

## Judges Chapter 16 Part 3

Today, we will go on a short detour before we get into the study of the book of Judges.

As I study in preparation for lessons on interpreting the Old Testament there are gems from authors that are worth sharing now. Here is one from Francis Foulkes. He gave a lecture at Cambridge in July 1955 on “The Acts of God.” <http://ffoulkes.org/actsof/sect1.html>, Also at [https://mail.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/acts\\_of\\_god\\_foulkes.pdf](https://mail.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/acts_of_god_foulkes.pdf)

“One of the deepest convictions that the prophets and historians of Israel had about the God in whom they trusted, and whose word they believed they were inspired to utter, was that He was not like the gods of other nations, whose actions were totally unpredictable, who had to be appeased by sacrifice when things went wrong, and under whose rule the people could never know what would happen next. They believed that He had not left them in ignorance of His nature and purpose. Rather He had revealed Himself to them, and had shown Himself to be a God who acted according to principles, principles that would not change as long as the sun and moon endured. They could assume, therefore, that as He had acted in the past, He could and would act in the future. By such an assumption the whole of the Old Testament is bound together and given unity. Men may be fickle and unfaithful, but He does not change. He dwells in the midst of His people and always cares for them. Each succeeding generation could know that He would be with them as He had been with their fathers. He keeps His word and His promise to a thousand generations. For to Him the passing of time is not as it is to men. It produces no change in Him; He was at the beginning and He will be at the end, and He is in the whole course of history in between.”

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“All the action of God in the Old Testament history foreshadows His unique action and revelation in Christ.”

Jesus used events and people in the Old Testament to illustrate and explain His life on earth.

**Matthew 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”**

**Matthew 12:39 But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;**

**Matthew 12:40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

Note that Jesus is setting up a comparison between what happened to Jonah and what will happen to Jesus. The same kind of thing. An example. A pattern. It is to explain so that those listening would understand what was going to happen. But He is using the Old Testament events to establish this pattern that He then applies to Himself.

**Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.**

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**Matthew 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.**

Here Jesus is making another comparison. Jesus compares Himself and by implication His wisdom to Solomon and his wisdom. And Jesus is greater.

Some of what I teach has the purpose of convincing you of the Bible's integrity. You should have confidence in the validity, veracity and the integrity of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. The "fabric of Scripture" indicates that they are "coherent." It everywhere agrees with itself. The Scriptures also give comfort. When I was a child my mother, who was an unbeliever, had me memorize Psalm 22 because of the comfort it could give. You can read Isaiah 40:1 and hear God say, "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.

**Luke 24:27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He (Jesus) explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

Now let us return to the book of Judges and attempt to finish chapter 16.

Three times Samson has deceived Delilah. The first two times Philistines were in another room in Delilah's house. The third time, there is no mention of the Philistines. They may have said, call us when you have really figured out what makes him weak.

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**Judges 16:15 Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is.”**

Indeed. Samson doesn't really love her. He is infatuated with her. His emotion is overflowing. But there is no real connection between Samson and Delilah. He doesn't trust her. Indeed, she has demonstrated three times that she cannot be trusted. And apparently, he liked the game. It may have given him an adrenaline rush. He may have participated in the binding. “Make sure you pull the cords tight. You wouldn't want me to be able to wiggle out of this.”

**Judges 16:16 It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.**

**Urged him.** It can mean urged. But this is an intensive word. According to Biblehub, this is the only place in the Old Testament that this word is used. So, looking at the LXX translation, the Greek word can mean pressed against, irritate, annoyed. Essentially she interrogated him. There is no love on her part. If this is a love story, then it is a sad love story. She is using him without regard for him. She only cares about the information about him. Once she extracts that information, she walks away with thousands of “shekels” of silver (worth millions of dollars) in her possession. It is slightly reminiscent of Judas Ischariot and Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus for only 30 pieces of silver such that he is crucified. Delilah betrays Samson such that he dies. Yet, there is a strange irony when this all goes down. Thousands of Philistines die as well. What happened when Samson's wife extracts information from him? He ends up killing 30 Philistines and destroying the Philistine crops just before

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being harvested. So the Philistines kill her and her father. Here there are no Philistines left with any intention to kill Delilah. But some in her shoes might take the first ship to Tarshish. Did she have a conscience? She is responsible for killing thousands. It is possible that when the Philistines had their great celebration at the house of Dagon she might have been invited as a guest of honor, in which case she would have died when the temple collapsed. We don't know for sure what happened to her because the text does not say. Once they Philistines take possession of Samson, her involvement in the story is over.

**Judges 16:17 So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man.”**

**If I am shaved.** This is intensive. It is passive. It can mean to make bald. The picture here in context is that “if someone were to shave all my hair off so that I am bald...”

**Nazirite to God.** Here is the key element. He is dedicated to God. He knows this. Yet, he does not act in accordance with that dedication. Such a dedication requires humility toward God instead of arrogance.

**Like any other man.** In verses 7 and 11 Samson uses the term “one” man. It should be in verse 13 and is in the Greek of the LXX, but not in the Masoretic text. Here he changes it to “each” or “any.” Here he has told her the truth. And here he changes it to “any.”

