
Judges 16

Judges 16:1–31

Samson and Delilah

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Introduction: Judges 16 must be correctly understood to be appreciated. Unfortunately, we will never know all of the details in this chapter. There are several things which the author leaves out, which cause us to guess at exactly what events took place. There are a number of things which we may deduce, sometimes after the fact.

However, in all of the commentaries that I have read, no one seems to spend much time really examining this chapter from a psychological standpoint, which is the angle at which this chapter is most interesting. The motivations of Samson and Delilah are key in understanding what is going on here. For me, the most fascinating part of this chapter is what is going through the mind of Samson and Delilah and why are they behaving the way that they do. There will be quite a number of things which we will discuss in this chapter that, even if you have read a dozen commentaries, you have not seen discussed before. You all know the story of Samson and Delilah; let me tell you that you don’t know the story of Samson and Delilah.

If you will recall, I mentioned at the beginning of Judges 13 that I found Samson to be one of the least interesting characters in Scripture and that I did not care for him or his exploits. By this chapter, despite his stupid behavior in previous chapters, he’s begun to be fleshed out as an interesting character to me. I recall reading *Studs Lonigan* many years ago, and, for the longest part of the book, I’m not liking any of the characters that much and wondering why on earth I am still reading the book. Then, about two-thirds of the way through the book, suddenly, Studs and Weary have become interesting people with some dimension to them, and I couldn’t hardly put the book down after that. That’s how I feel about Samson. Initially, I didn’t particularly like him and would have preferred, at first, to write him off as some apocryphal myth. Now, at this time, I have become fascinated by his character and with the contents of this chapter.

From this chapter and previous chapters, we have come to find out that Samson’s weakness is women (among other things). In Judges 16, he meets up with Delilah, who apparently with great boldness inquired the secret of his strength. She never seemed to keep her purposes hidden, which some find to be a bit confusing. She would ask Samson what the source of his strength was, he would make something up, she would try it, and then the Philistines would show up to kill him; then he would reveal that he had only been misleading her. At the end, Samson tells her that the secret to his strength is his long hair. Now, please understand, Samson was not strong because he had long hair. The long hair signified that he was a Nazirite to God, and, as such, he also possessed the power of God’s Holy Spirit. What happened was that Samson got a bit cocky. He took his vows less seriously than he should have. He was super-humanly strong and widely feared. He could walk right into the middle of a Philistine city, where he was hated, and suffer no ill consequences.

When Samson told Delilah that the secret of his strength was in his long hair, it is possible that he did not realize that the cutting of his hair would cause the Holy Spirit to leave him. It is possible that he was just playing close to the edge. We really don't know one way or the other for certain. Listen, Samson is living with a woman with whom he is infatuated—and it is clear that Delilah has no feelings for him and that their relationship is based simply upon sex. And, by the way, it is even clear to Samson that she has no real feeling for him. It is not like Samson is completely fooled into thinking that Delilah is inherently a nice person who deep down loves him. No where is this even implied. She is a Philistine, perhaps a former prostitute. In any case, she is well off, she is exceptionally attractive, and Samson strongly lusts for her. Furthermore, Samson is living in the midst of Philistines. In other words, Samson is pushing the envelope, he is living life on the edge, he is taking chances, he is seeing how far he can go. This is a far cry from the Samson of the previous chapter. In the previous chapter, Samson, for a period of time, had seemed to reach some sort of a spiritual plateau. He called out to God, reasoning with God from the standpoint of God's justice and God's plan. Then he took a position of leadership in Israel. However, between Judges 15 and 16, Samson has fallen. He is a judge in Israel, but now he is living in the midst of the Philistines with a heathen Philistine woman who does not love him and he is simply doing it because he can.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, *what the hell is wrong with you Samson? Just what is your deal?* This is simple. Samson, as a young man (perhaps his mid or late 20's)¹, reached a spiritual plateau, after which he became a judge in Israel, respected. For most of twenty years, Samson apparently takes this position seriously and takes his spiritual life seriously (we are guessing here; we actually know nothing about the time period during which he judged Israel). But then Samson slid into his 40's; he hadn't been mixing it up with the Philistines as much as he did in his youth and he craved a little adventure and a little stimulation. Now you've got it—Samson was experiencing the typical male mid-life crisis. Today, he might purchase a red convertible, get his hair dyed and perhaps even get some cosmetic surgery. These options not being open to him, Samson goes down to Gaza and has himself a Philistine prostitute. We are only told of one incident—we don't know how many times that Samson did this. However, he spends enough time with the Philistines to find himself another Philistine woman to take up with—the infamous Delilah.

So, with Delilah, as has been described, we have a dysfunctional relationship. She does not love Samson, he, if not in love with her, was at least captivated by her and her ways. In their relationship, she actually pokes and prods him for the secret of his supernatural strength. Although he does not reveal it immediately, he finally tells her just enough—he tells her the secret is his long hair. Now, when Delilah cuts Samson's hair, which breaks his Nazirite vows, the Holy Spirit leaves him. His strength is in the Holy Spirit, but he loses the Spirit because he breaks his Nazirite vows. Now, this is a little tricky, but understand that Samson's parents, apart from his choice, vow for him to be a Nazirite; and now, Delilah, apart from his volition, will cause him break one of his Nazirite vows. Without the Holy Spirit to give him his great strength, the Philistines easily overpower Samson. They gouge out his eyes and they place him into temporary slavery until they gather to gloat.

At the end, Samson's strength returns to him because God the Holy Spirit returns to him. It is at this point that he takes out the roof of a Philistine coliseum, killing the people who are both inside and on the roof, which is his most famous act. It is this act which essentially broke the back of the Philistines making it possible for the Israelites to later completely overpower the Philistines under Saul and David. Of course, most of you, because your Bible as a child had pictures in it, have this mistaken mental picture of Samson with his long hair standing between two pillars and pulling the house down on several thousand Philistines. Actually, at this time, Samson had a burr haircut and probably most of the Philistines were above him, on the roof of the building (which apparently afforded a good view to what was down below). As a person who appreciates architecture, I would love to see pictures of this great building which Samson toppled.

Finally, after this chapter, we will leave the general format of the book of Judges that we had become accustomed to and we approach this time period from a different standpoint. So far, we have looked at the various judges and deliverers of Israel during the time of the judges, but we have not really seen much of the people and their actions. That is what is to come in the subsequent and final chapters of this book.

¹ We will discuss Samson's age in greater detail in v. 5.

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Samson, His Whore and the Philistines

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

And so went Samson to Gaza and so he saw there a woman fornicator and so he went in unto her.

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16:1

Later, Samson went to Gaza and he saw there a female prostitute, so he went in unto her.

Later, Samson went down to Gaza and saw there a prostitute, whom he had sex with.

We have briefly covered Gaza in Joshua 10:41 13:3a, one of the five primary cities of the Philistines. You will recall that when Samson lost the bet against his *best men* at his wedding, he went to Ashkelon and killed thirty Philistines for their clothes. Ashkelon is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, almost due west of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. Below Ashkelon is the city of Gaza, the southern-most Philistine city, inland by about three miles, and the perfect location for a city, as it sits on a hill 100 feet above a fertile plane, and there are fifteen natural, fresh water wells in the area of the city.²

You may wonder why Samson travels to the southernmost of the Philistine cities. Why doesn't he just go into the city next door to where he lives and do this? This is no doubt not Samson's only trip to a prostitute. He has probably been doing that for years and he goes to different Philistine cities. He doesn't set up a pattern. He may be devil-may-care, but he is not totally and completely foolhardy. He takes some precautions, as we will see in subsequent verses.

Samson is an interesting guy. He has this feud going on with the Philistines, he is a judge in Israel, and yet he persists in going to these Philistine cities for various and sundry reasons. Who he sees there is the feminine singular of *ʾishshâh* (אִשְׁשָׁה) [pronounced *eesh-SHAWH*], which means *woman, wife*. Strong's #802 BDB #61. This word is modified by feminine singular, Qal active participle of *zânâh* (זָנָה) [pronounced *zaw-NAW*], which means *to commit adultery, to fornicate, to [sexually pursue]*. As a participle, this describes a person often by their occupation and what they do at their occupation. In other words, this woman was a *fornicator* or a *prostitute* (without the feminine singular suffix, this would mean that Samson saw a *woman fornicating*). Strong's #2181 BDB #275. What is interesting is that the noun *ʾishshâh* is not really required here. Samson sees her first as a woman and secondly as a prostitute. As was said before, Samson's weakness was the female camp.

Now, you may wonder why this verse is here—it sets a pattern for Samson's life. He has been a judge in Israel for some time, but, after ten or so years have passed by, he's become bored and wants to go out and find some action and excitement. We don't know if this occurred at the end of his judgeship or whether Samson was guilty of this behavior throughout. My thinking is that he did this during the last few years, and these continued trips to prostitutes set him up for Delilah. He was on a spiritual peak at the end of the previous chapter and he may have been able to resist a woman like Delilah at that time. However, frequent sexual encounters totally confuses the soul with regards to matters of the heart and it weakens the man's authority. By the time Samson got to Delilah, he was easy pickings.

² Most of this material comes from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 662.

[And it was told] to Gazites to say, “Came Samson here.” And so they surrounded and so they lay in wait for him all of the night in a gate of the city and so they were silent all of the night, to say, “Until light of the morning and we will kill him.”

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16:2

[And it was told] to the Gazites was said, “Samson has come here.” So they surrounded [Samson] and lay in wait for him all of the night inside the gate of the city. They were [absolutely] silent all of the night, saying, “Until the light of the morning, and then we will kill him.”

The men of Gaza were informed that Samson was in town. Therefore, they lay in wait for Samson inside the city gate all that night. They remained there in absolute silence, saying, “We will wait for the dawn and then kill him.”

The Hebrew is missing the first few words, which are found in the Greek text. Rotherham, includes this. The NASB the KJV and Young include these words, but italicize them. Several translations found some kind of middle ground (*The Amplified Bible*, the NIV, the NRSV and the NJB, for instance).

Samson was the most famous Israelite insofar as these Philistines were concerned. He was readily recognizable, despite the fact that there were no cameras or VCR's at the time. Samson was notorious for his acts of aggression against the Philistines, unparalleled by even any tribe of Israel. Therefore, his visage was known at least by description by almost every Philistine.

When the Philistines realized that Samson was in town, what they did was the Qal imperfect of $\text{צָאֵבָה} (\text{בָּבָה})$ [pronounced *saw^b-VAH^bV*], which means *to turn oneself, to go around, to surround, to encompass*. Strong's #5437 BDB #685. The second thing that they did is the Qal imperfect of $\text{אַרְבָּה} (\text{בָּרָבָה})$ [pronounced *aw-RA^bV*], which means *to ambush, to lay in wait*. Strong's #693 BDB #70. It is obvious what Samson was doing and the Philistines figured that he would be worn out and would sleep till dawn. They had no expectation of meeting up with Samson prior to the break of dawn.

Prior to *gate of the city* we have the *bêyth* preposition, which can mean *at, against, in*. The key is proximity. No Strong's # BDB #88. What is meant here is that everyone was inside the city limits. There is going to be one main exit out of the city, called the gate of the city and these men lay in wait inside the city for Samson. Samson cannot exit the city because there is no exit. At night, the cities were locked up and the gate to the city was closed and locked. It would be re-opened at dawn. In the ancient world, without a wall around the city and a gate which could be closed and locked, a city was completely at the mercy of whoever lurked in the outside world. Therefore, once a people took over an area would often wall in the city and then have one main gate going in and out so that they would not be subjected to devastating night attacks (see also Joshua 2:5). Given what we have here and the events which followed, these men were not stationed at the gate of the city but inside the gate of the city, around the perimeter of the house of the whore that Samson was seeing. They apparently put up a rather slipshod watch as well. That is, there were not two or three men awake at all times—their expectation was that Samson was not going anywhere until dawn, so, they, apart from snoring, waited in silence. Obviously, to them, there was nowhere Samson could go at night, with the gate closed. He was stuck inside the town till the gate was opened in the morning. This reasoning explains why their posted guard was not more effective.

As they lay in wait, having surrounded Samson, they were the Hithpael imperfect of $\text{חָרַשׁ} (\text{חָרַשׁ})$ [pronounced *chaw-RAHSH*], which means *to be silent, to exhibit silence*. This is the only time this particular word occurs in the Hithpael, which is the reflexive of the Piel (or intensive) stem. They kept themselves absolutely silent. Strong's #2790 BDB #361.

And so lay Samson until half of the night and so he arose in half of the night. And so he took hold in doors of a gate of the city and in two of the posts and so he pulled them up with the bar and so he put them upon his shoulders and so he carried them unto a top of the hill which [is] unto a faces Hebron.

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And Samson laid down until the middle of the night and then he arose in the middle of the night. Then he took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and of the two posts and he pulled them up with the bar and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Samson remained sleeping until the middle of the night, at which point he got up. He went to the gates of the city and took a hold of the gates and of the two anchoring posts and he lifted them up, along with the bar across the top. He placed all of this on his shoulders and hauled them to the top of the mountain due east of Gaza, facing Hebron.

Samson sleeps until the masculine singular of *chätsîy* (צַחַי) [pronounced *khuh-TSEE*], which means *half*. When affixed to the word *night*, it means the half-way point of night, and the two words can be then rendered as *midnight* (Owen, NASB, Rotherham). Strong's #2677 BDB #345.

What is not mentioned is that Samson goes outside, wanders quietly over to the gates of the city. Now, you may not understand Samson's behavior, but he feels that he is impervious to Philistine attacks. You know the teenage boy who drives his car 90 mph and thinks that nothing can happen to him, that's Samson. Young men often do a lot of stupid things because the notion of death and dying never occurs to them. Samson is the same way, and he has good reason to feel that way. He was strong enough to kill 1000 Philistines at one time. God protects and provides for him. He feels as though he is invincible. So, when he wants sex, going to the middle of a Philistine city is not a big thing to him. He doesn't particularly hide his actions nor is he concerned if the Philistines find out. He knows them and he enjoys having a little *fun* with them, Samson wants to mess with their heads a little. Whether he knew that men were waiting for him, we are not told. In order to slip out quietly and get to the gates of the city, Samson probably was surreptitious, and it probably did occur to him that it was possible that Philistines were laying in wait for him.

