

Technology vs God. Nice title for an Old Testament story. You probably know the Sunday School version of the story of Samson and Delilah. The Philistines versus the Israelites, or my betrayal of Samson are side-stories. I will tell you the main story, but the real world version of the main story. I am Delilah.

In about 2000 BC on the island of Crete, just south of mainland Greece, the powerful Minoan culture arose. Its beautiful palace at Knossos can still be seen.

A few hundred years later, the Mycenaean culture began on the Peloponnese Peninsula of Greece. Its cities with advanced architecture can still be seen in your time, too.

The Minoans and Mycenaeans were greatly responsible for a huge trading network that extended from Egypt to Italy to Afghanistan. All sorts of goods flowed through this network, from tools with new metals to food to weapons. Something else of greater value flowed through this network, too...ideas. Knowledge and technology.

Technology was changing, and in turn changing everything. Chariots revolutionized transportation and warfare, and the invention of iron changed warfare and farming.

In Israel, the period of the Judges started about 1400 BC. This was also the time period when the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures came under immense stress. Volcanoes, earthquakes, diseases. Migrations of peoples from the north and east wanting new lands. Worn out farmland. Increasing populations.

By 1200 BC, all was chaos. The Minoan and Mycenaean cultures were falling apart. People migrating into Greece and Turkey from the north. Where could people from southern Europe go to get peace and prosperity...and farm land?

The obvious place to go for the mysterious sea people known as the Philistines was the coastal plains of Israel. It did not take long for them to establish a strong presence there. They only had to displace some unsophisticated Canaanites and Israelites. The Israelites could have kept the Philistines out had their tribes acted in concert, but they didn't.

The Philistines soon controlled the Via Maris trade route that came out of Egypt and went north. They controlled the few port cities on the Mediterranean Seas and used their modern ships to trade with other countries. They had chariots that ruled the flat lands with virtually no opposition. Their fortified cities had improved architecture, technology and administration...Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath.

The Philistines were well versed in the production and use of iron. This gave them the most advanced weapons and iron implements. Even hundreds of years later, they would still control the use of iron in Israel and restrict its use by the Israelites.<sup>1</sup> The Philistines had all of the best and newest technology.

What did the Israelites have? The promise of God to provide and protect them if they obeyed the Laws of Moses. Since they chose not to follow those laws, the Israelites had little. They had chosen not to completely dominate the land, so they didn't keep out the Philistines. They had to retreat to the hill country that the Philistines didn't really want. The Israelites had chosen not to eliminate the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, so they and their foreign gods were still a thorn to the Israelites.

The only thing that could make the plight of the Israelites worse was this...begin consorting with the Philistines and start worshiping their gods. God was willing and capable of protecting the Israelites against the Philistines, but only if the Israelites would follow God, and God only.

With this information, you can understand the story of Samson as an adult of the real world it should. Technology versus God.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 13:19-21

After being ruled by a long series of judges, the Israelites again chose to follow foreign gods, so the Lord of Israel allowed the Philistines to rule over the Israelites for forty years. When they cried out to him, he answered their call.

Samson's parents were from the tribe of Dan. They had unsuccessfully tried to have children for many years. The angel of the Lord appeared to his mother and told her that she would have a child, and they were never to allow his hair to be cut because he would be a Nazirite, a man dedicated to God according the Law of Moses.<sup>2</sup>

His parents learned from the angel what to do and what not to do during the pregnancy, and after the child was born in order to fulfill the Lord's will. His mother did not drink any alcoholic beverages or eat unclean foods. They were instructed in other ways to raise Samson in order to please God. Samson was blessed by God, and he grew, and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in him while he was in Mahaneh Dan.

Samson and his parents moved to a town near Timnah, a Philistine city. One day, Samson went into Timnah and saw a young Philistine woman there. He insisted that his parents get her for his wife, but they objected, they wanted him to marry an Israelite. But God wanted Samson to confront the Philistines, and this was a perfect pretext.

So, Samson and his parents went into Timnah, on the outskirts they were attacked by a young lion. The Spirit of the Lord came on Samson and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands. Then he went on into town to meet the woman. He really liked her. Sometime later, he went back to marry her. On his way, he passed the slaughtered carcass... it was full of bees and honey. A truly delicious secret.

