

Samson

I am Samson. You know me as a strong man, and I did have a well-developed body. Even when the supernatural strength was taken from me, I still did the work of an ox turning a grindstone. But it was not the natural gifts that made my contribution to the nation of Israel.

Manoah, my father, and my mother had no children when they were visited by an angel, who predicted a baby. Mom was not to drink alcohol, and neither was I for my entire life. Neither was I to cut my hair. This was the vow of a Nazirite, according to the Law of Moses.

My parents asked for more advice on how to raise me but that was all they were ever told. When I think about it, I probably was spoiled because they felt I had some important role to play, and I was an only child. I don't recall ever being denied any request. But that actually contributed to the big plan the LORD had.

I did experience a physical confirmation of the presence of the LORD while I was in Mahaneh Dan. Shortly after that, I was very attracted to a Philistine woman and asked for her despite my parents' pleas to find an Israelite wife. It did not end as I wanted but as the LORD wanted.

On the way for the first visit, together with my parents, a lion jumped out at me and I tore it apart as if it had been a small goat. That surprised even me! But my parents actually did not see it happen. When mom and dad gave their approval for the marriage, a second visit was arranged for the wedding.

On the way I passed by the carcass of the lion and in it was a colony of bees with honeycomb. I took some honey, ate it and gave to my parents who had not seen where it came from. At the groom's dinner, I gave a riddle to 30 of my guests, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." I made a wager that they could never solve it. They couldn't... until they cheated. They threatened my bride until she weaseled the secret out of me. The 30 came to collect their winnings, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Do I have a reason to stop trusting women?

I went off to kill 30 Philistines to get the 30 sets of clothing to pay off the bet. But when I came back to my bride, she had been given to my best man. Do I have reason to stop trusting Philistines? I came up with a very creative way to get back at them – I am not just strong and fast! I caught 300 foxes and tied them in twos by the tail and fastened a torch to each pair. It was actually hilarious to see them zigzagging through the fields and vineyards, spreading fire to everything. The Philistines did not appreciate the humor, of course. They burned my wife and her father.

Would you believe it? The next group to criticize me was my own countrymen who said I should not stir things up with our masters! They conspired to turn me over to the enemy. I cooperated because I had a plan. Pretending to be securely bound, arriving in the Philistines' camp, I broke the ropes. Then picking up the nearest tool I could find, the jawbone of a donkey, attacked and killed 1000 soldiers.

And if I doubted that the power came from the LORD, when I called for a drink, a spring burst forth. Did all this mean I was a "good person"? No, it didn't. I was an undisciplined man controlled by his emotions. I spent the night with a prostitute but got up early because of a plot to kill me at dawn. I then picked up the city gates and moved them to a hill.

You have all heard the name of Delilah. She was what I believe you now call a "honey trap." Well, I was caught, although I initially resisted. She begged over and over for the secret to my strength and instead of "just say no," I teased with false clues until I got perilously close to the truth – weave my braids into a loom.

Then finally I told her, cutting my hair would remove my strength. She waited until I was asleep, then called for help to shave my head and bind me. I awoke expecting to break the bonds but could not.

The power was not in the hair itself, but in the vow. Actually, it was in the LORD to whom the vow was made! It was the Nazarite covenant made with the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, to not cut my hair.

Yet this personal defeat led to the greatest victory of all. Yes, they put out my eyes and harnessed me to a grindstone as a spectacle for the common people to gawk at. I think I became “a destination.” But as they gathered to praise their god, Dagon, I prayed for a return of my strength. My hair had grown back, and the Philistines had not paid attention to the connection it had to my supernatural power. I prayed for revenge for my eyes, but the LORD gave strength for the honor of his name. I pushed down the pillars of the temple and probably killed 3000, as well as myself.

I was a Judge in Israel for 20 years, a flawed man who played his part in the greater struggle. Hardly noble even in self-sacrifice, but the man chosen, for his faults as well as his strengths. Believe it or not, I even got mentioned in the heroes of faith gallery! It is only by the grace of the LORD! But, of course, it always is.

Judges 13 – 16, Hebrews 11