When he comes to the gates of the city, which prevent his leaving, he does the Qal imperfect of *'âchaz* (אָחַז) [pronounced *aw-KHAHZ*]; and it means *to grasp, to take hold of, to take possession of*. Strong's #270 BDB #28. This he does to the doors of the gates of the city. Also, he grabs the two posts which apparently anchor the entire gate to the city. Then what Samson did was the Qal imperfect of *nâçar* (נָצַר) [pronounced *naw-SAHÇ*], which means *to pull up* [the stakes of a tent]. Strong's #5265 BDB #652. With the verb, we have the 3rd person masculine plural suffix, translated *them*, referring to the *posts* which anchored the gates of the city. Keil and Delitzsch render this phrase as: *...laying hold of the folding wings of the city gate, as well as the two posts, tore them out of the ground with his herculean strength, together with the bar that fastened them, and carried them up to the top of the mountain which stands opposite to Hebron.*³ The city gates are a natural entry point to a city, so these posts and gates are carefully installed to insure maximum protection from outside invasion. It is unthinkable that a man could uproot the posts and gate. Samson is obviously given superhuman strength by God the Holy Spirit.

Now, this is going to make some noise and it was probably heard all over the town. The Philistines lying in wait for him at their various posts certainly hear this. My thinking is that not one of them moved. If they had fallen asleep, they were awake. If they were awake, they were frozen in their steps. We live in a time period where there is a lot of construction and our ears are constantly bombarded with noise of things being built and things being torn down. In the ancient world, in the middle of the night, almost all activity stopped. There were no sounds, apart from the animals and the insects. Suddenly, over a period of maybe a minute or two, there is an incredibly loud sound at the gates of the city. This is not the sound of a foreign power hitting the gate with something, but a sound that they had not heard before. The lifting up of the posts out of the ground would have been a unique, not overly-loud sound that they had never heard before. Given Samson's strength, this would not have gone on for too long of a

³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 301.

time period. As you or I might reach into the ground a pull up a surveyor's marker, Samson grabs a hold of these posts and lifts them out of the ground. The gates would clang somewhat in all of this. The plan was to kill Samson at daybreak and it was not daybreak. The men listening to this may have thought that Samson was merely banging on the gates to get out and that he was not going to get out. Obviously, we can only make reasonable speculations as to where everyone was and what they were thinking.

After it reads *he pulled them up*, we have the preposition עִם (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which is generally rendered *with*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. Now, with one arm around the anchoring post on one side and the gate affixed to it, he lifted the post out of the ground. Then he went to the other side and did the same thing here. It all came up as one connected piece because what he pulls up *with* the posts is the masculine singular of בַּרְיָח (בַּרְיָח) [pronounced *b^oree-AHKH*], which means *bar*. It is the bar of wood across a tavern or the bar reaching from post to post of a city gate. Strong's #1280 BDB #138. Samson pulls up the posts, the gates and the bar across the top of the posts.

Then he places all of this on his shoulders. For Samson, the weight was not the problem; the bulk was the problem. Then he carries all of this to the top of the hill which faces Hebron. This does not mean that there is Gaza, a hill and then Hebron. Hebron is almost 40 miles away, due east of Gaza, and much nearer to the Dead Sea. This simply means that Samson hauled this to the nearest hill due east of Gaza. Keil and Delitzsch: *To the east of Gaza, there is a range of hills which runs from north to south. The highest of them all is one which stands somewhere isolated, about half an hour to the south-east of the town, and is called el Montar from a wely which is found upon the top of it. From this hill there is a splendid prospect over the whole of the surrounding country. Hebron itself is not visible from this hill, but the mountains of Hebron are. According to an ancient tradition, it was to the summit of this hill that Samson carried the city gates.*⁴ Robinson agrees that this is reasonable: *The city gate of the Gaza of that time was probably not less than three-quarters of an hour from the hill el Montar; and to climb this peak with the heavy gates and their posts and bar upon his shoulders through the deep sand upon the road, was a feat which only a Samson could perform.*⁵

Samson is probably chuckling to himself the whole time. When they wake up the next morning, their gate—their protection—will be completely gone, and it will be hauled so far away, that it will be a major undertaking to bring it back. The whole time, you know that Samson is chortling to himself, thinking that he is just about the funniest guy in the world. McGee: *What he did sounds like the prank of a teenager or the trick of a college student. This boy Samson never did grow up. He has been called to deliver Israel with his mighty power, and all he does is use it for his personal advantage.*⁶

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Samson and Delilah—Samson's First Lie

And so he was after this and so he loved a woman in a valley of Sorek and her name [was] Delilah.

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And it was after this that he loved a woman from the valley of Sorek; and her name [was] Delilah.

Sometime later, Samson fell in love with a woman from the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

This is the only place where we find the Sorek valley mentioned; however, ZPEB seems to indicate its location today without qualification. They have it as beginning about thirteen miles southwest of Jerusalem and running in the northwesterly direction toward the Mediterranean Sea for twenty or so miles. There are apparently three parallel, narrow valleys that run from east to west across the Shephelah. Since the Levitical city of Beth-shemesh

⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 302.

⁵ Also taken from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 302; they give the reference *V. de Velde*.

⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 196.

would be at the southeast entryway into this valley, if Samson were neutralized, this would leave quite a vulnerable opening into Beth-shemesh.⁷

Throughout the Bible, we will find time after time when the undoing of great spiritual men has been the woman. For Adam, it was Eve. For Samson, it was Delilah. David married several times, having a host of children, which was one source of his problems (further, recall the problems which he had with his first wife, the daughter of Saul—I Sam. 18:20–21 II Sam. 6:16). King Solomon, who could have not only been great, but could have enjoyed a rule of incredible prosperity with very little personal cost, lost his heart to many women (I Kings 1:11). It is the unfaithfulness of a woman which God uses in the life of the prophet Hosea which both plagues his heart and yet provides him with an analogy between Israel and God. Don't misunderstand this—this does not mean that men are good and women are bad; and, if you're hearing this, I doubt that you are that lame in your thinking (after all, at the cross, there was only one disciple but several of the women in the life of our Lord). This simply means that women exert a great power over men, and that it takes great spiritual discernment and growth on the part of both men and women so that their relationship stands in glory to God as opposed to one which brings shame to Him.

And so went up unto her princes of Philistines and so they said to her, “Entice him and see by the what his strength great and by the what we may have ability for him—and bind him to afflict him and we [even] we will give to you, a man, a thousand and a hundred [pieces of] silver.”

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So the princes of the Philistines went up to her and said to her, “Entice him and see by what means [is] his great strength and by what means we may have ability for him—and bind him to afflict him—and we [even] we will each give to you 1100 [pieces of] silver.”

So the princes of the Philistines went up to her and said to her, “Entice him and see wherein is the secret of his great strength and how we might be able to bind him in order to humble him. Find out this information and we will give you 1100 pieces of silver from each one of us.”

The language in this verse is rather difficult, so we will need to see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So the lords of the Philistines come up unto her and said to her— Entice him and see wherein lieth his great strength, and wherewith we may prevail against him, and bind him, to humble him, —and we will give thee every man eleven hundred pieces of silver.
NASB	And the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and said to her, “Entice him, and see where his great strength <i>lies</i> and how [lit., by what] we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred <i>pieces of silver</i> .”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and the princes of the Philistines come up unto her, and say to her, ‘Entice him, and see wherein his great power <i>is</i> , and wherein we are able for him— and we have bound him to afflict him, and we—we give to thee, each one, eleven hundred silverlings.’

the first verb is interesting and I don't know that I can explain why it is used, but I will pass it on to you. It is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. What is odd about this verb is that she lives in the *valley* of Sorek. Therefore, they would normally not be going *up* to see her. What this suggests is that she lives with Samson on higher ground than where she was raised.

Who comes to her is the masculine plural construct of çeren (צָרֵן) [pronounced *SEH-ren*], which means *warlord, princes, tyrant, lord, czar, potentate, despot*. This is a word used only of heathen rulers, and their actual ranking on the food chain is unclear. Strong's #5633 BDB #710. This lacks a definite article in the Hebrew because it is in the construct state. There were five princes of the Philistines (Joshua 13:3).

⁷ Quoted or paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 495.

The second verb which the princes use is the 2nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative of the very common verb *râ'âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see, to look*. In the imperative, it means *look, see, behold, view*. It would be reasonable to render this as *to perceive*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. They have not asked her to determine the source of Samson's strength in a particular way—in whatever way she can, they ask her to *determine* what the source of his strength is.

After the verb, we have combination of the *bêyth* preposition and the interrogative particle. Together, they mean *wherein, wherewith, by what means*; this is used with indirect questions. *Bêyth* = Strong's #none BDB #88. *Meh* = Strong's #4100 BDB #552. What follows this is *his great strength*, and then this phrase is repeated and then we have the 1st person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *yâkôl* (יָכֹל) [pronounced *yaw-COAL*], which means *to be able, to have the ability, to have the power to*. Strong's #3201 BDB #407.

Now, one would expect to have the Qal infinitive to follow this verb, but what they use instead is the *wâw* conjunction and the Qal perfect of *'âçar* (אַסַּר) [pronounced *aw-AWHR*], which means *to bind, to tie, to imprison, to restrain*. Strong's #631 BDB #63. Now we have the Piel infinitive construct of *'ânâh* (אַנָּה) [pronounced *gaw-NAWH*], which means *to humble, to be grace oriented, to be humbled, to be afflicted*. In the Piel, this means *to oppress, to depress, to afflict*. Strong's #6031 BDB #776.

These heathen thought that there was some external thing of Samson's that they could neutralize in order to rob him of his strength. They assumed that he wore some amulet or that he did something in particular which gave him this supernatural strength, as he was not simply just a very strong man. Keil and Delitzsch: *There was a certain truth at the foundation of this heathen superstition, inasmuch as this gift of divine grace was really bound up with the possession of a corporeal pledge, the loss of which was followed by the immediate loss of the gift of God.*⁸ They also assumed that there was some key, something that they could do, something that they could remove, which would take this supernatural strength away.

We need to stop and think about how old Samson is at this time. There are about two theories here, neither one of which have I seen really discussed by anyone. He could be around 35 or he could be 50 or older. This depends upon whether or not Samson was born while the Philistines ruled over Israel. We are told that the Philistines ruled over Israel for forty years (Judges 13:1). We are also told that Samson was born in Judges 13 and that he was a judge over Israel for twenty years (Judges 15:20). Therefore, if Samson was born, say, during the first couple years of Philistine rule, then he must be under 40, meaning that he began to judge Israel at a very, very young age. Even if we squeeze Samson's life in there, so that an additional five years or fewer are given at his death to throw off the yoke of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7), that would make him at most, 35, meaning that he would have begun to judge Israel at age 15. We might be able to push that further and make him maybe 37 or 38. In any case, his judgeship would have begun quite early. Now, since he was a Nazirite to God, and since this would have been public knowledge, it is not unreasonable to have Samson ruling at a young age in his late teens, although that would have been quite unusual.

The second theory is that the Israelites and the Philistines mixed it up pretty good for several years prior to the subjugation of Israel under them. That there was a general animosity between Israel and the Philistines would have been known to Manoah and his wife (Samson's parents) prior to the birth of Samson. Therefore, the prediction of the Angel of Jehovah that Samson would begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines (Judges 13:5) would make some sense to them. Even if it did not, that does not mean that there is any problem with the prophecy of the Angel of Jehovah. In either case, under this scenario, Samson's youth would have occurred during Israel independence from the Philistines, and, some time while Samson was perhaps in his teens, the Philistines took control of southern Israel. Under this scenario, he would have been in his late forties and early fifties in this chapter. I have spent a great deal of time here dealing with Samson's age because his behavior needs some explaining later on in this chapter. His age comes into play when it comes to understanding his actions and motivations. Samson, in this chapter, appears to be going through the typical mid-life crisis. He is visiting prostitutes, he is taking up with exotic foreign women, he is falling in love with women much younger than he from the enemy camp. All that is occurring is that Samson has realized that he is aging and that he is uncomfortable with that—and this does not

⁸ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 302.

have to occur at a conscience level. Personally, the age 30 bothered me a great deal whereas 40 did not. Throughout these few chapters, we have noted that Samson has done some pretty goofy things; what occurs in this chapter is very much in character for someone who is immature to begin with and then goes through a mid-life crisis besides.

In either case, whether Samson is 35 or 50, Delilah might be in her late teens or early 20's and she might have some fondness for Samson and he may have appeared to her to be way too old to take seriously, even if he is only 35. Even if she is in her late 20's (which I think is the oldest possible age for her), she obviously does not need to feel the same way about Samson as he feels about her. Therefore, her behavior will make more sense.

You will note that they do not threaten Delilah—they promise to pay her 1100 silverlings or pieces of silver from each prince, making 5500 silverlings in all. From the rest of the narrative, it will be obvious that Delilah is willing to participate. What is tremendously sad about this is that the first women that Samson fell for, the Philistine woman from Timnath, was threatened with her life and the life of her family in order to cooperate. However, here, there are no threats. Delilah is promised a great deal of wealth, and you will find no hesitation on her part throughout the narrative which is to come. You may wonder how is all of this possible. Isn't Samson quite a hunk and hasn't he caught Delilah's eye? Certainly, he will have a tremendous build and certainly, there would be some physical attraction. However, this again does not mean that Delilah loves him. We will get into the psychology of why Samson is doing what he does in a few verses, so that what I am going to say will make more sense. Samson is between 35–50. He has never been married and he has been going to prostitutes for who knows how many years. He is apparently very much in love with this young thing, who is anywhere from 7 to 25 years younger than he. Whereas, this is not a great problem for Israelite culture, the Philistines may have married closer to their own ages. And, again, even if they did not, this in no way means that Delilah has any deep feelings for Samson. Given that Samson is much older than her, that he is an Israelite, and that Delilah is young, offering her money is the only motivation that she needs. She may have even been brought up to dislike Samson even prior to meeting him, as he was a well-known thorn in the side of the Philistines.

One question which should be on your mind is just how much money are we talking about? The NIV gives this as 28 lbs. or 13 kg, which, to us, is not that great of a price. ZPEB suggests that this is 150 lbs.⁹ However, by ancient world standards, this is actually quite a bit of money. In Judges 17:10, a year's salary is given as 10 silverlings; therefore, if Delilah retired and still had 70 years to live, she would be able to live on 78.5 silverlings/year; in other words, this would be enough money for Delilah to retire on as a rich person. A young, vigorous slave, way back in the days of Joseph, went for 20 silverlings, making her fortune equivalent to the price of 275 slaves.