**Judges 16:18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying,**

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**“Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands.**

On the third try, the Philistines were absent. They were tired of false starts. But now she reassures the Philistines. “I have the real info. I am sure.” Now they believe her.

**Judges 16:19 She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him.**

Samson is arrogant and has been lulled into a sense of security such that he falls asleep once again as he did on the third try above with his hair woven by a loom. He had not considered that anyone could shave his hair even while he was asleep.

**She made him sleep.** This word is a bit unusual. It is intensive. But it is not in the causative as the translation seems to suggest. Yet, in context that is what is exactly what is meant. In context, I would translate this as “she caused him to go into a deep sleep.” If he was a light sleeper, he would have awakened as soon as someone tried to shave off his hair. The text does not say how she caused him to go to sleep. Perhaps there was a sleep potion she put in his food. When he was playing his game he didn’t dream (pun intended) she would do something like this. Ordinarily, when someone played a trick on him, he used his great strength to extract vengeance. But now he has been deprived of his strength. He is defenseless. It is the Philistine’s turn to exact vengeance on him. Yet, behind the scenes, God is at work setting up the Philistines for the biggest fall to this point.

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**She called.** Here is another indication that she had caused a deep sleep to come over him. She had to raise her voice to call a man, a barber. Yet, she did not wake Samson.

**She began to afflict him.** Here is confirmation that she did not love him. The Philistines used this word to describe what they wanted to do to Samson. Delilah used this word to describe what the Philistines wanted to do to Samson. But here, she herself begins to do it, to afflict him, herself. Here, she not only engages in afflicting him, she must have some perverse satisfaction in humbling him. Interesting that this action comes before he wakes up. We do not know how she afflicted him.

Up to this point, Samson has acted arrogantly, full of pride. But now that he is afflicted (remember it is a double entendre with “humble”) he is to be pitied. Here is a believer who operated not on faith but upon reliance on his human strength gifted to him by the Holy Spirit. He has abused the power given to him. Now that he is weak, it is sad to see him being afflicted. So it goes with believers who get into a constant dependence upon their own strengths. And when they are humbled, their enemies afflict them.

**Judges 16:20 She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord (Yahweh) had departed from him.**

**He did not know.** He had been in a deep sleep.

**Shake myself free.** He has not been tied up. It appears there is a lingering effect from the deep sleep or the drug that Delilah gave him. He is apparently disoriented.

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**The Lord had departed from him.** It was possible in the Old Testament to lose the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And so, the author tells us that the Lord Yahweh, in this case, the Holy Spirit, left him. Please do not confuse this with salvation. Samson is still saved. But the Holy Spirit and his gift of strength has been removed.

Reminds me of that riddle in “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,” “Only the penitent man will pass.”

**Judges 16:21 Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.**

Previously, Delilah is said to have “afflicted” Samson. The Philistines are not said to afflict him. No, but in the typical Hebrew style, the text describes the affliction of the Philistines upon Samson.

**Seized him.** Seized him is OK. But this could also be like “they captured him.” This word has been used previously in the book of Judges in this type of context.

**Judges 1:6 6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught (our word) him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.**

**Judges 12:5 The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim. And it happened when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,”**



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**Judges 12:6 then they would say to him, “Say now, ‘Shibboleth.’” But he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized (our word) him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim.**

**Gouged out his eyes.** Meanings range from gouged out to burned out to plucked out to bore out. The end result is the same. This was done, not to kill him, but to cause great suffering and to be better able to control him. In order to channel his great strength against the Philistines, he needed to see them. Now he is weak and he cannot see. But, as sometimes happens to people who are being disciplined by God, the loss of something in their lives causes them to develop a spiritual eyesight they did not previously have.

**Bound him in bronze chains.** Previously Samson could not be bound. Now he has been captured by the Philistines and humbled by God. The various bindings that he easily escaped from have been replaced by two heavy bronze (chains). Actually, the word for “chains” is not in the text. Literally, it is “two bronzes.” The word for chains is in the Hebrew plural known as “dual.” It is a special plural to indicate “two.”

This is the same thing that happened to Zedekiah before being taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

**2 Kings 25:7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.**

In the ancient world, there was no Geneva Convention. The prisoners were treated however their captors wanted to treat them.

**Judges 16:22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.**

**Began to grow again.** The old Rabbi, teaching his teenage class, asks them if Samson's hair had anything to do with Samson's strength. If they answer no, then he would ask them, "What was the source of Samson's strength?" The answer is, of course, the Holy Spirit. So as his hair grows back, his arrogance disappears and he begins to understand the concept of humility before God. He changes from being an arrogant Nazirite to being a humble man.

When Samson dies, he does not have long hair. It is probably just "stubble."

**Judges 16:23 Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands."**

The entry from Biblegateway.com as well as from Merrill Unger say that Dagon was a Mesopotamian deity. Edward Hinson in his book on the Philistines, "The Philistines and the Old Testament," gives us this information about Dagon:

"Dagon was the Semitic grain deity whom the Philistines had borrowed from the Canaanites. Earlier commentators thought Dagon to be a fish deity (from the Hebrew dāg), but modern Semitic studies have shown "Dagon" to be derived from the word dāgān ("grain"). He was probably therefore, part of the fertility pantheon of the Canaanites. In Ugaritic literature he appears as the father of Baal."

