

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Why, Why, Why, Delilah?”

JUDGES 15 & 16

Introduction

Not too many girls named Delilah... Or boys named Samson, for that matter. If you don't know why, you will after tonight.

Samson had just gotten married not to Delilah, but to a Philistine woman who caught his eye in the city of Timnah. His wedding feast ended with his new wife betraying his riddle to the invited guests. While he was off in a furious rage, hacking-up Philistines, his wife was given to his best man:

Judges 14:20 And Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, who had been his best man.

I don't want to defend or justify his wife's actions. But we can learn from the situation. Let's review Samson's relationship with his wife:

1. Samson had not cut the cord with his parents and fully committed himself to the marriage.
2. He kept secrets from his new wife.
3. His attraction to her was mostly surface and physical. They spent no time getting to know one another.
4. After she was terrorized into betraying the answer to his riddle, he called her a **heifer**.
5. He went off in a rage.

It's not hard to see why she would prefer the company of another man.

Judges 15:1 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into *her* room." But her father would not permit him to go in.

Samson hadn't seen her at all for quite some time. He showed up with a gift thinking he'd go in and have sex with her. He's pretty dense and very selfish.

Judges 15:2 Her father said, “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.”

Other people can tell a lot about how you really feel towards your spouse by how you treat them. Samson’s father-in-law was a just man and was willing to give Samson his younger daughter – presumably as a wife.

Samson refused to take any blame for his failed marriage:

Judges 15:3 And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!”

Judges 15:4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails.

Judges 15:5 When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.

This is an amazing piece of vandalism. A note: the word for *foxes* could be translated *jackals*. The Philistine crop and harvest was ruined.

Judges 15:6 Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they answered, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Talk about holding parents accountable! In this case, they held the in-laws accountable.

What the Philistines did was wrong. Still, it reminds us that our failures at home affect others. People say, “We’re getting a divorce because it’s better for our kids to not see us fight.” **It would be better to stay married and not fight!**

Judges 15:7 Samson said to them, “Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease.”

Judges 15:8 So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

Hip and thigh is apparently a graphic expression. Samson destroyed those guys. He cleaned their clock; he wiped them out.

Judges 15:9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi.

Judges 15:10 And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

Judges 15:11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?"

And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."

Judges 15:12 But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines."

Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

Judges 15:13 So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Oppression seemed a better risk than hoping Samson would be willing to fight for them. After all, up until now, everything he did was for selfish motives. Maybe they should have tried to counsel Samson to realize his potential.

Samson shows his faith in God by allowing himself to be bound. He evidently believed that God's Spirit would come upon him and give him a great victory.

Judges 15:14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands.

Judges 15:15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.

The Philistines were the most advanced metalworkers of their day. They had the very finest weaponry. Their weapons meant nothing to God. In Judges chapter three, Shamgar killed 600 of them with an ox goad; here, 1,000 were killed with the jawbone of a donkey; later on, David would slay their fierce champion, Goliath, with one smooth stone.

God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; the weak to overcome the strong. He wants it made known that it was not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit.

A political comment: I'm glad we are the world's superpower. But we need to look to God, or else our weaponry is useless.

Judges 15:16 Then Samson said:

“With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men!”

Judges 15:17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

The poetry of verse sixteen is something like, *With the jawbone of an ass, I have piled them in a mass*. OK, so Samson was not a gifted poet!

One commentator says the name **Ramath Lehi** means, *Jawbone Heights*. He was more of a humorist or satirist!

Judges 15:18 Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”

Judges 15:19 So God split the hollow place that *is* in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

Judges 15:20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

There's always too much flesh in Samson – even when he's calling upon the Lord. He was over-worried about his thirst. God would provide for him.

This is a high point in the story. Samson gave God the glory. He went on to judge Israel for twenty relatively peaceful years. Samson had a real love for God. We hesitate to say it because it sounds like we're condoning his sin. We're not.

Judges 16:1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

Note to self: **Don't go to Gaza!** Wherever you might be tempted... *Don't go there!* I'm not talking necessarily about a location on the map, but something in your life that is a weakness.

Judges 16:2 *When the Gazites were told, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him."*
Judges 16:3 *And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.*

In the middle of the night, Samson was empowered to uproot the gates and walk right through the ambushers. He walked a distance of 38 miles, with a 3,000 foot rise in elevation, carrying these heavy gates.