There are several reasons why Samson is worth so much to the Philistines. Principally because he is the only man which the Philistines who are aware of who could single-handedly bring them down. Most of Israel has been more than cooperative. The men from Judah—3000 of them—chose to talk to Samson, to get him to turn himself in, as it were, to the Philistines (Judges 15:10–13). Not a single one of them expresses the thought that, *hey, here we are, 3000 men, with a leader of superhuman strength—let's kick the butts of the Philistines right now*. Since the men of Judah, when banded together, do not oppose the Philistines, then they only man that Philistia has to be concerned about is Samson. Subduing him removes all the opposition of Israel.

Finally, it is important that you notice that these Philistines say nothing to Delilah about killing Samson. They do not want Delilah to kill Samson nor do they plan to kill him immediately. Samson has been a thorn in their sides for over two decades (as he was a judge in Israel for 20 years). Furthermore, not only had his feud with the Philistines began before then, but we certainly have not been told each and every deed that Samson did. Once they had Samson under their power, they were going to make him suffer. Revenge would require more than just a quick execution.

⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 751.

And so said Delilah unto Samson, “[Might you] make known, please, to me in the what your strength great and in the what you will be bound to humble you.”

Judges
16:6

So Delilah said to Samson, “Please make known to me by what means your strength [is] great and by what means you will be bound to afflict you.”

Then Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me what the secret to your great strength is and how you may be subdued in order for you to be humbled.”

Delilah begins with the Hiphil imperative, with a voluntative *hê*, of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform*. Strong's #5046 BDB #616.

Delilah is very direct; there appears to be no duplicity. She uses the same language as did the Philistines. She uses the Niphal imperfect of *âçar* (אָסַר) [pronounced *aw-AWHR*], which means *to bind, to tie, to imprison, to restrain*. The Niphal is the passive stem, so she is asking him how he might be bound or restrained. Strong's #631 BDB #63. Then she uses the Piel infinitive construct again of *ânâh* (אָנַח) [pronounced *gaw-NAWH*], which means *to humble, to be grace oriented, to be humbled, to be afflicted*. Strong's #6031 BDB #776. After Samson tells her, if he did not know, he will know that this is not just for her own information.

This tells us something about Delilah—she is not a very devious woman, meaning that she really is not all that smart. She directly asks Samson the secret of his strength and how it would be possible for him to be subdued. After all that has happened, Samson knows that she has been approached by Philistines who have asked her for this information. Samson here is not stupid. It is a game to him. He thinks he is invincible and he is strongly attracted to this woman, so he goes along with the program.

The relationship between Samson and Delilah is simply physical. She is moderately attracted to him, and he is strongly attracted to her. It is not any sort of true love, as Samson is not capable. Emotionally, he is in love with her, and that is simply based upon physical attraction and sex. Because this is the basis for their relationship, Samson will do some pretty stupid things. For the past twenty years in American society, physical attraction and sex have been the initial basis for most marriages and live-in relationships. The participants tend to do very stupid things in such a relationship. There are bonds forged with a sexual relationship which can dig into the man, the woman or both. However, this is no basis for a long-term relationship, which is why so many marriages end in divorce and even more live-in relationships are dissolved. What we find in this chapter may have occurred three millenniums ago, but in the realm of human psychology, it is as up-to-date as anything you will read in any current magazine. Understand Samson and Delilah, and you understand why marriage and family in America has been on such a downhill slide for the past two or three decades.

And so said unto her Samson, “If they bind me in seven bowstrings fresh which have not been dried, and I will be weakened and I will be like one of the man.”

Judges
16:7

So, Samson said to her, “If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried out, then I will be weakened and I will be like [any] one of the human race.”

So, Samson answered her, “If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried out, then I will be weakened and become just like any other man.”

So, Samson just starts making shit up. When he uses the word *bind*, which is the same word as in the previous two verses, he uses the 3rd person masculine plural. “If *they* bind me in seven bowstrings...” He knows what is going on. If he were merely answering a question for her own curiosity, then he would have used the 2nd person feminine singular, and he would have said, “If *you* bind me in seven bowstrings.” He adds in a little hocus pocus by saying *seven*, which was a number which meant to the ancients, *completeness*. Since the beginning of man, we have had seven day weeks which corresponds to the seven days of restoration. Since the oldest thing in man's history is the restoration of the earth in six days plus one day of rest, this was commemorated by all men as a

seven day week, which has come down to us even to this day. Even after the real reason for a seven day week faded from memory, the seven day week which commemorates God's work, remains.

Then Samson suggests the masculine plural noun *yether* (יֵתֶר) [pronounced *YEH-ther*], which means *cord, bowstring*. Because of its usage in Psalm 11:2, *bowstring* seems to be the most accurate rendering. Keil and Delitzsch say that it could refer to a harp of guitar string, although we have no Scriptural evidence for that. This word is a homonym. Strong's #3499 BDB #452. Samson modifies it with the adjective *lach* (לַח) [pronounced *lahkh*], which means *fresh, moist, new*. Strong's #3892 BDB #535. Samson takes it even further. These would be fresh bowstrings which have not been, and then he uses the Pual perfect of *chârêḇ* (חָרַב) [pronounced *khaw-RAWᵇV*], which means *to be dry, to be dried up*. Strong's #2717 BDB #351. So, Samson is making it simple. He tells her that her fellow Philistines need to find seven fresh bowstrings that haven't even been dried out yet, and use those on him. He is no doubt chuckling to himself. You may wonder why they are playing this game. I hesitate to say this, but the result was probably great sex. She has a great feeling of power over him, as well as thinking that this was going to be the last time. He feels jovial and amused over the entire situation. Both of them are physically drawn to one another.

What Samson says at the end is:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...then shall I become weak and be as any other man.
NASB	"...then I shall become weak and be like any other man."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	'...then I have been weak, and have been as one of the human race.'

The last few words are rather difficult. We have the 1st person singular, Qal perfect of the absolute status quo verb *to be* followed by the kaph preposition (*like, as*) and the construct of the numeral *ʿechâd* (אֶחָד) [pronounced *eh-KHAWD*] and it means *one, first*. Strong's #259 BDB #25. This is followed by the definite article and the masculine singular noun *ʿâdâm* (אָדָם) [pronounced *aw-DAWM*], which can be the proper name for *Adam*, another name for *man* or a name for the human race, e.g., *human being, mankind*. Strong's #120 BDB #9. Literally, what we have is *and I have become like one of the man*. In the English, we would probably have *man* in the plural.

And so brought to her princes of Philistines seven bowstrings, fresh, which were not dried and so she bound him in them.

Judges
16:8

And so the princes of the Philistines brought to her seven fresh bowstrings which had not [yet] been dried, and she bound him [Samson] with them.

So the princes of the Philistines brought to her the still-moist, seven fresh bowstrings and she tied Samson up with them.

You will note how brave these Philistines are. They give the bowstrings to Delilah and ask her to tie Samson up. She does, and Samson allows her to. Again, it would not be using too much imagination to figure that there was something kinky going on here as well.

One option which went through my mind is that Delilah was devious and that we did not really *get* what was going on here. Due to the differences of their strength, it might appear as though Delilah wanted Samson to engage in a little bondage and that this was the story that Samson was being fed. Whereas, this may be how it was first presented to Samson, he realized after the first time or two that there was more to this than kinky sex. Even though Samson is no Rhodes scholar, what occurs next makes it clear that there is more to this than just being tied up.

And the ambushing dwelling in to her in the inner chamber and so she said unto him, "Philistines [are] upon you, Samson."

Judges
16:9a

Also, the ambushing was dwelling in by her in the inner chamber and she said to him, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson."

Furthermore, there left behind a group of them in the inner chamber; then she said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you."

After the conjunction and the definite article, we have the Qal active participle of *ʾāraʿ* (אָרַע) [pronounced *aw-RAʿV*], which means *to ambush, to lay in wait*. As a participle, it means *an ambushing*. Strong's #693 BDB #70. This is followed by the Qal active participle of *yāshaʿ* (יָשַׁע) [pronounced *yaw-SHAHʿV*] and it means *to remain, to sit, to dwell*. In the Qal participle, it should be rendered *inhabiting, dwelling in*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. This is followed by the lamed prefixed preposition (*to, for, in regards to, of, with reference to, by*) and affixed to it is the feminine singular suffix, referring to Delilah.

Where the men are is the masculine singular noun *cheder* (חֵדֶר) [pronounced *KHEH-dehr*], which means *chamber, room, private room*. Strong's #2315 (and #2316) BDB #293. Off the bedroom was another private room where these men were. Or, they were in the bedroom, and Samson and Delilah were in the den. Samson is a judge of Israel and notorious throughout all of the southern portion of Judah and the Philistine empire. Delilah is not some poor trollop who caught his eye, but a young woman of wealth, beauty and influence.

And so he tore away the bowstrings as which is torn away a thread of the tow in a smelling of fire; and was not known his strength.

Judges
16:9b

Then he tore apart the bowstrings just as a thread of tow is torn apart when it smells ire; and his strength was not known.”

Then he snapped apart the bowstrings just as the short fibers of flax melt when placed near a flame; and the secret of his strength was still undiscovered.

Let's look at this second half of this verse as others have rendered it:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And he snapped the cords as a thread of tow is broken, when fire bloweth thereon, so his strength was not discovered.
NASB	But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and he breaketh the withs as a thread of tow is broken in its smelling fire, and his power hath not been known.

We first have the Piel imperfect of *nāthaq* (נָתַק) [pronounced *naw-THAK*], which means *to pull, to draw, to tear away, to tear apart, to tear off*. Then this is found in the Niphal, which means *to be torn away, to be broken, to be torn out, to be separated, to be drawn away from*. Strong's #5423 BDB #683.

What is *torn away* is the masculine singular construct of *pāthîl* (פָּתִיל) [pronounced *paw-THEEL*], which is usually rendered *lace*; it can mean *thread* as well. Strong's #6616 BDB #836. It is a *thread of the* feminine singular of *n° ʿōreth* (נֹעֶרֶת) [pronounced *n°GOH-reth*], which is generally rendered *tow*, which means nothing the most readers. *Tow is the short and coarse fibers of flax* prior to the flax being spun.¹⁰ Being put into a flame immediately disintegrates it. Strong's #5296 BDB #654. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition and the Hiphil infinitive construct of *rîyach* (רִיחַ) [pronounced *ree-AHKH*], which means *to smell, to perceive an odor*. Strong's #7306 BDB #926. Here's the deal: when the flame comes close enough to smell it, these little coarse pieces of flax just melt away as if they were nothing. They act as though they had been held close enough to a fire to burn them.

Then we have the Niphal (passive stem) perfect of *yādaʿ* (יָדַעַ) [pronounced *yaw-DAHʿ*], which means *to know*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to know, to instruct, to teach*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. This is in the masculine singular, telling us that the subject is Samson's *strength*.

We do not know precisely what happened here. It is unclear whether Samson realized that the Philistines were in the other room, whether they charged out, how long it was before Samson snapped the seven bowstrings. It appears that what Delilah said, which she will repeat in the next several verses, was the signal for the Philistines to come out. We just don't know, based upon this verse, whether they did or not. However, in the final incident, it becomes clear that these Philistines did come out and they did lay their hands on Samson. Apparently, what he

¹⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 781.

did was, with all of them holding onto him, Samson would go out of the house and then shake them all off. Furthermore, at this time, Samson realizes that Delilah was not just playing kinky bondage games with him.

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Samson's Second and Third Lies to Delilah

And so said Delilah unto Samson, “Behold, you have trifled in me and so you proclaim unto me lies; now, [might you] make known please to me in the what you are bound.”

Judges
16:10

And Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have trifled with me and you proclaim to me lies; now, [might you] make know, please, to me wherewith you can be bound.”

Then Delilah said to Samson, “Listen, you have mocked me and you have been telling me lies; now, please just tell me how you could be bound.”

Although the gist of this verse is quite easy to get, we will look at a couple of other translations of what Delilah says before exegeting it:

The Emphasized Bible Lo! thou hast been laughing at me, and speaking unto me falsehoods, —Now, do tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

NASB “Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies; now please tell me, how [Lit., by what] you may be bound.”

Young's Lit. Translation ‘Lo, thou hast played upon me, and speakest unto me lies; now, declare, I pray thee, to me, wherewith thou art bound.’

What Delilah claims that Samson was been doing to her is the Hiphil perfect of *tâlal* (תָּלַל) [pronounced *taw-LAHL*], which means *to deceive, to mock, to trifle [with]*. Since this word is followed by the *bêyth* preposition, *trifle* would be the most logical rendering. Strong's #8524 BDB #1068 (and Strong's #2048 BDB #251).

What else he has done is the Piel imperfect of *dâ^bvar* (דַּבַּר) [pronounced *daw^b-VAHR*], which means *to speak, to declare, to proclaim, to announce*. The Piel is stronger and it can carry with it the idea of providing guidance and direction. Strong's #1696 BDB #180. Then she follows this with the Hiphil imperative (with the voluntative *hê*) of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to confess, to inform*. This is only found in the Hiphil. Strong's #5046 BDB #616.

Now, this is the second time that we have noticed Delilah used an usual speech pattern. We would have expected to find the voluntative *hê* with *bound* and not with *make known*. She said roughly the same thing in v. 6.

Now, this is a bizarre sort of relationship. She is a Philistine; Samson realizes by this time that the Philistines are using her; and yet he plays along with it. She doesn't appear to disguise that which she asks for nor is a reason for this given. Then we have the problem of a band of Philistines in the other room. The only way that this could have been disguised is some sort of a sexual-bondage thing that she and Samson had going. However, she would then cry out that the Philistines were there, then Samson snapped the ropes (or, whatever), and, apparently, the Philistines would simultaneously charge in the room and jump on Samson. He would then shake off the Philistines as though they were fleas (we are not told that here but it is implied in v. 20).

And so he said unto her, “If a binding, they bind me in [thick] ropes, new, which he has not been done in them work and I will be weak and I will be as one the man.”

Judges
16:11

Then he said to her, “If [with] a binding, they bind me in new [thick] ropes, which it was not been done with them work, then I will be weak and I will be like [any] one of the human race.”

Then he said to her, “If I am securely bound with thick, new ropes which have done been used, then I will become weak and be just like any other man.”

What Samson suggests is that *they* bind him with the masculine plural of *ʿăḇvôth* (עֲבֹת) [pronounced *guh^b-VOHTH*], which means *a twisted cord, rope, cord*; Young renders this as *thick rope*. We had this same noun in the previous chapter when the Israelites tied him up to present Samson to the Philistines. Strong’s #5688 BDB #721. Here is the problem with the theory that this is some sort of a sexual bondage thing: Samson again uses the 3rd person masculine plural with the verb—he does not speak as if Delilah will tie him up, but as if his enemies, the Philistines would tie him up. The other possibility is that he is speaking of the hypothetical *they*, as Delilah does the actual tying up in all instances.

