

## Lesson 72

# Samson Receives Strength

God gave Samson supernatural strength to fight the Philistines.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

God set Samson apart from birth to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. Samson lost his strength when Delilah became more important to him than God, and he was captured by the Philistines. When Samson prayed for forgiveness and strength, God enabled him to collapse a building, destroying 3,000 Philistines.

## Key Passages

Judges 14:5–6, 16:19–20, 16:28–30

## Memory Verse

1 John 1:8–9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The period of the 14 judges extended over about 300 years. It began around 1400 BC with the first judge, Othniel, and ended with the prophet and judge Samuel (see table below). The period of judges occurred during a very dark time of backsliding in Israel’s history. Within the book of Judges, we see the repeated themes of the Israelites’ disobedience to God and God’s faithfulness to forgive and deliver the people when they repented. We also see the recurring theme that God uses people—even the wicked, idolatrous enemy nations of Israel and the imperfect judges—to bring judgment, to promote reconciliation with his people, and to fulfill his perfect will however he deems necessary.

Judge	Reference	Period
Othniel	Judges 3:9–11	40 years
Ehud	Judges 3:15–30	80 years
Shamgar	Judges 3:31	10 years
Deborah	Judges 4:4–5:31	40 years
Gideon	Judges 6:7–8:35	40 years
Tola	Judges 10:1–2	23 years
Jair	Judges 10:3–5	22 years
Jephthah	Judges 11:1–12:7	6 years

Ibzan	Judges 12:8–10	7 years
Elon	Judges 12:11–12	10 years
Abdon	Judges 12:13–15	8 years
Samson	Judges 13:2–16:31	20 years
Eli	1 Samuel 4:18	40 years
Samuel	1 Samuel 7	21 years

Despite Israel's repeated sin, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges but abandoned the Lord and bowed down to false gods. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. When the judge was dead, they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from evil or from their stubborn ways.

The evil of idolatry caused the Lord to deliver the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years (Judges 13:1). It was at this time that God appeared to the barren wife of Manoah and promised a son who would deliver the people. God also specified that the boy would be set apart by following the laws of a Nazirite, which included drinking no wine, eating no unclean thing, and not shaving his head (Judges 13:4–5). The son born to Manoah and his wife was Samson, who received God's blessing and supernatural strength. Samson was the twelfth judge and the last one recorded in the book of Judges. God used even Samson's sinful choices to accomplish his will against the Philistines. Samson's failed marriage to a Philistine woman eventually led to a battle in which Samson defeated 1,000 Philistines using just the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:14–15). He judged Israel for 20 years.

Despite his victories and feats of strength, Samson had a weakness for ungodly women with loyalty to the Philistines. His love for Delilah led to him revealing his special relationship to God as a Nazirite. Delilah betrayed him to the Philistines, and God removed his empowering Spirit. Samson was captured, blinded, and forced to grind at the mill in a Philistine prison (Judges 16:15–22). Because of God's mercy, Samson's account does not end there. God listened to Samson's prayer for strength to destroy about 3,000 Philistines who gathered to worship their false god, Dagon, and to mock Samson and the true God. Blind Samson, positioned between two pillars, was given the strength to collapse the whole building filled with Philistines (Judges 16:23–30). Samson had his failings, but he repented and showed great faith, as noted in Hebrews 11:32–34.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Samson was born to a barren woman and dedicated to God from the womb. The Nazirite vow described in Numbers 6:1–21 was typically done for a specified time. The term "Nazirite" comes from a Hebrew term that indicates dedication by separation. The Nazirite vow, which could be made by a man or a woman, included separation to the Lord by avoiding grape products, hair-

cutting, and contact with a dead body. In Judges 13, Manoah's wife followed Nazirite restrictions while she was pregnant, and God told her and her husband that Samson would be a Nazirite to the day of his death (Judges 13:7). It is important to note that Samson's long hair was not the source of his strength—God was. Scripture repeats that the Spirit of the Lord enabled Samson to do his miraculous deeds, including killing a lion with his bare hands (Judges 14:6), striking Philistines (Judges 14:19, 15:14–15), transporting a city gate (Judges 16:3), and bringing down a building (Judges 16:28–30). Samson acknowledged God's hand in his victory when he prayed for water after killing 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:18). However, his desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh led to poor choices in women: first the Philistine woman in Timnah, then a Philistine prostitute in Gaza, and finally Delilah in the Valley of Sorek, who would be his downfall. These women showed loyalty to the Philistines over Samson.

The Philistines are first mentioned in the listing of nations descended from Noah's son Ham (Genesis 10:13–14). The Greek version of their name is where we get the name Palestine. It is believed that the Philistines migrated from the island of Crete and the Aegean region to the area of Canaan along the Mediterranean coast. They controlled land in Canaan as early as the time of Abraham and Isaac (see Genesis 21:32–34, 26:1). God later directed Moses and the Israelites around the land of the Philistines to avoid war (Exodus 13:17). By the time of the conquest, the Philistines had moved inland and controlled five city-states: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron (Joshua 13:3). Each city was controlled by a "lord" or "king." It was significant that the lords of the Philistines, likely the rulers of these cities, came to Delilah and each offered her a large sum of silver if she would discover the source of Samson's strength and tell them (Judges 16:4–6). Delilah appeared to care more for material gain than for Samson, while Samson cared more for Delilah than being obedient to God. May God strengthen us to avoid the desires of the flesh and of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), which all end in destruction.

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