Judges 16:4 *Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.*

Judges 16:5 *And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."*

Sorek was the Napa Valley of the region – a wine area. Wine and women had not prevented him from being God's Judge. Delayed discipline can make us think God will never act.

Judges 16:6 *So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you."*

Judges 16:7 *And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*

Judges 16:8 *So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.*

Judges 16:9 *Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.*

Samson loved to play games. **Don't play games with God; or on God's time.**

Judges 16:10 *Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."*

Judges 16:11 *So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*

Judges 16:12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

Samson consents to being bound, thinking he could break free at any time. This is how sin fools us. We dabble with it, thinking we are handling it – not realizing we are becoming its slave.

Judges 16:13 Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with.”

And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom”

Judges 16:14 So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

Samson may have invented dreadlocks! For the first time, he mentions something that at least connects with the source of his power. It’s not the hair itself, but the Nazarite vow to never cut the hair.

Weaving it isn’t cutting it... But Samson was getting closer-and-closer to total slavery to sin, all the while thinking he could walk away any time.

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

Love? Who said anything about love? I’m amazed at how quickly people fall in and out of love. They can do so because it is all on a physical and emotional level. It’s a selfishness that should not be compared to real love.

Judges 16:16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death,

Judges 16:17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

Judges 16:18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.” So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.

Judges 16:19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.

Judges 16:20 And she said, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

Samson was lured, then lulled. Sin creates its own atmosphere which, when breathed long enough, dulls our spiritual senses. He couldn't tell that the Lord was no longer empowering him.

Samson touched grapes, and nothing seemed to happen. In fact, God went on using him. He touched a carcass, and nothing seemed to happen. In fact, God went on using him. He might have thought that he could break the third vow and have the same result.

God's ways – especially His timing – are not like ours. Better to believe Him on principle; take God at face value; than to begin to reason for ourselves about His delays.

The next verse puts sin into perspective:

Judges 16:21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

First, sin blinds. Long before the Philistines put out his eyes, Samson was blind to the consequences of his sin.

Second, sin binds. It holds captive.

Third, sin grinds. We talk about life being a 'grind,' and this is where the expression comes from. Samson was just going around in circles, day-in and day-out, no better than an ox.

People would like you to believe that sin frees you to become better, but the opposite is true. Sin reduces you to the level of the animal.

God's grace is sufficient – *even when you sin!*

Judges 16:22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

Note to the jailer: When was the last time Samson went to the barber? It seems odd they wouldn't keep him bald!

They probably thought that since Samson had sinned, God was through with him. They didn't believe Samson's God would restore him and use him.

We are sometimes like that. Someone sins and we sort of believe they may have repented; but we don't think they can ever really be used by God in the same way. Especially if they were a minister... Or missionary.

I'm not suggesting we take grace lightly; but that we see how strong it really is. And notice that, although Samson was forgiven, he went through a season of grinding – the natural consequences of his sin.

Judges 16:23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands
Samson our enemy!”

Judges 16:24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy,
The destroyer of our land,
And the one who multiplied our dead.”

“Our god's better than your God,” was their chant. The world seems to have no need for God, and no fear of God. If He's mentioned, it is in a derogatory way; or to establish blame for allowing suffering.

The suffering you need to consider is God's longsuffering. It's the reason He waits.

Judges 16:25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars.

Judges 16:26 Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.”

Judges 16:27 Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there - about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

Samson's hair had returned... Then his heart for God... Now, his hope in God.

Judges 16:28 Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"

Judges 16:29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left.

Judges 16:30 Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

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

You can start out strong, and finish poorly; or start out weak, but finish strong. Better to start out and stay strong – as you depend upon the Lord to strengthen you, instead of depending upon your own strength.

Conclusion

There are a couple of things we might say about Samson's death.

1. Was it suicide? Not really – because he was involved in a struggle against God's enemies – a battle in which life could be lost. I do want to say this about suicide: It is selfish and awful, but it is not an unpardonable sin.
2. It's been suggested by some that Samson need not have died – that God would have granted him his life had he asked for it. That's a position that cannot be proven or disproven. It is interesting that so often people feel as though they cannot really be used anymore once they've sinned. It affects their prayers. You need to know that God forgives to the uttermost.