

***“Open Up that Gaza Gate,
Hill of Hebron Here I Come!”***

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

Jdg 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.”

Jdg 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.

“Not my finest hour, but a man’s gotta go to work,”
Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson posted on Instagram.

“We experienced a power outage due to severe storms, causing my front gate not to open. I tried to override the hydraulic system to open the gates, which usually works when power goes out - but this time it wouldn’t.

“Made some calls to see how fast I can get the gate tech on site, but I didn’t have 45 minutes to wait,” he continued. “By this time, I know I have hundreds of production crew members waiting for me to come to work so we can start our day. So I did what I had to do. I pushed, pulled and ripped the gate completely off myself. Tore it out of the brick wall, severed the steel hydraulics and threw it on the grass.”

“The Rock” would be on any short-list to portray Samson on screen. The fact that they both had an encounter with a gate might give him the edge over other muscle-bound leads.

There have been remarkably few feature films about Samson, but in every one of them the lead is a muscled guy:

- 1949 *Samson & Delilah*. A buff Victor Mature was the hero.
- 2013 *The Bible* mini-series. Nonso Anozie, 6’ 6,” 280 pounds.
- 2018 *Samson*. You never heard of it. It is a PureFlix production. It received a 25% TomatoMeter score on Rotten Tomatoes. Taylor James starred, all 6’ 2½” of him.

Who would you cast as Samson? I'd cast Jason Alexander

Yes, George Castanza from Seinfeld.

It's simple, really. The Philistines were constantly puzzled as to the source of Samson's strength. If he looked like Nonso Anozie or The Rock his great strength would have been attributed to long days spent at Planet Fitness.

Further, his average build explains why when he finally gave up the secret of his strength to Delilah, Samson was unaware that he was powerless.

The episode in Gaza simultaneously shows the power of God and the pull of the flesh. The same power by which Samson performed feats of strength was available for him to put to death his flesh.

It is the power of the Holy Spirit and He is available to us.

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

Gaza was deep in Philistine territory and one of its major cities. Commentators are all over the place on why Samson “went to Gaza,” and if he should be there at all.

Regardless his many failings, Samson was Israel’s judge and champion. There is something interesting about Gaza that might have drawn him there. We’re told in Joshua 11:22, “None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.”

The Anakim were Nephilim. They were the giant cannibals we read about in Genesis who were the offspring of fallen angels mating with women.

We did a series here at Mid-Week on *The Days of Noah*. You should check it out.

I don’t want to get sidetracked by the Nephilim, but there is one question we should answer. How could there be Nephilim in Israel after the global flood wiped them out? I can see only two possibilities:

1. The flood was local, not global, allowing Nephilim to survive. We reject that. Noah’s

flood was global, wiping out humans and Nephilim. After all, that was the point.

2. Fallen angels once again co-habited with human females and produced offspring who were Nephilim. The argument against is that the Bible doesn't specifically say they did. Since the flood was global, and there were giants in the land, it is the only solution I can see.

The Nephilim were concentrated in Israel. I suggest it was a satanic strategy to reintroduce Nephilim in order to interfere with the Israelites possessing the Holy Land.

It worked. At least, it worked on the first generation of Jews to exodus Egypt.

Num 13:25 And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

Num 13:26 Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

Num 13:27 Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit.

Num 13:28 Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.

Num 13:29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”

Num 13:31 ... the men... said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we.”

Num 13:32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature.

Num 13:33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Giants lived in the Promised Land until eradicated in the days of King David.

Perhaps Samson went to Gaza to confront these giants. He was, after all, Israel's hero.

Dug the dog in the Pixar film, *Up*, can talk through his electronic collar. As he's talking, he will yell out, "*Squirrel!*" when he is momentarily distracted by one running by. He loses his train of thought afterwards.

Whatever Samson's reasons for going to Gaza, he sees a prostitute and his hormones yell "*Girl!*"

If this were a psalm, the writer might have inserted a *Selah* - Stop & think about it.