The grammar in the middle of this verse is rather difficult, although you wouldn’t think so by the English. *Ropes* is a masculine plural. After *ropes*, we have the relative pronoun, a negative, and the 3rd person masculine *singular*, Niphal perfect of *ʿâsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. In the Niphal, it means *to be made, to be done to*. Strong’s #6213 BDB #793. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix (obviously, referring to the ropes). Then we have the feminine singular noun *m^lʾâḵâh* (מְלָאכָה) [pronounced *m^law-KAWH*], which means *work, occupation, labor, workmanship*. Strong’s #4399 & 4397 BDB #521. The problem here is what is the subject of *ʿâsâh*? We don’t have a masculine singular noun anywhere. Samson has already been bound with thick, new ropes in Judges 15:13 by the Israelites when they *took* him to the Philistines. Since the Israelites had tied Samson up, and not the Philistines, they Philistines didn’t know that this already didn’t work (Judges 15:14).

And so took Delilah [thick] ropes, new, and so she bound him with them and so she said unto him, “Philistines upon you, Samson.” And the ambushing dwelling in the inner chamber. And so he tore them apart from upon his arms as the thread.

Judges
16:12

Then Delilah took new, [thick] ropes and she bound him with them, and then said to him, “The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!” (The ambushing was dwelling in the inner chamber). Then he tore them apart from upon his arms as [if they were a] thread.

Then Delilah took thick, new ropes and she tied him up with them, and then said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” The ones laying in wait were in the inner chamber. He then tore the ropes around his arms apart as if they were thread.

The second problem with the idea that what Delilah is doing to Samson is this sexual bondage thing is the fact that the person who recorded this knew about the Philistines in the other room. As was said before, we aren’t told here if they come out into where Samson and Delilah are or not, but we are told later that they had. If Delilah is presenting this scenario as a bondage thing, then how does the writer know about the Philistines in the other room? Another option is that this is the way she presents it, but Samson realizes that is not what is going on. He simply plays along with her. We will get to the *why* in a couple of verses.

After *tore apart*, we have the combined preposition *mêʿal* (מֵעַל) [pronounced *may-GAHL*], from the preposition *min* (מִן) [pronounced *min*] denotes separation (*away from, out from, out of from*) [Strong’s #4480 BDB #577]; and the preposition is the preposition *ʿal* (עַל) [pronounced *gahl*] which means, primarily, *upon, against, above*. Strong’s #5920, 5921 BDB #752. Together, they mean *from upon, from over, from by*.

The ropes are tied around his arms and then he snaps them apart as the masculine singular of *chûṭ* (חוֹט) [pronounced *khoot*], which means *thread*. Strong’s #2339 BDB #296.

Again, what apparently happened is the Delilah yelled out, the Philistines hustled themselves into the room and grabbed Samson, as a group; then Samson walked outside with these Philistines hanging onto them, and he shakes them off as he breaks the rope. It is not clear when he snaps the rope, but I would think that the Philistines would not even bother to jump him if he is not tied at the time. After Delilah says, “**The Philistines are upon you,**

Samson!" in v. 20, he will say, "I will go out as at other times and *shake* myself free." The word for *shake* would not correspond with Samson going out and *breaking* the ropes free. This word, as we will examine later, refers to shaking something out of one's hair, like an errant insect.

After going over these verses several times, it is possible that Samson was referring to going outside, as he had done previously, and publically snapping a rope; and, in this case of v. 20, shaking off the Philistines. In this scenario, Samson would have never seen the Philistines until the very last time. Although that is a possible scenario, I still lean toward the Philistines grabbing Samson each and every time, and Samson taking them outdoors, shaking them off, and snapping whatever ropes were on him.

In order to follow the next few verses, we are going to break Judges 16:13–14 down into several parts. This will better help us to digest it.

And so said Delilah unto Samson, "Until now, you have trifled with me and so you have spoken unto me lies. [Might you] tell me, [please],¹¹ in the what you would be bound."

Judges
16:13a

Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now, you have trifled with me and you have told me lies. Tell me wherewith you might be bound."

Then Delilah said to Samson, "Up until now, you have been mocking me and you continually tell me lies. Now tell me how you can be restrained."

The verbiage here is almost identical with v. 10. However, it begins with the preposition *ʿad* (אֲד) [pronounced *ʿad*] which means *as far as, even to, up to, until*. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. This is followed by the adverb *hēnnâh* הֵנְנָהּ [pronounced *HAYN-naw*], which can be an adverb of place or of time. It can mean *this time, hitherto*. Strong's #2008 BDB #244. Together, they mean *thus far, hitherto, up until this time*. Again, the voluntative *hê* is found with *tell me* rather than with *bound*.

At this point, one should bear in mind that the time frame of these events is never given. That is, we don't know if they occurred on successive nights, within the same week, or how much time elapsed between them. Some Philistines are right off in the other room during the first three deceptions (although that is only implied in these latter two cases). Whether Samson is aware of this in advance or not, we do not know. He did seem to think of it as great sport, apparently.

And so he said unto her, "If you weave seven plaits of my head with the web..."

Judges
16:13b

And then he said to her, "If you braid seven plaits of my head with the web..."

Then Samson said to her, "If you weave the seven braids of my head..."

The verb which Samson uses is the first time that we have the 2nd person feminine singular. So far, she has tied him up twice, yet he always speaks of the Philistines as tying him up. However, here we have the 2nd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *ʿârag* (אָרַג) [pronounced *aw-RAHG*], which means *weave, braid*. Strong's #707 BDB #70. What he suggests that she weave is the feminine plural of *machălâpâh* (מַחְלָפָה) [pronounced *mah-khuh-law-FAW*], which means *strands, plaits, locks* (of hair). This word is only found here and in v. 19. (It is spelled differently by various Hebrew sources). Strong's #4253 BDB #322. Then we have *of my head*. If there was any doubt as to who would attempt to disable him, there was not here. He may have used the 3rd person masculine plural before to sort of offer theoretically how his strength could be neutralized—but here, he assigns the deed to Delilah for the first time. Whether this is because what he suggests is the sort of thing that a woman would do rather than a bunch of Philistines or whether he realizes that she will be the one to try to void his strength, we don't know; however, in either case, he still acknowledges that she will do it. Furthermore, Samson tells Delilah that it has something to do with his hair. This is getting very close to the truth. Samson likes to live on the edge.

¹¹ This is found in one early printed edition and in the Septuagint.

He behaves as if he is invincible. He is sleeping with the enemy, a woman who obviously does not love him, in the midst of Philistine territory. Samson is simply turning it up a notch.

Then we have the preposition עִם (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which is generally rendered *with*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. This is followed by a feminine singular noun which may require a little work. First of all, there is a feminine singular noun, מַצְצֵקָה (מַצְצֵקָה) [pronounced *mahs-say-KAW*], which means *weaving, seb, that which has been woven, some woven* [used as a covering]. Strong's #4541 BDB #651. This is found only in Isa. 25:7 28:20 (and maybe in Isa. 30:1). In this verse, the word is מַצְצֵקֶת (מַצְצֵקֶת) [pronounced *mahs-SAW-keth*], which is given as a *weaving* of unfinished cloth. Strong's #4545 BDB #651. Whereas, these could be different words, their primary difference is the last letter and the vowel points (added centuries after Scripture was written). It is possible that we are dealing here with some partially woven cloth which is woven in with Samson's hair (we get this more from v. 14 than this verse), however, I believe that the weaving here simply refers to Samson's hair and nothing else.¹² Most commentators, however, agree that Samson's hair is being woven in with some unfinished cloth, perhaps one which is still attached to the loom; and most commentators admit that this is a reasonable guess on their part..

Then we have an unusual occurrence—the Massoretic text appears to be missing a verse (actually, missing the end of this verse and then an additional verse, which we will call v. 13c). In the Hebrew, we jump from Samson speaking to Delilah *fastening in a pin*. However, in the Greek, he finishes his statement and then he falls asleep, and then Delilah does the hair thing to him. What happened was the scribe's eyes, after a long day of copying the Hebrew, jumped from מַצְצֵקֶת to its next occurrence, and then picked up with his copying, leaving behind the few words in the middle, which we find preserved in the Septuagint. This missing bit of verse reads:

<p>"...and fasten them with the pin on the wall, then I will be as one the man, I will be weak."</p>	<p>Judges 16:13c (from LXX)</p>	<p>"...and fasten them with that pin on the wall, then I will be weak, as one man."</p>
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"...and if you fasten them with that pin on the wall, then I will become weak, just like any other man."

What follows in the next verse makes much more sense with the ending given in this verse.

To be honest with you, I don't completely grasp what is going on. It sounds as though his hair is being tightly woven with a pin and perhaps some cloth of some sort. I'll give you the explanation of two others, although it didn't do a lot for me. The NIV Study Bible: *Probably from a weaver's shuttle. The details of the account suggest that the loom in question was the vertical type with a cross-beam from which warp threads were suspended. Samson's long hair was woven into the warp and beaten up in the web with the pin, thus forming a tight fabric.*¹³ Barnes: *The meaning of these verses seems to be that the seven long plaits, in which Samson's hair was arranged, were to be woven as a woof into the threads of a warp which stood prepared on a loom in the chamber, which loom Delilah fastened down with a pin, so as to keep it firm and immovable. But Samson, when he awoke, tore up the pin from its socket, and went away with the loom and the pin fastened to his hair.*¹⁴

<p>And it was, in the sleeping his, and took Delilah the seven plaits of his head and wove them with a weaving...</p>	<p>Judges 16:14a (from LXX)</p>	<p>And it was, in his sleeping, that Delilah took the seven plaits of his head and she wove them with a weaving....</p>
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Then, while Samson was sleeping, Delilah took seven plaits of his head and she wove them with a weaving...

¹² Zodhiates tells us that Delilah is weaving Samson's hair into a piece of cloth that she had been weaving on her loom. He is not particularly dogmatic about this position. *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 691.

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 351.

¹⁴ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 456.

This portion of v. 14 is also missing from the Massoretic text; however, we restore it here from the Greek text. The oldest Hebrew manuscript that we have dates back no further than 900 A.D. That is 2000 years after this passage was written. When a manuscript became difficult to read or to a point where it was ready to fall apart, a scribe would copy it onto a fresh vellum (and later paper) and then the old manuscript would be thrown away. Most of our Hebrew manuscripts actually date back to 1100 A.D. The Greek Septuagint was translated from Hebrew manuscripts around 200 B.C., so they used manuscripts that were a full millennium older than the manuscripts which we have. We even have bits and pieces of the Septuagint which date back to 100 B.C. Unfortunately, the translation of the Septuagint was rather uneven—sometimes it was very precise and other times it was very free-form. Therefore, when it comes to some things, the Septuagint sometimes obfuscates rather than illuminates. However, in this place, because of the repetition of the verbiage in this passage, we could just about re-create the original Hebrew if we wanted to.

Now, what is clear is that Samson's hair was separated into seven strands of hair and that was woven or braided and then held in place with a pin. It is unclear whether the finished product was a weaving of hair or whether it was woven in with a bit of woven cloth, or whether it was attached in all of this to a loom in Delilah's room. The uncertainty is the word *maççâketh* covered above. In any case, it involved his hair and she did what Samson said would drain him of his strength. Keil and Delitzsch, as do others, have Samson's hair being woven into something which is actually a part of the loom.¹⁵

And so she fastened in the pin and she said unto him, "Philistines upon you, Samson."

Judges
16:14b

Then she fastened [his hair] with a pin, and said to him, "The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson."

Then she fastened his hair with a pin, and said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"

The verb here is the Qal imperfect of *tâqa'* (טָקַח) [pronounced *taw-KAHG*], which means *to fasten*. Strong's #8628 BDB #1075. The preposition is *bêyth*, where the key is proximity. As was done several times before, Samson reveals the purported act which would induce weakness in him, and she tries it, and then tells him that there are Philistines on him. The use of the word *'al* (עַל) [pronounced *ahl*], which means *upon, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. The implication is that she says this after these Philistines attach themselves to Samson. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752.

And so he awoke from his sleep and so he pulled out the pin of the loom and the weaving.

Judges
16:14c

And then he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom [from] the braid [hair].

And then he awoke from his sleep and he pulled out the pin of the loom out from his braided hair.

What Samson did with the pin is the Qal imperfect of *nâça'* (נָסַח) [pronounced *naw-SAHG*], which means *to journey, to depart*. It denotes the pulling up the stakes of a tent. In this case, Samson is merely pulling the pin out of his braided hair. Strong's #5265 BDB #652. It would be my guess that the hair was simply woven with itself and Samson pulled the pin out of his woven hair.

Now, here we do not know what happened. That is, we don't know how Samson's strength was observed. All we are told is he pulled the pin out of his hair. Whether that was enough to dissuade the Philistines from barging in from the other room, whether they were already on him as the preposition suggests, we really don't know. It appears as though he was in physical contact with a number of Philistines in these three instances by the use of the preposition *'al* all three times and the implication of v. 20, but it is not something that I would stake me theological reputation on. That he had his strength is clear—but whether he came into contact with the Philistines,

¹⁵ If you want to see this topic beat half to death, then read Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 303.

that he was aware that they were there, how they filed out of the house, or whether Samson carried them out en masse as they hung onto him and then shook them all off—none of that is known with a certainty.

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Samson Reveals the Source of His Strength to Delilah

And so she said unto him, “How can you say / love you and your heart [is] not with me? Three times you have trifled in me and you have not made know to me in the what your strength, great.”

Judges
16:15

Then she said to him, “How can you say / love you and your heart [is] not with me? Three times you have trifled with me and you have not made known to me wherein [is] your great strength.”

Then she said to him, “How can you say / love you when your heart is not with me? You have blown me off three times and you have not made known to me the secret of your great strength.”

What Delilah says begins with the adverb *ʿêyk* (עֵיךְ) [pronounced *ayche*], which means *how*. It can be used as an interrogative or as an exclamation. Strong’s #349 BDB #32.

Delilah is working Samson for his life. Samson, although this is a game for him, is also emotionally wrapped up with Delilah. She is obviously much more interested in the resultant riches than she is in him. She uses tears, just as Samson’s fiancée had in Judges 14:16.

And so he was that she caused distress to him in her words all the days and so she urged him and so came short of his soul to death.

Judges
16:16

And it was that she caused distress to him with her words all the days and she nagged him and his soul was short of death.

And as time went on, she continued to stress him with these words, day after day, nagging him until his soul was worn out.

The third verb occurs only here, and is rendered *urged* (Owen, Young, NASB) and *prodded* (NIV). I’m thinking that *nagged* might be a good up-to-date rendering. Strong’s #509 BDB #49.

