort, broke the bowstrings.

Two other times he lied to her about the source of his strength. Finally, he got tired of her complaining that if he would not tell her, then he did not love her. He told her that he was a Nazirite, under a vow to God and that if his head was shaved, he would be like any other man. We understand that his hair did not make him strong. It was God who made him strong. If he rejected his vow to God by cutting his hair, God would take his strength away.

While Samson was sleeping, Delilah called for a man and he cut Samson's hair. Delilah said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" Samson arose against them, but had no strength to resist his captors. They put out his eyes and put him in the prison house where he was used to grind grain for the Philistines. Samson had been a great and mighty man when he kept his vow to God, but because of his weakness for women, his strength was gone!

The story of Samson is tragic, but it ends with a great victory over the Philistines. In time, Samson's hair began to grow long again. At a victory feast for their idol god, Dagon, the Philistines called for Samson so they could make fun of him. There were thousands of people present at this feast. The building was filled with people, with about 3,000 on the roof alone. 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." 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!"

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. 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. Samson had judged for 20 years.

The final five chapters of the book of Judges show that Israel continued to disobey God by worshipping idols. God had told them to drive all the Canaanites out of the land, but they had not. Instead they allowed the Canaanites to influence them to do all sorts of evil.

The tribes began to fight against themselves. The people had become a savage, bloodthirsty people. They were not at all what God intended them to be. In spite of all the bad things that were happening in Israel, God was still working out His plan to bring a Savior into the world. Truly, the time of the judges shows how desperately the world needed a Savior!