Samson's father went to inquire of the young woman, which was customary. Samson and his father held a feast. At the feast were thirty Philistine young men who acted as his party companions. "Let me tell you a riddle," said Samson. If they could answer the riddle, he would give them each a set of clothes. Thirty sets of clothes? Hard to come by for anyone. If they could not answer the riddle, they would need to give him the same. They all agreed to the deal. The riddle: "out of

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers 6:1-21

the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.” Like I said, a delicious secret.

After three days, the young men panicked. They could not afford to lose the bet. They threatened Samson’s now wife and family with death if they did not tell them the answer to the riddle. Samson’s wife begged and whined and finally got the answer from him. She told the thirty young men, they gave Samson the correct answer, he lost the bet.

The Spirit of the Lord came on Samson again, and he went to the nearby city of Ashelton and killed thirty men. He took their clothes and gave them to the young men from the wedding feast. Samson was furious, he went back to his father’s house. Now thinking Samson was never going to return, the girl’s father gave her in marriage to another Philistine.

Some months later, around harvest time, Samson went back to Timnah to his wife’s house to be with her. Her father said “I thought you hated her, so I married her off to another man.” Samson went berserk.

Anger and revenge don’t even begin to describe it all. He caught 300 foxes and tied them in pairs, tail-to-tail. Lighting a torch between their tails, he released them into the grain fields. The foxes burnt the Philistines’ ripe wheat, vineyards and olive groves.

The Philistines reacted by killing Samson’s former wife and her father. Samson was enraged. He slaughtered many of them, and then hid in the cave of Etam. Wasn’t long, the Philistines came for Samson, but the Spirit of the Lord came on him again, and he killed one thousand of the Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.

Samson led Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines. That would be the end of the story of Samson if it wasn’t for me. Me, Delilah. A Philistine.

I live in the Valley of Sorek, just north of Timnah, the home of Samson’s first wife. Samson is in love with me, just like a bunch of other guys.

The rulers of the Philistines find out that Samson is in love with me. They come to me and promise me great riches if I can find out the source of his strength so they can overpower him. I guess they are tired of Samson protecting the Israelites at the cost of Philistine lives. Obviously, I don't care much about Samson, but the idea of great riches is very attractive to me.

At first, I just ask Samson the source of his strength, and he lies to me. It is *not* being tied up with seven fresh bowstrings. I pout and ask again. Again, he lies. It is *not* being tied up with new ropes.

I tell him to quit making me a fool, but again, he lies. It is *not* weaving his hair into seven braids.

I turn up the big heat. I nag him day after day after day. And, of course, I won't give him any love, if he doesn't act like he loves me. Finally, he gives in and tells me the truth... He's not allowed to cut his hair.

I tell the Philistine leaders and they come to my house with the money. I soothe Samson to sleep on my lap so his hair drapes over my knee. While he is asleep, they cut off the seven braids of his hair. He awakens, and he is as weak as a normal man. What do I care? I am rich.

The Philistine leaders haul him away. They gouge out his eyes and take him to Gaza where they shackle him and make him grind grain, just like the donkey, whose jawbone was used to kill the Philistines. Day after day after day. He works like a donkey, and for a long time nothing changes. Except one thing. One... slow...un noticeable thing. His hair grows back.

The Philistine leaders eventually have a giant party to celebrate his capture and blindness, and to give thanks to their god, Dagon. They had him perform like a bear on a chain and he humors them. As a closing act, Samson asks the servant who has been leading him around to place him between the pillars supporting the temple, says he wants to lean on them.

The servant leads him, the crowd watches. Very important men and women fill the massive temple. Three-thousand of them standing on the roof alone, all laughing at Samson. They don't understand Hebrew, but if they had, they would

have heard him praying to the Lord to provide him strength one more time. One more time for revenge against the Philistines.

The crowd laughs and laughs as Samson strains against the pillars. They know he is weak, too weak to do anything. What they know is wrong. Technology versus God. The finest architecture in the world fails against one human being empowered by God. The pillars come crashing down, the giant temple stones kill all the people, all the Philistine rulers.

For the next century, the Philistines and their superior technology will torment the Israelites. And then history will repeat itself. Superior weaponry of the Philistines will be destroyed by a young man empowered by God using a sling. That young man will live with the Philistines and learn about their technology and its weaknesses. Then, that young man, will grow to be the king who completely overwhelms and destroys the Philistines through the power of God. King David.

Technology versus God. I'd pick God if I were you.