The subject of the last verb is *his soul* and that verb is the Qal imperfect of *qâtsar* (קָצַר) [pronounced *kaw-TSAHR*], which means *to be short, to come short of, to cut off [with regards to grain], to reap, to harvest*. Strong’s #7114 BDB #894. This is an idiom meaning that he was totally worn out from her nagging. You can be a 6’6”, 300 lbs of pure muscle, strong enough to kill 1000 men when necessary, and still be worn out by the nagging of a beautiful, 5’2”, 100 lb. (when soaking wet) woman. Furthermore, we do not know the time frame here, but Samson’s infatuation with Delilah has not worn out, but her nagging has worn him out. I give the time as one to three months, but a woman who excels in nagging, might be able to get the job done in three weeks.

And so he made know to her all of his heart and so he said to her, “A razor has not come upon my head for a Nazirite to God I [am] out from a womb of my mother. If I am shaved and would depart from me my strength and I would be weak and I would be like all of the man.”

Judges
16:17

And he made known to her all of his heart, and he said to her, “A razor has not come upon my head for I [have been] a Nazirite to God since [coming] out from the womb of my mother. If I am shaved, then my strength would depart from me and I would be weak like all of the human race.”

Then he finally told her all that was in her heart, saying, “A razor has never come across my head, because I have been a Nazirite to God from my birth. If I am shaved, then my strength would depart from me and I would be weak, just like any other man.”

Exactly how all this came about, we are not totally certain. For awhile, Samson played along and made up stuff and Delilah would immediately try it, with Philistines in the other room, ready to jump Samson. We never found out if he knew that they were there or whether they came out, although that appears to be the case. This passage never records any sort of direct confrontation between him and the Philistines up until this time—only that she would say, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” and he would snap the rope (or whatever) and be functioning at full strength. There was no recorded indication so far, beyond the snapping of the ropes, that he was at full strength.

Samson, for the first time, reveals some real personal information. He tells Delilah that he is a Nazirite. Now, we have studied the vows of the Nazirite and I hope you recall that there was no promise from God of great strength—a Nazirite was simply dedicated to God, and Samson is out only unquestioned case of a Nazirite (although John the Baptist appeared to be one). God blessed Samson with great strength, which is somewhat of a bonus. However, it has never been completely clear that a breaking of any of his vows would remove his great strength. We can reasonably deduce that since Samson’s strength is from the Holy Spirit and if the Holy Spirit left Samson, then his strength would be gone. Therefore, if he breaks his vows, it would be reasonable to suppose that the Holy Spirit would leave him and that he would therefore become weak. However, this is not the complete picture—does Samson fully realize this? As we have seen, Samson is not led around by his thinking; nor has he said or done anything to indicate that he is of even average intelligence. He appears to be confessing to her all that he knows, but he may not fully realize that when his hair is cut, that he will lose the Holy Spirit, and therefore his strength. You may wonder how can he not see from A to B to C? We have teenagers who are given sex education, are given condoms, are told the consequences of their illicit sexual activity (although it is never judgmentally called *illicit*, of course—you just don’t want to crush their little spirits); and then they are surprised and upset when one of them turns up pregnant after illicit sex. Samson is both pushed by his sexual drive and frustrated by her nagging.

Samson uses the 1st person, Pual perfect of *gâlach* (גָּלַח) [pronounced *gaw-LAHKH*], which means *to be bald*. In the Piel, as we find here, it means *to shave, to shave off*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel, meaning that Samson himself receives the shaving of the head. Strong’s #1548 BDB #164.

After Samson talks about being shaved, we have the Qal perfect of *çûwr* (צָוַר) [pronounced *soor*], which means *to turn aside, to depart, to go away*. Strong’s #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. The subject of the verb is the masculine singular noun *kôwach* (כֹּחַ) [pronounced *KOE-ahkh*]—or *kôach* (כֹּאֵץ) [pronounced *KOE-ahkh*], which means *strength, power, ability*. Strong’s #3581 BDB #470.

Now, here we have some changes. There are no Philistines waiting in the other room. Delilah has nagged and nagged Samson for days on end. I hate like hell to reveal this, but given enough day-in and day-out nagging, some men are ready to do anything (and be forewarned that it may not be the response desired by the woman, however). Samson, because he was so infatuated, revealed what he knew. Another man, who was not as infatuated, might kill Delilah. Nagging is a powerful weapon. It is not unlike holding a gun to the man’s head. Anything could happen.

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The Philistines Overpower Samson and Haul Him to Gaza

And so saw Delilah that he made known to her all of his heart and so she sent and so she called to princes of Philistines, to say, "Come up the once for he has made known to me¹⁶ all of his heart." And came up unto her princes of Philistines and so they brought the silver in their hands.

Judges
16:18

So Delilah saw that he had made known to her all of his heart, so she sent [for] and called to the princes of the Philistines, saying, "Come up this time, for he has made known to me all of his heart." And the princes of the Philistines came up to her and they brought the silver in their hands.

When Delilah realized that Samson had revealed everything to her, she sent for the Philistine leaders, saying, "Come immediately, for Samson has told me everything." The leaders of the Philistines came up to her, bringing the blood-money with them.

Samson has some time to reflect on what he has told Delilah. She does not shave his head that night, so he wakes up, the house is empty except for Delilah, who is already up and making coffee (she has a big day ahead of her). What he ought to do is to get out of the house and get out of the city. However, the night has passed and everything appears to be okay to him.

Only a portion of this verse is difficult. She tells the princes to *come up* and follows that with the definite article and the feminine singular noun *pâ ʿam* (פֶּאֱמָ) [pronounced *PAW-gahm*], which means *beat, foot, anvil, occurrence, time*. Strong's #6471 BDB #821. The definite article may be interpreted as a demonstrative pronoun.

What the princes brought in their hands is the masculine singular of *keçeph* (כֶּזֶבֶד) [pronounced *KEH-sef*], which means *silver*. Strong's #3701 BDB #494. Doubtless, this occurred almost immediately. She went to the Philistines the next morning, they gathered their funds and brought them with. At this point in time, Delilah seems to think that this is a pretty sure thing, and apparently, so do the princes of the Philistines. Since they no longer seem to be hiding in the other room, apparently some time has passed since the third deception.

And so she made him sleep upon her knees and so she called unto a man and so she shaved seven of locks of his head and so she began to afflict him¹⁷ and so was departed his strength from him

Judges
16:19

Then she made Samson [fall to] sleep on her knees and then she called to a man and then shaved the seven locks of his head. Then she began to afflict him and his strength departed from him.

She made Samson fall asleep on her knees, and then called to a man (to bring her a razor) and she shaved off Samson's hair. Then she began to afflict him and his strength was gone.

At the beginning of this verse, we have the Piel imperfect of *yâshên* (יָשַׁן) [pronounced *yaw-SHAYN*], which means *to sleep*. In the Piel, found only here, it means *to make sleep, to cause to sleep*. Although the Piel stem is taken as the intensive stem, it can also refer to an accomplished or established state of being without regard to the process or to the events which brought it about. It is used to refer to verbal facts and results. The object of the verb is passively transformed so that there is an idea of causation inherent in the meaning, although this causative aspect is not the point of emphasis.¹⁸ Strong's #3462 BDB #445. Now, I am certain that you read this verse and didn't even think about what was happening. Delilah did not order Samson to fall asleep on her knees and Samson obeyed. This was their last night together and Delilah, like some women without a heart, choose to enjoy it by wearing Samson out with sex. This is how he collapsed, not even realizing the danger that he was in.

¹⁶ Some manuscripts have this word *written* as *her*, but *read* as *me*. See Rotherham for further details in Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 278.

¹⁷ According to the NIV Study Bible and to the NRSV, in the Greek, this reads *and he began to weaken*. This would be the alpha Septuagint.

¹⁸ Quoted and paraphrased from *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 2280.

Delilah had no razor nearby; however, she had a man off in a nearby room with the razor—probably one of the Philistines. He handed her the razor and she shaved Samson’s head. The verb used here is the 3rd person feminine singular, Piel imperfect of *gâlach* (גָּלַח) [pronounced *gaw-LAHKH*], which means *to be bald*. In the Piel, as we find here, it means *to shave, to shave off*. Strong’s #1548 BDB #164. In the Hebrew, Delilah is doing the shaving; in the Greek, it is the man that she calls in. In some English versions, we have this translated as though Delilah causes the man to shave Samson’s head, but this rendering is not consistent with the Hebrew or the Greek.

What she did after shaving his head was the Hiphil imperfect of *châlal* (חָלַל) [pronounced *khaw-LAHL*], which means, in the Hiphil, *to begin*. Strong’s #2490 BDB #320. This is followed by the Piel infinitive construct of *ʿânâh* (אָנָּה) [pronounced *gaw-NAWH*], which means *to humble, to be grace oriented, to be humbled, to be afflicted*. In the Piel, this means *to oppress, to depress, to afflict*. Strong’s #6031 BDB #776. We are not told how exactly she afflicted him. What she would be doing is looking to test his superhuman strength. Maybe she asked him to lift her up—we really don’t know, but she said and did something which tested him and found his strength to be gone. The alpha Septuagint offers a very different meaning—in the Septuagint, it reads: *And he began to become weak*.¹⁹

I am certain that you are looking at this and thinking, *Samson, how can you be this stupid?* You completely underestimate the power of a woman. A woman can be so desirable as to cause a man to do whatever she desires. At the same time, she can, with her nagging, cause a man excruciating, torturous pain. In a relationship, it is claimed that the person who is not in love or in love the least has all of the power. Delilah had all of the power in this relationship. Samson may have been twice her size and was able to bench press her without a thought—yet he was completely at her mercy. Recall that Adam, with a clear head, completely understanding what he was doing, traded fellowship with God and the incredible life in the garden in order to remain with Eve, his *ishshah*. She was that beautiful, she was that perfect for him, and on the earth, there was no other woman for him—Adam knew that. Adam’s love for Eve completely overruled his intelligence and wisdom and he made a decision which resulted in pain and sorrow from then until now (and every male reading or hearing this would have made the same decision). [For many are the victims she has cast down and numerous are all the slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death \(Prov. 7:26–27\).](#)

And so she said, “Philistines upon you, Samson!” And so he awoke from his sleeping and so he said, “I will go out as time in time, and I will shake myself off.” And he [even] he did not know that Y^ehowah departed from upon him.

Judges
16:20

Then she said, “The Philistines [are] upon you, Samson!” Then he awoke from his sleeping and said, “I will go out, as in times past, and I will shake [them] off me.” And he, [even] he did not know that Y^ehowah had departed from upon him.

Then she cried out, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” As he awoke from his sleeping, he said, “I will simply go outside, as I have done in the past, and shake these Philistines off of me.” He did not realize that Jehovah had departed from upon him.

Samson says that he will go out and then uses the phrase *as time in time*. The noun used twice is the feminine singular of *pâ ʿam* (פְּאָם) [pronounced *PAW-gahm*], which we examined a couple verses ago; it means *time*. The phrase, *as time in time* or *as time against time* or *as time with time* means *as usual, as formerly, as in times past, as at other times, as in previous times*. We find this same phrase in Judges 20:30. Strong’s #6471 BDB #821. It is this little phrase that helps fill in the blanks of what has occurred before. We never knew whether Samson ever saw the Philistines prior to this time. It was never clear that they actually came into the room and jumped him. However, this little phrase tells us that this has occurred before. What Samson planned to do was the Niphal imperfect of *nâ ʿar* (נָאָר) [pronounced *naw-GAHR*], which means *to shake, to shake out, to shake off*. We found this used in Psalm 136:15 where the idea was a locust got caught in your hair and you shake your head and it falls out. Of course, when this happens indoors, you walk outside and shake your head till the locust falls out. This is what Samson was doing. Strong’s #5287 BDB #654.

¹⁹ This is according to the New King James Version; Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1994; p 230. My beta version of the Septuagint, as well as the Vulgate, Massoretic text, and the Aramaic versions, have Delilah as the subject of the verb.

It is interesting that Delilah and the Philistines were absolutely convinced that Samson was now powerless. Samson himself did not realize that. The Hebrew emphasizes the fact that Samson didn't know this. We have the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun in addition to the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *yâda* (יָדָע) [pronounced *yaw-DAHĠ*], which means *to know*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. With this verb is the negative. Samson probably realized that Delilah has shaved him, but he certainly does not know that the Holy Spirit has left him, or that his superhuman strength is gone as well.

Jehovah (or, Y^ehowah) in the Old Testament can refer to any member of the Trinity. You will note that throughout this narrative about Samson, what has been upon Samson is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, *Jehovah* here, refers to God the Holy Spirit, meaning that it is just about time that we took up the **Doctrine of the Deity of the Holy Spirit**.

As any commentator will point out at this time, the key is not the hair cut that Samson received which weakened him, but the fact that the Holy Spirit left him after he betrayed his Nazirite vows. The source of his strength was Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of the Universe. Throughout Old Testament Scripture, there are instances of the Holy Spirit leaving a man whom He once supported. After becoming disobedient to God's Word, the Holy Spirit left Saul (I Sam. 16:14 18:12 28:15–16). Saul is mentioned more often than anyone else as having lost the Holy Spirit. However, it is clear in II Chron. 15:2 that retention and loss of the Holy Spirit is the result of human volition and it is clear in Num. 14 that the Holy Spirit supports nations as well as individuals, and will withdraw support from a nation of apostate believers.

I should hope that the application to us is obvious: we cannot survive spiritually apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. We are foolish to rely on our own abilities and upon our own power. In our lives, what is of utmost importance is to keep short accounts with God—that is, to name our sins to God immediately upon sinning, and to remain in fellowship in that way. Those who do not are dependent upon the power of the flesh, which has no spiritual power.

And so seized him Philistines and so bored out his eyes and so brought him down Gaza-ward and so they bound him in two bronze [cuffs] and so he was grinding in a house of the prisoners.

Judges
16:21

Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They then brought him to Gaza and bound him with bronze cuffs. So he was grinding in the house of the prisoners.

Then the Philistines seized Samson and gouged out his eyes. They then brought him, bound in cuffs, to Gaza, where they placed him grinding in the prison.

The second verb is not one that we see very often; it is the Piel imperfect of *nâqar* (נָקַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], which means *to bore, to pick, to dig, to bore out, to hollow out, to gouge out*. It is found in the Piel in Num. 16:14 Judges 16:21 Job 30:17 and it means *to bore out, to gouge out*. Strong's #5365 BDB #669.