What are my weaknesses? What are yours? Those thoughts and behaviors that seem to best you. Maybe you've come to think that you can't overcome them.

God the Holy Spirit can obliterate them. He can carry them away the way Samson dealt with the Gaza Gates.

Jdg 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.”

The Gazites are not our example in this text, but that doesn't mean we can't learn something from them. There was no point in waiting; no point in putting off the confrontation until the next day.

We tend to put-off dealing with our weaknesses. Our sins. It's a silly example, but when you decide you're going to go on a diet, do you overindulge the night before?

The overnight wait could only heighten the fears of the Gazites as they had time to contemplate the confrontation.

Jdg 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.

Samson opted to check-out of the brothel early. The gates of the city would have been locked and guarded.

He picked them up and carried them off like they were a backpack

I read a scholarly paper on the Gates of Gaza. Using the excavated gates of other known cities as a model, the author estimated, conservatively, that the gates could have weighed anywhere from five tons to ten tons. *That's upwards of twenty thousand pounds.*

J.R.R. Tolkein had a way with the written word. He described a magnificent battering ram:

Great engines crawled across the field; and in the midst was a huge ram, great as a forest-tree a hundred feet in length, swinging on mighty chains. Long had it been forging in the dark smithies of Mordor, and its hideous head, founded of black steel, was shaped in the likeness of a ravening wolf; on it spells of ruin lay. Grond they named it, in memory of the Hammer of the Underworld of old. Great beasts drew it, orcs surrounded it, and behind walked mountain-trolls to wield it.

In the movie, it took Grond a little while to finally splinter the gates of Gondor.

- Samson didn't break through the gates, splintering them and busting through like Grond.
- He didn't throw them to the ground and walk off like The Rock.

He came to the gates and picked them up as if they were a balsa wood prop on a movie set.

Then he walked at least eighteen hours carrying them an estimated forty miles to Hebron, some of it uphill.

It was an incredible physical feat. It's no wonder that none of those who lie in wait dared to challenge him.

That power was equally available to him to overcome his flesh and walk in holiness

It might be fantastic to be able to perform physical feats of strength. How much better to yield yourself to the indwelling Holy Spirit and walk in victory over your sins.

One final thought, for you to meditate upon.

Jesus said that He would obliterate some gates

Jesus once said that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18). It is easy to misread what He said. Jesus wasn't saying that Hell, literally Hades, was on the offensive. Gates are not a weapon; they are a defense.

Don't get me wrong: The church most certainly is involved in spiritual warfare. Our enemy goes about like a roaring lion; he has darts and arrows; he sets traps and utilizes lures; he creates obstacles.

In the Gates of Hades passage, Jesus was announcing His total victory over the supernatural realm. He would die on the Cross, then rise from the dead. He would thus crash the Gates of Hades.

Before His resurrection, the souls of all the deceased - both the righteous and the unrighteous - went to Hades to await resurrection. You remember from the story of the Rich Man & Lazarus that Hades was divided into two areas:

- One was a place of torment for the unrighteous.
- One was a place of comfort for the righteous.

There is a passage in the Book of Ephesians that scholars think involves Jesus and Hades.

Eph 4:8 Therefore He says: “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, AND GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.”

Eph 4:9 (Now this, “HE ASCENDED” - what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?)

It is likely that after His crucifixion but before His resurrection three days later Jesus was in Hades. When He rose from the dead, He set free the righteous souls in Hades, taking them with Him to Heaven to await their physical resurrection.

Jesus’ pronouncement about the Gates of Hades took place in Caesarea Philippi, situated near a mountainous region containing Mount Hermon.

According to one scholar,

In Jewish tradition, Mount Hermon was the location where the divine sons of God had descended from Heaven ultimately corrupting humankind via their offspring with human women. These offspring were known as Nephilim, ancestors of the Anakim and the Rephaim.

Jesus was declaring war on death and Hades. It was a war He won for us by resurrection from the dead.