

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. (Judges 16:29)

Merciful Father, it is by your strength that we are able to face each new day. Help us to never lose our confidence in you, even when things around us are grim. Thank you for watching over us and protecting us from our enemies. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

During the time of the Judges, God raised up local leaders to defend the Israelites from their Canaanite enemies. Chief among them were the Philistines, with whom the proud and arrogant Samson spent his life in conflict, resulting in his death.

Read: Judges 16:4-31

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The historical books of Joshua and Judges include some of the most violent stories in Scripture. In modern terms, it would be considered an “R”-rated story — “for mature audiences only.” This is definitely the case in the story of Samson.

In Bible storybooks, Samson is often portrayed as a kind of “superhero” — the image of a man of faith who was strong and brave. The real Samson was not such a paragon of virtue. The Bible does say he had great strength, but it also describes him as an arrogant bully who caused trouble and conflict just for the fun of it.

Samson did not keep the peace, but provoked fights with the nearby Philistines. Often involved in affairs with foreign women — like Delilah in today's story — Samson's lack of self-control and belligerent attitude were what led to his demise.

Discussion Questions

1. The Israelites and Philistines were enemies. Why did Samson (an Israelite) let Delilah (a Philistine) get close to him? What did Samson want from her?
2. The Philistines saw this as an opportunity to get the advantage over Samson. What did they ask Delilah to do? What did they promise her?
3. Why did Samson lie and keep putting off Delilah's questions? According to verses 15-17, why did he finally give in and tell Delilah the source of his strength? Have you ever done something wrong because you stopped resisting?
4. Go back and read about Samson's origins in Judges 13:1-5. From what you see here, what does it mean to be a “Nazirite”? (Look this up online or in a Bible dictionary for further information.)
5. Do you know other stories from Samson's life? Why were the Philistines so angry with him? Skim through Judges 14-15. What impression do you get of Samson's personality and temperament?
6. Did Samson's strength come from his hair, or did it come from something else? After a self-centered life, at what point did Samson finally realize that he needed God (v. 28-31)?
7. Read Isaiah 40:28b-31. Whom does the prophet say is giver of true strength? In what ways is the strength described here more than just physical?
8. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. As Christians, why are we able to admit our own weaknesses, as Paul did here? Who was speaking to Paul in verse 9? On whom do we rely when we feel powerless? Why is this greater than any power we have on our own?