What Samson was bound with is the dual of the masculine noun *n^echesheth* (נְחֹשֶׁת) [pronounced *n^e-KHOH-sheth*], which simply means *copper, bronze*. My thinking is that manufacturing of the metal was so new to the Israelites, that they did not have a word for the various things which were made out of bronze or copper, so those things were simply called by what they were made out of. Strong's #5178 BDB #638. We find other incidents of this in II Sam. 3:34 Jer. 52:11. The use of the dual could refer to two sets of cuffs, so that both of his hands were bound; and probably both of his feet.

This was not unlike what happened in the end times of Israel. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, he slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah, the king, and then put out his eyes, and dragged him off in chains (II Kings 25:7). In fact, this sort of brutal treatment was not out of the ordinary for prisoners in the ancient world—particularly those who might pose a future threat (see also Num. 16:14 I Sam. 11:1–2 Jer. 39:7).

What Samson was doing in the prison house is the Qal active participle of *ṭâchan* (טָחַן) [pronounced *taw-KHAHN*], which means *to grind, to crush*. Grinding small amounts of grain was considered women's work in the ancient

world, and grinding larger amounts between millstones was assigned to animals or to slaves—in either case, it was doubly demeaning to Samson (see also Ex. 11:5 Isa. 47:2 Lam. 5:13). Strong's #2912 BDB #377.

It is funny how much a picture can stay with you. I have always pictured Samson pushing some large lever in a circular motion around a great stone. Freeman suggests that this sort of a mill, run on the power of an ass, was not in existence during the time of Samson (and, he allows, if it was, then Samson would be unable to move freely enough to work it). Freeman tells us that Samson simply grinded away at the grain much like any woman would do in her own household.²⁰ This was to give him something degrading to do while the great event of his death was organized.

Where Samson is placed is the masculine singular construct of bayîth (בַּיִת) [pronounced *BAH-yith*], which means *house, household, habitation*. Strong's #1004 BDB #108. This is a house of the masculine plural of `âçîyr (אֲצִיּוּר) [pronounced *aw-SEER*], which means *prisoner*. Strong's #615 BDB #64.

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Samson Is Humiliated Before Thousands of Drunken Philistines

And so began hair of his head to grow, as which he was shaved. Judges 16:22 **Then the hair of his head began to grow, according as it had been shaved.**

Then his hair began to grow, after it had been shaven off.

What Samson's hair began to do was the Qal imperfect of tsâmach (צָמַח) [pronounced *tsaw-MAHKH*], which means *to sprout, to spring up, to spring forth*. It means *to grow* when used of a man's hair or beard (Lev. 13:37 I Chron. 19:5). Strong's #6779 BDB #855.

After the word *to grow*, we have ka`âsher (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the compound of the preposition kaph (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun `âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which means *which, that, when* or *who*. Together, literally, we have *as which*; however, together, they generally mean *as which, as one who, as, like as, just as*. BDB classifies these two together as a separate word, and gives the meanings *according as, as, when*. Together they = Strong's #834 BDB #455.

Now, I want you to understand what did **not** happen here: the Philistines did not capture Samson, let his hair grow for six months or so until he looked somewhat like a hippy, and then decide, *let's celebrate his capture*. You need to have an idea as to a realistic time frame here. You've no doubt seen pictures of a long-haired Samson pulling the pillars down and collapsing the coliseum upon the Philistines, but that is wrong—it is every bit as wrong and as goofy as those pictures of a long-haired Jesus. There is nothing about long hair in the remainder of this chapter. His hair began to grow the instant it had been shaven off. In that, Samson was keeping his Nazirite vows. So, how much hair does Samson have? A little more than none at all. He calls upon God to help him. He is instantly put back into service as a Nazirite. The Philistines are about to have a great celebration over this victory, and it is unlikely if even a week has passed since Delilah cut Samson's hair. The Philistines are going to be giving praise and thanks to their god, Dagon—they aren't going to wait a few months or even a few weeks in order to do this. The preparations for this celebration began immediately. And, when they look at Samson, they see a helpless, blind man with a shaved head. They might even see the minuscule amount of hair that has grown on his head.

²⁰ See *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 126.

And princes of Philistines were gathered to slaughter a sacrifice, great, to Dagon their gods and to rejoice. And so they were saying, “Given our gods into our hand Samson, our enemy.”

Judges
16:23

Now the princes of the Philistines were gathered to slaughter a great sacrifice to Dagon, their god, and to rejoice. And they kept saying, “Our god has given Samson, our enemy, into our hand.”

Now the princes of the Philistines gathered together to slaughter many sacrifices to Dagon, their god, and to rejoice in their victory over Samson. They continued saying, “Our god has given Samson, our enemy, into our hand.”

Samson had been a thorn in the flesh of the Philistines for probably 10–30 years. He judged Israel for twenty years and caused the Philistines grief during and subsequent to that time. This was a great celebration which required, apparently, some preparation, but unlikely that it was more than two weeks, if that. The point I am making in setting up this time frame is that Samson’s hair does not have time to grow long. Samson now has a burr haircut at best. How many times has Samson cut his hair since Delilah shaved it? He hasn’t. Has he kept his Nazirite vows since Delilah cut his hair? Absolutely. All of this could have taken place the day of his capture or the next. God’s plan does not require a great deal of time for you to get back into fellowship. Returning to God’s plan is instantaneous. You name your sins and you are back in fellowship. Now, the quality of your service is determined by the doctrine in your soul; however, once you name your sins to God, you are back in service to God. So, how much hair does Samson need in order to be filled with the Spirit again? A little more hair than no hair at all.

What the Philistines were gathered together to do is the Qal infinitive construct of *zâ^bvach* (זָבַח) [pronounced *zaw^b-VAHKH*], which means *to slaughter [usually an animal for sacrifice]*. Strong’s #2076 BDB #256.

From the very beginning, we have the masculine plural noun *’ēlōhîym*²¹ (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*], which means *gods* or *God*. This word can refer to the Godhead or to foreign gods. Context inevitably points out whether this is the God, the Creator of the Universe, or foreign gods, which are the result of fertile imagination at best and representative of demons at worst. Strong’s #430 BDB #43. What I need to discuss here is the *plural* form of this noun. Here, it refers to one demon-god, Dagon, yet it is in the plural. The key is that Satan is the great counterfeiter. Even though when this word was first used to refer to God, the trinity in Gen. 1:1, it was bastardized to refer to singular heathen gods, thereby confusing its meaning as it has come down to us today.

It is suggested that the Philistines hauled Samson to the Temple of Dagon in Gaza, which is possible. In the next verse, the people will see Samson and begin praising Dagon, which is what we would expect in a Dagon church. However, nothing in this passage directly points to this being at a temple of Dagon. Furthermore, the passage of I Sam. 5, when the Philistines capture the Ark of God, it is specifically taken to the *house of Dagon* (I Sam. 5:3), which is in Ashdod, not Gaza. The destruction of this building at the end of this chapter and the different location from the *house of Dagon* from I Sam. 5 indicates that this is probably just an extremely large public building and not the temple of Dagon.

The popular theory was that *Dagon* is derived from *fish*; however, according to ZPEB, the correct meaning of *Dagon* is *grain* and that extra-Biblical evidence does not support the concept of a *sea-god* or a *fish-god*. Furthermore, if the head and hands of Dagon were cut off (I Sam. 5:4), then this suggests something other than a fish (although some gods were a mixture of man and animal).²² Barnes suggests exactly the opposite, who points out that there are *representations of a fish-god on the walls of Khorsabad, on slabs at Konyunjik, and on sundry antique cylinders and gems. In these the figures vary. Some have a human form down to the waist, with that of a fish below the waist; others have a human head, arms and legs, growing, as it were, out of a fish’s body, and so arranged that the fish’s head forms a kind of mitre to the man’s head, while the body and fins form a kind of cloak, hanging down behind.*²³ Let me add, that the Philistines were a sea people, so the idea that they would

²¹ Since this is so commonly referred to in reference books, we will use the designation *Elohim* as well.

²² Dagon certainly could have been a fish from the waist down.

²³ *Barnes’ Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 457.

worship a *fish-god* is in keeping with their vocation and Freeman tells us that representations of a fish-god have been found in the ruins of Nineveh, giving further credence the traditional view.

Now, a point of interest for those who try to trace the origins of ancient peoples, the Amorites had a god, Dagon, whose temple was in Ugarit. There is evidence that he was worshiped prior to 2000 B.C. and that we have evidence of him being worshiped in Ugarit by the Amorites throughout the Amarna Age, which was from the time of the exodus to part way through the book of Judges.²⁴ The great influence of Dagon in the land of Palestine is clear from the three cities named *Beth-Dagon* in Palestine (two are found in Scripture—Joshua 15:41, 19:27) and one is found in the *Annals of Sennacherib*. We will go into more detail about the **Doctrine of the Pagan God Dagon** when we get to I Sam. 5.

For the Philistines, this was a great victory—for thirty or so years, Samson has been a royal pain in their neck and they are going to get crazy with celebrating. In the meantime, Samson is kept in a jail, grinding away, which is women's work, as has been mentioned.

And so saw him the people and so they praised their gods, for they said, "Given our gods into our hand our enemy and devastator of our land, and who has caused to multiply our slain."

Judges
16:24

When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, "Our god had given into our hand our enemy, the devastator of our land, who has caused to greatly increase our mortally wounded."

Then, when the people saw him, they praised their God, and sang, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand—the one who devastated our land and killed so many of us."

We have a few tough words in here, so let me give this to you as others have translated it:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And when the people saw him the praised their god, for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy, even him who laid waste our land, and who multiplied our slain.
NASB	When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hands, Even the destroyer of our country, Who had slain many of us."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the people see him, and praise their god, for they said, 'Our god hath given in our hand our enemy, and he who is laying waste our land, and who multiplied our wounded.'

it was common for a people to praise their god for military victories (see Dan. 5:4–5 I Sam. 31:9 I Chron. 10:9). This is why there was no little important attached to the God of Israel, Who struck down the enemies of Israel, to His Own glory.

What they call Samson is the Hiphil participle of *chârêᵛ* (חָרַב) [pronounced *khaw-RAW^{BV}*], which means *to be dry, to be dried up*. It also means *to waste, to lay waste, to be desolate*. The idea is that when a land goes without water, it both dries up and is desolate. In the Hiphil, with a human subject, it means *to lay waste, to make desolate*. As a participle, it is sort of like Samson's occupation, and it would be rendered *devastator, destroyer, exterminator, terminator, annihilator, ravager*. Strong's #2717 BDB #351. What Samson devastated is the feminine singular of *ʿerets* (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced *EH-rets*] is a feminine singular substantive which means *earth (all or a portion), land*. Strong's #776 BDB #75.

The last verb is the Hiphil perfect of *râᵛâh* (רָבַח) [pronounced *raw^B-VAWH*], which means *to become much, to become many, to multiply, to increase in population and in whatever else*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to become many, to make much, to multiply, to increase, to enlarge, to cause to greatly increase*. Strong's #7235 BDB #915. What Samson increased is the masculine plural of *châlâl* (לָלַח) [pronounced *chaw-LAWL*], which

²⁴ ZPEB goes into much greater detail: *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 2.

means *slain, fatally wounded, wounded, pierced*; it is from a verb which means *to bore, to pierce*. Strong's #2491 BDB #319. These last two phrases expand on the concept of how Samson was the enemy of the Philistines. From what we have read, he appears to be the only Israelite who stood up in opposition to the Philistines, although most of the time it was on the basis of petty, personal disputes.

Barnes suggests that this quote at the end of v. 24 is a portion of a song, quickly put together by the court composer of Gaza, to be sung in celebration of the great triumph of Philistia over one man.

And so he was when a happiness [or, well-being] of their hearts and so they said, "Call for Samson and so he will play [or, jest] for²⁵ us." And so they called for Samson from a house of the bound ones and so he made sport for their faces and so they caused him to stand between the pillars.

Judges
16:25

And it was when [they had achieved] happiness [or, well-being] of their hearts that they said, "Call for Samson and he will amuse us." So they called for Samson from the house of the imprisoned and he was amusing before them. Then they caused him to stand between the pillars.

As soon as they got tanked up, they said, "Call for Samson so that he can amuse us." So, they summoned Samson from the prison and he amused them. Then they caused him to stand between the pillars.

Let's glance at a couple of other translations:

The Emphasized Bible And it came to pass when their heart was merry that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make sort for us. So they called for Samson out of the prison and he made sport before them, and they stationed him between the pillars.

NASB It so happened when they were in high spirits [lit., their heart was pleasant], that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained [lit., made sport before them]. And they made him stand between the pillars.

Young's Lit. Translation And it cometh to pass, when their heart *is* glad, that they say, 'Call for Samson, and he doth play before us;' and they call for Samson out of the prison house, and he playeth before them, and they cause him to stand between the pillars.

We begin with the masculine singular, Qal imperfect of the verb *to be* followed by the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Samson is in prison and the Philistines are celebrating, but they are going to wait until they are good and tanked up before they call for him. We have the Qal infinitive construct of *to be pleasant, to be delightful, to be delicious, to be cheerful, to be happy, to be joyful, to be good, to be kind, to be well, to do well, to do right*. Strong's #2895 BDB #373. Some manuscripts have a kaph preposition prior to *to be pleasant*, which means *like, as*. This cheerfulness was achieved in their hearts. This simply means that these people began to tie one on.

What they want out of Samson is the Piel imperfect of *sâchaq* (שָׂחַק) [pronounced *saw-KHAKH*], which means *to laugh*; by extension, it means *to sport, to play, to jest*. In the Piel, it means *to joke, to jest, to laugh repeatedly, to play, to amuse, to dance*. Strong's #7832 BDB #965. Now, obviously, Samson hadn't prepared a standup routine which he played out before them for their amusement. Barnes suggests that they would call upon him to sing and dance. The crowd yelled, told him to do various humiliating things and they threw stuff at him. Keep in mind, we are dealing with thousands of gloating drunks. Since they apparently lacked good theater, this was the high point of their year. The Philistines hated one man above all others, and that was Samson. Now, he stood before them, blind and helpless, and they were smashed, and they enjoyed that tremendously.

Interestingly enough, they do not use the exact same phrase as we found back in v. 21, which was a house of prisoners. Here they use the definite article and the masculine plural, Qal passive participle of *'âçar* (אָצַר) [pronounced *'ah-sar*], which means *to imprison*.

²⁵ This reads *before us* in one early printed edition, and in the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate.

[pronounced *aw-AWHR*], which means *to bind, to tie, to imprison, to restrain*. Here, we would render this *the bound ones, the restrained ones, prisoners*. Strong's #631 BDB #63.