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**Great sacrifice.** The word for sacrifice indicates just that: they are going to slaughter animals to Dagon. In a few instances, this word is used in a military context to slaughter the enemy:

**Jeremiah 46:10 For that day belongs to the Lord God of hosts, A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; And the sword will devour and be satiated And drink its fill of their blood; For there will be a slaughter (our word) for the Lord God of hosts, In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.**

The irony is that on that day, the slaughter will be of the Philistines.

**Judges 16:24 When the people saw him (Samson), they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hands, Even the destroyer of our country, Who has slain many of us.”**

**Our God...** The Philistines praise Dagon for giving Samson into their hands. But, because God was disciplining Samson for his arrogance and also because God wanted to put someone in the Philistine camp to destroy it, He had orchestrated this. The wording is similar to the phrases used of Israel’s God giving their enemies into their hands. But the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has them right where He wants them. A single man, Samson, will kill thousands of Philistines as if he was an army in battle.

God works all things together for good... 1) Samson had to learn humility and this was the only way God could do that, 2) As a result, he is blessed eternally because he used his faith and is now in the list of Old

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Testament faith heroes (Hebrews chapter 11), 3) God accomplishes through Samson the beginning of the delivery of Israel from the Philistines, 4) Israel may have begun to understand that Yahweh was a jealous God and they belonged to him 5) This leads to the rise of Samuel, king Saul and king David.

**Destroyer of our country.** “Country” is literally “land.” Destroyer is explained by Gary Kukis. “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.”

**Who has slain many of us.** Literally who multiplied (or increased) our slain.

These are not idle words or just general descriptions of Samson’s “crimes.” Both of these actions were documented in chapter 15. He destroyed their land when he burned with fire their crops which were ready to be harvested. Then he killed at least 1,000 Philistine men. The way this is worded here in chapter 16 is consistent with a military encounter.

**Judges 16:25 It so happened when they were in high spirits, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may amuse us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.**

**High spirits.** Literally “heart (is) good/glad.”

**Amuse us/entertained them.** Both of these words, from different roots, mean to laugh. They are both intensive. The second word is where Isaac

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gets his name. In this context, they want Samson to act in such a manner so they can mock him because he has lost his strength and they want to laugh at him. This is perhaps the worst thing you can do to an arrogant person, make fun of them. Yet, there is nothing from a human perspective that Samson can do. Gary Kukis provided a word picture of this event.

“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.”

**Prison.** It is interesting that this is two words in the Hebrew: house of prisoners or prison house. In the entire Samson narrative, we never see Samson in his own house. He was in his parents’ house, his father-in-law’s house, in the house of the prostitute and now in a house of prisoners. Soon, he will be in another house, the house (of Dagon).

**Stand between the pillars.** The verb for stand and the noun for pillar come from the same Hebrew root word. A very literal translation might be, “they caused him to pillar between the pillars. The verb can also mean to stand up or take one’s stand. The Philistines placed him between pillars to make fun of him, yet spiritually, he is about to make his stand, his last stand which will result in their deaths. Another double entendre?

**Judges 16:26 Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, “Let me feel the**

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**pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.”**

**Boy.** This is the same word used of Samson in chapter 13 when he was given the task, before birth, of starting to deliver Israel from the Philistines. This boy will help Samson realize the task that he was given as a boy.

**Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy (this is our word) shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”**

Here the reference to the boy takes us back to the beginning to remind us of Samson as a boy with a task. Now that task will be completed.

**Judges 16:27 Now the house (it is referred to as “house” not a “temple”) 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 them.**

**House.** This is the word for house, not temple. Since this does not say “temple” is this just a public building like a theater? Here is Gary Kuki’s take on this:

“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

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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.”

**All the lords of the Philistines.** All five of the lords of the Philistines are present. So these lords will die and be replaced by other men like Goliath. Interesting irony. Ordinary men are replaced by “giant” strongmen, the Philistine response to Samson. Goliath, the giant strongman, will be taken down by an “ordinary” man, David. Irony!

**Roof.** This is the roof. This is something I did not expect. A roof of a temple might have been made of wood. This is perhaps another indication that this was not a temple but some kind of theater or coliseum with a roof. The suggestion is that it was a building used for “spectacles.”

**Judges 16:28 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.”**

Avenged. This is actually two words which emphasizes the action. The Young’s Literal Translation puts it this way, “I am avenged -- vengeance at once.”

**Judges 16:29 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.**

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**Judges 16:30 And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.**

**Judges 16:31 Then his brothers and all his father’s household came down, took him, brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years.**

**Took him.** Curious. His family heard what happened, went to Gaza, sorted through the rubble to find his body so they could bury him. There is obviously a more detailed story involved here.



Tomb of Samson (from Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samson>)

Here is another historical marker that points to the fact that this narrative really happened.