

Episode: Promised Land Series No. 18

Narrator: Delilah

Primary Scriptures: Judges 13-16

Story Summary: The many stories about Samson

Location: Canaan

Time: c. 1406 BC The Israelites enter Canaan

c. 1209-1169 BC The rule of Deborah

c. 1075-1055 BC The rule of Samson

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Judges 13:1; 14:4; 15:15; 16:16

According to historians, the Sea Peoples left Crete and other islands of Greece and settled around the Mediterranean Sea. One of these groups settled on the coastal plain of Israel and became known as the Philistines. This happened before the time of Samson. By the time of Samson, the Philistines had total control of the coastal plain and had powerful cities, such as Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath.

The Philistines were able to protect the coastal plain with chariots, which worked well on the flat lands. The Israelites first encountered these types of chariots in Joshua 11. The Israelites were pushed eastward into the Judean hills and mountains. Between the coastal plain and the mountains was a buffer zone of six fertile valleys known as the Shephelah. During Samson's time, it appears the Philistines were either taking or already had control of the Shephelah. Judges 13:1 says all of this happened because the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord and he delivered them into the hands of the Philistines.

Virtually all of the land controlled by the Philistines had been taken from the tribe of Dan. In fact, Dan controlled very little land in the time of Samson. The other tribes of Israel had their own problems, so they did not come to Dan's aid to dislodge the Philistines.

A man from the tribe of Dan, Zorah, and his wife were childless. God determined that they should have a child and raise him as a Nazirite (different from Jesus, who was a Nazarene). A Nazirite was someone who was dedicated to serving God and followed the regulations shown in Numbers 6. According to Numbers 6:5, during the time of their vows, Nazirites were not to cut their hair. God ordained that Samson should be a Nazirite his entire life.

Samson's many exploits revolve around his great strength. In the story of Delilah, it is revealed that the source of Samson's strength is that he never cut his hair, thus fulfilling a major portion of his Nazirite vow. When his hair is cut, he loses his strength. Not only is Samson weakened, but so are the Israelites.

The story of Samson does not end when his hair grows back. He cannot unbreak a vow that has been broken. But Samson's story comes to an end when he repents and asks the Lord to strengthen him one last time. Samson's death slows down the Philistine invasion but does not end it.

Discussion Questions:

1. How long had the Philistines tormented the Israelites before Samson arrived? Why was it important that Samson came from the tribe of Dan?
 2. Zorah and Manoah were childless and unable to give birth. Why might God have chosen them to be the parents of Samson?
 3. Study Numbers 6 and compare it to Judges 13. What are the similarities and what are the differences?
 4. Judges 15:11 says the men of Judah came to Samson. Why is that important?
1. Forty years. The Philistines controlled land that had been allocated to the tribe of Dan. 2. Similar to other parents in the Bible who seemingly couldn't have children, they would demonstrate a high trust in God, and willingly make sacrifices to have a child. 4. Judah's land was next to those controlled by the Philistines. They knew they would have to pay the price for Samson's actions. Samson did not trust them, so he made them vow not to kill him themselves.

Application Questions:

1. Judges 14:1-3 describes Samson requesting his parents to do something that was clearly against the instructions of God and Moses. His parents gave in to his demands. Are you ever tempted to give into the demands of your children because they've worn you down? Did you ever give in and regret doing so?
2. Based on Judges 15:20, Samson was probably in his late thirties or early forties when he met Delilah. Would his age have affected his judgment regarding her? Have you found that your age affects your judgment?
3. Have you ever tried to make someone love you? Did that work out well? When do you know you are trying too hard?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Judges 14:16-17 describes Samson being pestered by his wife/fiancée to tell her the answer to a riddle. By doing so, he pays a big penalty. When you do something wrong and pay a penalty, do you tend to learn your lesson or do you repeat the same type of a mistake...especially if it has to do with a boyfriend or girlfriend?
2. Judges 16:4 says Samson fell in love with Delilah, but the story never indicates she loved him in the least. Have you ever tried to get someone to like or love you? How did that work out for you? How hard should you try before it is unhealthy? How does this apply to non-romantic forms of love like friendships?