Now, where they placed him was between the pillars. The verb involved is the Hiphil imperfect of our old favorite *ʿamad* (אָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAHD*], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to stand, to station, to set, to place, to decree, to destine*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763.

And so said Samson unto the young man the one fastened with in his hand, "Permit me rest and cause me to feel the pillars which the house are firmly established upon them and I will lean upon them."

Judges
16:26

Then Samson said to the young man, the one fastened to his hand, "Permit me to rest and cause me to feel the pillars upon which the house is established and I will lean against them."

Then Samson said to the young man who was fastened to his hand, "Permit me to rest; lead me to the pillars on which the house rests, so that I may lean against them."

Again, let's see what others have done:

Barnes <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	"Let me rest and let me feel the pillars, that I may lean upon them." And Samson said unto the youth that held him by his hand, Place me where I may feel the pillars whereon the house resteth, that I may lean upon them.
NASB	Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Samson saith unto the young man who is keeping hold on his hand, 'Let me alone, and let me feel the pillars on which the house is established, and I lean upon them.'

Whatever was being done to Samson, after he was brought in from grinding grain in the prison, was exhausting. Now, there was not some little 10 year-old-boy holding his hand, but a strong, robust young man in his twenties. Edersheim suggests that this young man is a Hebrew servant to Samson,²⁶ but that seems to be unlikely. This young man is Samson's Philistine keeper. What the young man was doing was the Hiphil participle of *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means *to be strong, firm, to strengthen, to fasten upon, to seize, to grow firm*. This is preceded by a definite article, so it acts more like a noun. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. It is unclear whether or not Samson is still in chains, but he was restrained by this young man. Having killed a thousand Philistines with barely a weapon, this in itself was humiliating, regardless of the size and heft of this young man. Because Samson was blind and exhausted, this young man, possibly a jailer, led him around. We then have the *bêyth* preposition (*in, at, by, with, against*; proximity is the key) and *his hand*. Since earlier it was specifically mentioned that Samson was restrained with two bronze cuffs or chains, and here the young man is fastened to one hand, my thinking is that the restraints are off and the only one restraining him at this time is the young man. Otherwise, *hand* would have been in the plural. Now, it is possible that the young man is chained to him, as a policeman might cuff himself to a criminal. However, I think that it is more reasonable that there are no chains and that Samson's only restraint is the young man, likely a Philistine, who held tightly onto his hand, leading him around.

Now, realize that some time passes. It might be fifteen or thirty minutes, possibly longer, and the crowd gets a little bored with yelling at Samson, and they go back to drinking. Samson is still the center of attention, but whatever is being done to him makes it appear as though he is completely exhausted (in all actuality, he probably is completely exhausted). He will use this excuse to lean against a pillar. They are in some sort of a public building—perhaps the public building of the city, which seats over a thousand people, who surround Samson on perhaps all four sides. Throughout the building, but primarily in the middle, where Samson is, there are going to be load-bearing pillars—this, wooden pillars set on stone bases. In a house, these are the load-bearing studs that you cannot remove without substantially weakening the structure of the house. The main load bearing pillars will

²⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 389.

be in the middle of this public house. To the young man, Samson says the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil voluntative imperative of nûwach (נִוַּחַ) [pronounced *NOO-ahkh*], which means *rest, cause to rest, to be at rest, set down, lay down, deposit, leave*. In the voluntative Hiphil imperative, it means *permit me to rest, allow me to rest, permission to rest*. This is not ingratiating, but more of a recognition of the man's authority over him. It is the recruit saying, *permission to speak freely, sir*. I hope you noticed how your translation dropped the ball here and mistranslated this word. I did not find any translation which got this right. Strong's #5117 (and #3240) BDB #628. Then Samson uses the 2nd person masculine singular, with a 1st person suffix, Hiphil imperative of mâshash (מָשַׁשׁ) [pronounced *maw-SHAHSH*], which means *to feel, to grope*. Samson, being blind, would naturally use a term like this. Here it means *cause me to feel, cause me to touch*. Strong's #4959 BDB #606.

So far, Samson says, **“Permit me rest and cause me to feel the pillars which the house...”** What is next is the Niphal participle (or, possibly perfect) of kûwn (כִּוַּן) [pronounced *koon*], which means *to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. In the Niphal, it means *to be firmly established, to be set up, to be established*. Strong's #3559 BDB #465.

Then Samson uses the 1st person singular, Niphal imperfect of shâ'an (שָׂאֵן) [pronounced *shaw-AHN*], and it means *to lean against, to support oneself against*; it can be used figuratively for *faith*. This verb is found only in the Niphal. Strong's #8172 BDB #1043.

Samson has been grinding in the prison for a few hours that day; he's stood in front of all of these people for perhaps an hour or so; and he is blind and helpless. We do not know exactly how he was ridiculed, but it is reasonable to suppose that some even walked by a slapped him; he was no doubt reviled and insulted from a distance. He was still a big man, so many felt safer yelling at him from a distance. Samson does know what he is doing, however.

And the house was full—the men and the women and there, all of [the] princes of the Philistines—and upon the roof about 3000 men and women, the ones looking at an amusement of Samson.

Judges
16:27

And the house was full [of] men and women; and there [were also] all the princes of the Philistines, and on the roof [there were] about 3000 men and women, the ones looking at the amusement [and humiliation] of Samson

The entire house will filled with men and women, along with all of the princes of the Philistines. And on the roof, there were another 3000 men and women who observed the humiliation of Samson.

Allow me to list a few other renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Now the house was full of men and women, there also were all the lords of the Philistines, —and on the roof were about three thousand men and women, looking on while Samson made sport.
NASB	Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And about 3,000 men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was amusing <i>them</i> .
NIV	Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the house hath been full of men and of women, and thither <i>are</i> all the princes of the Philistines, and on the roof <i>are</i> about three thousand men and women, who are looking on the playing of Samson.

It appears as though these 3000 men and women are in addition to those who are inside the building. It is a bit confusing as to how the building is set up, but apparently the roof is open to below, so that the ones on the roof can look down and watch Samson, but I would think that there were be seats inside the building as well. In any case, it is obviously a huge structure. Barnes suggests that the princes and VIP's, along with their wives and dates, sat

under the roof, and were so shaded, and afforded a better view of the ceremonies. There were 3000 people celebrating on the roof, which certainly had a guard rail of sorts (or, a parapet) and perhaps some seating—it was designed to support a large number of people. My guess is that they were two or three stories high, with several pillars throughout. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that this building resembled the kiosks of Turkey, where there is a column in each corner, and then two close together in the middle; all six of which support the roof. The two pillars where Samson was would be either in the front or the front center or in the middle of the building (if the support is as Keil and Delitzsch suggest, then they would be in the center, of course). There would have to be some sort of an opening in the roof almost directly above Samson (he would be next to two support pillars, which would have, of course, some roof over them, but directly in front of that would be an open area so that the people on the roof could see what was going on. Samson, between these two pillars, each perhaps as much as 30 feet high, would be in full view of the crowd above and below. The support was done in such a way as the area of the roof where the people stood was not independent of these two pillars, but very much dependent upon them.²⁷

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Samson Avenges Himself Against the Philistines

And so called Samson unto Y^howah and so he said, “My Lords Y^howah, remember me, please, and strengthen me, please, only the time the this, the God; and I will be avenged a vengeance of one from two of my eyes from the Philistines.”

Judges
16:28

Then Samson called to Y^howah and he said, “My Lords Y^howah, please remember me, and please strengthen me, only this [one] time, O God, so that I will be avenged a vengeance of one on account of my two eyes on from the Philistines.

Then Samson called out to Jehovah and he said, “My Lord, Jehovah, please remember me and please strengthen me just this one time, O God, so that I may be avenged for the loss of my two eyes by the hands of the Philistines.”

There are a number of things that you will not find in your translation in this verse, so let's see some of the better translations and then do a little correcting:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So then Samson cried unto Yahweh, and said,— My Lord Yahweh! remember me, I pray thee,—and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged with one avenging, for my two eyes upon the Philistines.
NASB	Then Samson called to the LORD, and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Then Samson called to Yahweh and said, “O lord Yahweh, remember me, I pray thee and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged, vengeance for one of my two eyes upon the Philistines.”

It is not stated whether Samson did this aloud or whether he prayed silently. Actually, there is no indication that he did this silently, so we will presume that he spoke aloud. The first thing that your Bible does not tell you is that what Samson first says is the masculine plural of ʾādōwn (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], the word we often know as *adonai*; and this word means *lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign*. It is a word used of both man and God; and here of God. Here, the word is in the plural with a first person singular suffix, making it ʾādōnây (אֲדֹנָיִךְ) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAY*]. When it comes to the plural, we can either interpret this as referring to the Trinity or as an intensification of the noun. It is obvious that this is an intensely felt prayer, but it is also Trinity to Whom Samson is speaking. Strong's #113 BDB #10.

²⁷ A Dr. Thomson suggests that this building was erected out from the side of a mountain at that only one side—actually, the very end of the roof, was supported by pillars. Not that I buy this, but I pass it on to you. See Dr. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. ii, p. 342.

The verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of *zâkar* (זָכַר) [pronounced *zaw-KAHR*] means which means *remember, recall, call to mind*. Rotherham, in Joshua 23:7, renders this *to make memorial* and footnotes it as *to call to remembrance*. Strong's #2142 BDB #269. Samson has spent a great deal of his life away from God, and he has called upon God few times in his life (the only other recorded instance is Judges 15:18). No doubt, having had the upbringing that Samson had, that he realized that he had been not just a failure in his life, but a terrific failure in his life and nothing but bad choices brought him to where he was. However, Samson could still call upon God. We are all given that opportunity. During the time that we are alive, God has a purpose for our lives—we are included in His plan for what occurs here on this earth. Samson may have been a colossal failure, but he could still call upon God and God honored his prayer.

Samson asks God to strengthen him *only this [one] time*. Then he calls to God in the plural again and Samson uses the 1st person, voluntative Niphal imperfect of *nâqam* (נָקַם) [pronounced *naw-KAHM*], which means *to avenge, to take vengeance*. In the Niphal, it means *to avenge oneself*. Strong's #5358 BDB #667. This is followed by the noun cognate and then by the feminine singular numeral *ʿechâd* (אֶחָד) [pronounced *eh-KHAWD*] which means *one, first*. Strong's #259 BDB #25. What follows, literally, is *from two of my eyes from Philistines*.

There are some who would take issue with Samson's prayer; who would have problems with Samson's prayer. They think that Samson ought to turn the other cheek. Samson is a judge in Israel, and, in the capacity, made judgment calls on behalf of Jesus Christ. He was pretty much the only enemy the Philistines had in all of Israel, despite the fact that they were an evil people. Samson could not take personal revenge upon the Philistines apart from the strength and tacit approval of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gave Samson that approval and He poured the strength of the Holy Spirit into him. There are times that you do not turn the other cheek, and this is one of them.

And so grasped Samson two of the pillars of the midst which the house is [firmly] established upon them and so he leaned upon them one in his right and one in his left. Judges 16:29

Then Samson grasped two of the middle pillars [upon] which the house was firmly established, and he leaned against them, one in his right [hand] and one in his left.

Then Samson took a hold of the two middle pillars, which were load-bearing, and he leaned in against them, with one in his right hand and the other in his left.

There is one difficult portion of this verse where some translations are wildly different, so let's look at this one in more detail:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then did Samson grasp the two middle pillars whereon the house rested, and whereon it was upheld, and he braced himself against them, —the one with his right hand and the other with his left.
NASB	And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.
Owen's Translation	And Samson grasped the two middle pillars which the house rested on them and he leaned upon them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Samson turneth aside to the two middle pillars, on which the house is established, and on which it is supported, to the one with his right hand, and one with his left;...

What Samson did is the Qal imperfect of *lâphath* (לָפַת) [pronounced *law-FAHTH*], which means *to twist, to turn, to grasp with a twisting motion*. Strong's #3943 BDB #542. This tells us that two of the load-bearing pillars were within arms length of one another and that there was a way to grasp them.—that is, they were either thin enough for Samson to get his hands around them or close enough together (say, four feet apart) so that he could get his hands on both sides of them.

It is the next verb which is difficult. Since it is a masculine singular, we don't know if it refers back to the house or to Samson. It is the Niphal imperfect of *çâmak*^e (צָמַק) [pronounced *saw-MAHK^e*], which means *to lean, to rest, to support, to place, to lay [something upon something else]*. In the Niphal, it means *to be propped, supported, to*

stay oneself, to rest upon. Strong's #5564 BDB #701. Since we already have the building being *firmly established* on the pillars, a phrase used in vv. 26 and 29, and since we have a phrase which immediately follows that refers to Samson's hands, it is reasonable to suppose that Samson is the subject of this verb. Therefore, we have, *and so he supported [himself] against them.* How Samson supported himself against them is then given: *one in his right hand and one in his left.* The first noun is the feminine singular of *yāmīyn* (יָמִיַן) [pronounced *yaw-MEEN*], which means *the right hand, the right side.* Strong's #3225 BDB #411. The second is the masculine singular noun *sēmō'el* (שֵׁמֹעַל) [pronounced *s^əMOHL*], which means *the left, the left hand.* Strong's #8040 BDB #969. What is implied here is that Samson was leaning himself into one and then the other just to get a feel of where he was. Recall that he is blind and it is reasonable to suppose that he had never been inside that building before.

Although this is being observed by a large number of people, what Samson intends to do is completely unknown to them. In fact, it is pretty much out of the realm of their imagination.

And so said Samson, "Will die my soul with Philistines." And so he stretch out with strength and so fell the house upon the princes and upon all of the people who [were] in him [i.e., the house]. And so were the dying ones whom he killed in a dying of him more than that he killed in his life.

Judges
16:30

Then Samson said, "My soul will die with the Philistines." And so he spread out with strength and the house fell upon the princes and upon all of the people who [were] in it. So the dying ones that he killed in his dying were more than that which he killed in his life.

Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed against the pillars with all of his strength and the house fell down on the princes and on all of the people that were in it. All in all, Samson killed more Philistines in this one incident than he did during his entire lifetime.

In this verse, we have the same verb occur five times. We first find it as the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *mūwth* (מָוַת) [pronounced *mooth*], which means *to die.* Strong's #4191 BDB #559. The subject of the verb is *my soul.* Most translations read *"Let me die with the Philistines."* (NASB, Owen, Young, Rotherham) In fact, I am not aware of any translation which renders this literally.

