

JUDGES 16

SAMSON – THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD



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All emphasis added are mine

Judges 16:1-2 Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. 2 The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, "Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him."

- Just like in Chapter 14, Samson is visiting a Philistine city.
- All the events of Chapters 14-15 were a result of: "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." (human perspective) and "His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines." (divine perspective).

Judges 16:3 But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

- Hebron – where Abram's name was changed to Abraham, where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were buried.

Judges 16:4-5 *After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver."*

- The word translated "loved" here has a wide semantic range, and is used:
 - Jacob loved Rachel (Gen 29:18)
 - Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons (Gen 37:3)
 - Jonathan's love for David – "he loved him as he loved his own soul" (1 Sam 20:17).
 - YHWH's love for Israel (1 Kings 10:19)
- But is also used of:
 - Absalom's love for Tamar (2 Sam 13:15)
 - Solomon's love of many foreign women (1 Kings 11:1)

Judges 16:6-9 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you." 7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

- Fresh bowstrings – could be animal tendons (LXX)

Judges 16:10-12 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound." 11 And he said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

Judges 16:13-14 *Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.*

- 1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Judges 16:15-16 *And 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 you have not told me where your great strength lies." 16 And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.*

- "she pressed him hard" (Timnite wife 14:17)

Judges 16:17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

- Nazirite to God from the womb –
 - Vow of being set apart for service to YWHW.
 - With this vow comes 3 prohibitions:
 - No wine, strong drink or any product of the vine.
 - No going near a dead body.
 - No haircuts.

Judges 16:18-20 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And 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 had left him.

- "If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we will certainly wake up in the hands of the Philistines." Matthew Henry
- Numbers 6:18 *And the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.*

Judges 16:21 And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison.

- Normally a job reserved for women or slaves
- Dagon – grain “god”

Judges 16:22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

- Hair – not his source of power, but a sign of it
- Numbers 6:9 *“And if any man dies very suddenly beside him and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it.*

Judges 16:23-25 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." 24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us." 25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars.

- No mention of Israel
- Personal sin and failure led to failure as a leader.
- Covenant curses from Deuteronomy 28 (for Israel):
 - Defeated before their enemies (v25)
 - Struck with blindness (v28)
 - Subject to forced labor (v33)
 - Exiled (v36)

Judges 16:26-27 And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." 27 Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

Judges 16:28 Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."

- *O Lord GOD* – Adonay Yhvh - O Sovereign YHWH
- 8th time used in Scripture:
 - 2X by Abraham in Genesis 15 right before YHWH makes a covenant with him.
 - 2X by Moses in Deuteronomy (once as he pleads with YHWH to be able to enter the promised land and once after the incident with the golden calf where he pleads with YHWH not to destroy the people of Israel).
 - 1X by Joshua as he pleads with YHWH after Israel is defeated at Ai.
 - 1X by Gideon after his encounter with the Angel of YHWH.

Judges 16:29-30 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. 30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.



The Philistine temple with pillar bases at Tell es-Safi/Gath. Photo: Bar Ilan University.

Judges 16:31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

- *Deuteronomy 30:1-3 “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, 2 and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.*

1 Corinthians 10:11-13 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Romans 6:11-12 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.