Apparently, there has been some discussion among theologians and others whether Samson is committing suicide here. Samson is in the midst of a celebration which will culminate in his death, after humiliation and torture. The Philistines have gathered here not just to humiliate Samson, but to watch him die slowly by torture. This is Samson's last day on this earth and he realizes it. He is facing the enemies of Israel, and the enemies of God. What he is doing is no different than the soldier on the battle field who heroically gives his life for his country. Samson will be able to make his death count and apparently neutralize the power of the Philistines for several months. Finally, apart from the Holy Spirit, this was not going to happen. Samson could wish for whatever he wanted to wish for, but if God the Holy Spirit did not agree to give him the strength to do this, then Samson would not be able to execute the Philistines who are in this building with him. What he is doing has the complete authorization of the plan of God.

Geisler and Howe have written an excellent book called *When Critics Ask.* Allow me to quote from there: *Samson never took his life; he sacrificed it for his people. There is a big difference. Jonah prayed, "Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" (Jonah 4:3). But he never took his own life. Suicide is acting "for one's self." What Samson did was to lay down his life on the line for others—his people. Samson's act was no more suicide than Christ's, when He said, "I lay down my life," for "the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 17). In fact, "greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13)...The soldier who falls on a hand grenade to save his buddies is not taking his life by suicide; he is giving his life for others. Likewise, Christ did not commit suicide when He came to "give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).²⁸*

²⁸ *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, pp. 150–151. Geisler and Howe do go into more detail, giving examples of when the giving of a life for others is not exemplary; you can refer to the book for that.

What Samson then does is the Qal imperfect of *nâṭâh* (נָטָה) [pronounced *naw-TAWH*], which means *to stretch out, to spread out, to bow, to extend*. Strong's #5186 BDB #639. The picture is that Samson is standing between the pillars and in v. 29, he leans against them, his right hand on one and left on the other. Here, he pushes outward with the masculine singular noun *kôwach* (כֹּחַ) [pronounced *KOE-ahkh*]—or *kôach* (כֹּחַ) [pronounced *KOE-ahkh*], which means *strength, power, ability*. Strong's #3581 BDB #470. Very likely, this act all by itself would not have brought the house down; however, on the roof are 3000 Philistines. You can remove a load-bearing wall in a house and it won't just collapse. However, if you put several dozen of your drinking buddies on the roof, it will certainly cave in. I say this by way of information, not by encouragement; also, I mention this in now way to take away from the incredible feat of strength on Samson's part.

Archeologists have discovered a Philistine temple with a pair of very closely spaced rock bases (apparently the roof is held up by a series of wood pillars held in rock bases).²⁹ Samson apparently pushed the pillars out of their rock bases. Not only is this a miracle of strength, but one of balance as well. One pillar is used for leverage, while the other is pushed away from its base. Samson had to do this in such a way as to push them out evenly so that both pillars collapsed simultaneously (of, once one was pushed out completely, the other was out far enough to collapse as well).

The Philistines are called the Qal active participle of *mûwth*, which would be rendered *dead, dying ones, the executed, the killed*. This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect of *mûwth* again; In the Hiphil, this means *to kill, to destroy, to put to death, to execute*. I don't know if you follow this in the Hebrew, but the continued use of *mûwth* in this verse indicates that there were a lot of people who died. Certainly, that has been stated, but the Holy Spirit guided the author of this passage to use the term over and over again, which, by itself, indicates a tremendous slaughter.

And so came down his brothers and all of a house of his father and so they lifted him up and so they brought [him] and so they buried him between Zorah and between Eshtaol in a tomb of Manoah, his father. And he [even] he judged Israel twenty years.

Judges
16:31

Then his brothers came down and all of the house of his father, and they lifted him up and brought [him] up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah, his father. And he, [even] he judged Israel twenty years.

Then his brothers and his entire family came down and they lifted him up and carried him to the tomb of his father, Manoah and they buried him there, between Zorah and Eshtaol. Samson had judged Israel for twenty years.

Where it reads *his brothers and all the house of his father*, we have a reference to Samson's immediate family, as well as a large number of Danites who have traveled with them to show their respect for Samson. One item of interest to me is how those in Dan found out about what happened. CNN then was not what it is today. However, there were means by which news was spread abroad even in the ancient world, albeit more slowly. We can only speculate here. My thinking is that Israelite slaves or prisoners were able to escape as a result of this, and that they went up to Dan and spread the word as to what had happened. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the *lad* who was in charge of Samson heard his prayer and lived in this great catastrophe; and then brought the news to Samson's family. Although this would be a marvelous ending, as well as the one person who could actually relay Samson's prayer, we do not know for certain. He would have been the logical person to author the final chapter in Samson's life; however, the Bible does not specifically tell us this.³⁰

²⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 351.

³⁰ Keep in mind, the focus here is upon the power of God as manifested in Samson, and the grace of God, as was given to Samson. Therefore, the other details would have been left out, as they would have been distracting.

Edersheim: *Gaza and Philistia are hushed in awe and mourning. Samson's brethren and his father's house come down. From the ruins they search out the mangled body of the Nazarite. No one cares to interfere with them. Unmolested they bear away the remains, and lay them to rest in the buying-place of Manoah his father.*³¹

In this verse, we have four wâw consecutives and several verbs that we do not need to have. The indication here is that we have a very solemn occasion. Back in Judges 13:25, it reads: *And the Spirit of Jehovah began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.* It was here where God the Holy Spirit began to take a direct and active part in the life of Samson. It was here where Samson was finally laid to rest.

A question which is apropos here: *who wrote this?* There were dozens of incidents in the life of Samson which were worth retelling. Samson, I am sure, told these things often. Despite all of his many faults, he was a one-man army against the Philistines. He was a constant thorn in their side. Therefore, the things which he said and did were recorded by someone—possibly even himself, although that is not said. With respect to his death, it is highly unlikely that Samson pre-wrote this. What makes more sense is that his brothers, when they came for his body, also asked around to determine the circumstances of his death. In fact, they probably did not just show up unannounced, but some of the surviving Philistines probably called for them, realizing that, given what Samson did to them, it was probably not a good idea to keep him around, even as a dead man. We have several instances of positive volition toward Jehovah God of Israel in Philistia, and it would be reasonable for a man to be at this event, see all of these people killed by one man, and recognize that God was behind it all. Such a man would call for Samson's family and relay the story of his death as well. Samson's brothers (or some other family member) might have been inspired to write down a short biography of the things which Samson did, from his birth to his death.

One of the great contrasts of the Bible is the difference between the end of Samson and of King Saul. Both were enemies of the Philistines and both died in hostilities against the Philistines. Saul took his own life when retreating from the Philistines in battle—Saul committed suicide. Samson also took his life, but in the context of taking the lives of the degenerate Philistines in the temple of Dagon (if that is, in fact, where they were). Samson gave his life for Israel; Saul took his own life because he did not want to die at the hands of the Philistines. Samson's family was able to come and collect his body in peace; Saul's body was desecrated by the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:8–10). The primary difference between the final ends of the two men was that Samson had killed enough of the enemy, so that when his family came to collect Samson's body, there was no organized opposition to them. Samson had killed almost all of the nobles and generals, as most had attended the celebration of his capture. A skeleton crew remained on at the other Philistine cities in order to run things.

The very last phrase is unusual. The writer has already told us in Judges 15:20 that Samson had judged Israel for twenty years. It is unclear as to why this is said again. There are two possible reasons that I can come up with. The first, is that the two chapters were written by different people. Each person ended with the honor which was bestowed upon Samson, which was to judge Israel—any position of authority is a great honor to a believer or, for that matter, to an unbeliever, and it should be undertaken with great humility and dedication. Samson had several spectacular moments in his life, and there were many things from his life which were worth remembering and retelling. However, only two of the spectacular moments of Samson's life stand out as doing him great honor. At the end of Judges 15, he recognizes and honors Jesus Christ for delivering him as he had. The result of this recognition was a position of authority in Israel—Samson became a judge over Israel for twenty years. At the end of this chapter, he also recognized the source of his strength and his hope, and called upon Christ Jesus again. His death was honorable, and his position of honor is mentioned again.

One of the things which we should examine in this chapter which concludes Samson's life, are the parallels between Samson and our Lord Jesus Christ. Often, when Old Testament guys are praised in the New Testament, the key is not just what they did with their lives, but that parallels which could be drawn between instances in their lives and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ (the great sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham is a prime example of this).

³¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 389.

Samson	Jesus Christ
The mother of Samson had not bore any children prior to the birth of Samson (Judges 13:2).	Mary, the mother of the humanity of our Lord, was a virgin at His birth (Matt. 1:25).
The Angel of Jehovah appeared to the mother of Samson and prophesied his birth (Judges 13:3).	The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would bear a child (Luke 1:26–31).
The Angel of Jehovah told the parents of Samson that he would begin to deliver his people from the Philistines (Judges 16:5).	The Angel of the Lord predicted that the Lord Jesus would deliver His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).
Samson was dedicated to Jehovah from his womb (Judges 13:5).	Our Lord's destiny was told to Mary even prior to conception (Luke 1:31–33).
The Angel told the mother of Samson that he was to live a life separated to God (Judges 13:4–5).	Our Lord's destiny was told to Mary even prior to conception (Luke 1:31–33).
Manoah, the father of Samson, was not contacted at first. All contact, at the beginning, was between Samson's mother and the Angel of Jehovah (Judges 13:3–11).	Whereas Mary knew of the coming birth, Joseph was kept in the dark for awhile (Matt. 1:18–20).
The Angel of Jehovah eventually did appear to Manoah, the father of Samson and confirm the birth of Samson (Judges 13:11).	The Angel of the Lord did eventually appear to Joseph, the legal (but not paternal) father of our Lord (Matt. 1:20–21).
The Angel of Jehovah foretold the manner of the life of Samson (Judges 13:3–5, 13–14).	The Angel of the Lord also predicted the manner of our Lord's life (Matt. 1:21).
Manoah was treated, at first, as though he had no part in the birth or raising of Samson (Judges 13:12–14).	Mary was the mother of the humanity of our Lord. Joseph was not the father (Matt. 1:25).
Samson was born during a time when Israel was under the subjection of the Philistines (Judges 13:1).	Our Lord was born during a time when Israel was under subjection to the Romans (Matt. 2:1, 16 Luke 1:5 2:1–3).
The Angel of Jehovah did not appear to Manoah and his wife after the birth of Samson (Judges 13:21).	After the birth of Jesus, the Angel of the Lord, no longer appeared to Israel for the simple fact that Jesus Christ was the Angel of the Lord. Once He was incarnated, then there was no reason for Him to assume some other form in order to appear to man.
Samson was blessed by God early on in life (Judges 13:24).	Our Lord kept increasing in wisdom and he found grace in the sight of men and God (Luke 2:52).
Samson was stirred by the Holy Spirit early in life (Judges 13:25).	Jesus was guided by the Spirit early on in His life (Luke 2:41–49 ³² 4:1).
Samson, when he appeared to be at his weakest and most helpless, was, in fact the most effective moment of his life (Judges 16:21–30).	Our Lord, when He appeared to be at His weakest and most helpless, was when He accomplished His greatest work on this earth—our eternal salvation (Matt. 27:27–50 28:20 Heb. 9:14 II Peter 2:24)

³² This is by implication.

Samson	Jesus Christ
Samson gave his life to defeat the enemies of Israel (Judges 16:30).	Our Lord gave His life in order to break the back of Satan, our chief enemy (Heb. 2:14 I John 3:8 Rev. 1:17–18).
Samson gave his life, which was a beginning to the deliverance (or, salvation) of Israel (Judges 13:5 16:30).	Our Lord gave His life for the salvation of the many (Matt. 20:28 Eph. 5:2 I Thess. 5:10).

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McGee also did a very short comparison of our Lord and Samson; but then he also contrasts them, and I will give that in table form below:³³

Samson	Jesus Christ
Samson lived a life of sin.	Jesus' life was sinless.
Samson at the time of death prayed, "O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."	Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
In death, Samson's arms were outstretched in wrath.	In death, Jesus' arms were outstretched in love.
Samson died, that many might die with him.	Jesus died, that many might live eternally.
Samson died.	Jesus Christ lives!

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There are also parallels between Samson and the nation Israel.

Samson	Israel
Chosen even prior to birth to serve God.	Israel was chosen in Abraham to serve God.
Chosen as a matter of the spirituality of his parents.	Israel was chosen because of the spirituality of Abraham.
Had a few victories in his life, but Samson was essentially a spiritual failure.	Israel enjoyed a few victories in her existence, but was essentially a spiritual failure
Samson was blind near the end of his life.	Israel suffers from spiritual blindness, from several hundred years prior to the cross until today.
At the end, Samson returned to Jehovah, the God of Israel.	In the end times, Israel will return to Jehovah, their God—Christ Jesus of the New Testament.

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³³ Taken from J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 202 and expanded upon.

We need to take a look at Samson from a distance. Had he been your favorite Bible hero prior to this study, he certainly is not now. How does someone like Samson even fit into God's plan—a petty, violent man who continually gave way to his old sin nature? First of all, recall that Samson had been set apart for God's plan and God's plan would be accomplished regardless of Samson's behavior. Secondly, Israel had become quite complacent with regards to the Philistines within their land. When Samson stirred up trouble between the Israelites and the Philistines, the Israelites were the ones who complained to Samson (Judges 15:11). This indicates that, apart from Samson, Israel would have allowed the Philistines to overrun them and to rule over them, which is not God's plan. We will study the battles between the Philistines and the Israelites during the reigns of Saul and David and see how powerful and well-organized the Philistines were. Apart from Samson's removing a large segment of the Philistine population, Philistine may have been too strong for Israel (we will find that God's mode of deliverance, as time goes on, becomes seemingly more and more confined to natural laws). Therefore, Samson played an important role in the plan of God, despite his lack of character and devotion.

Let me close with a quote from Zodhiates: *Samson...was selected before birth as the one who would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). God gave him superhuman strength to achieve this, but Samson's whole life was filled with compromise in his repeated refusal to control his sensual desires and whims. His physical blinding by the Philistines...seemingly brought about the opening of his spiritual eyes; for he gave his life for his people, and is included with the "heroes of faith" in the New Testament (Heb. 11:32). His last act of killing the Philistines' leader did more to defeat them than all his earlier conquests combined.*³⁴

This brings us to a close of this portion of the book of the Judges. Recall, that this book is broken down into an introduction (the first two or two and a half chapters); a chronological listing of the judges and their lives (with some overlap; from Judges 3–16); and the next few chapters will chronicle some incidents taken from this time period, which give us great insight into the psyche of the people of Israel during this time.

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³⁴ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 684.