“SAMSON; GOOD JUDGE OR NOT SO MUCH?”

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God blessed Samson and yet he was a bad judge. The Lord had chosen Samson from before his birth. His story begins with the angel of the Lord appearing to his parents, telling them that they will have a child and that this child is never have a razor touch his head for e is to be a Nazirite from birth. This is and unusual thing to happen to an unborn child because the Nazirite vow is usually one that a person chooses and only submits to for a period of time. Samson’s vow was not of his choosing nor was it for only a designated period of time but for his whole life. Even so, the angel of the Lord is adamant that the stipulations of the vow are kept. Even Samson’s parents are given instructions to head themselves. Samson’s mother is not allowed to consume any wine or strong drink nor is she allowed to eat anything unclean. Once Samson is born, he begins to grow and God blesses him.

The Nazirite vow that Sampson was bound to is outlined in Numbers 6:1-21.[[1]](#footnote-1) Stipulations of the vow include strict commands that no razor shall touch his head. He shall drink no wine, strong drink, or vinegar. He can’t have grape juice or any product of a grape. Also, he is not supposed to touch, visit, or be near anything that is dead. The instructions in these verses allow no room for leniency on the rules. Samson, however, takes much leniency with the rules of the vow of which he has been commanded by God to follow. He starts out by defiling himself by requesting a wife from among the Philistines. When his parents advise him differently he disregards their advice and the command of the Lord demanding that his parents oblige him. Now, in chapter 14 verse 4 the writer tells us that Samson’s desire for a Philistine wife was from the Lord. Does that mean Samson was justified in his demand. I believe that, although God had planned to use Samson’s disobedience as an opportunity against the Philistines, Samson was still commanded by God not to and he did not regard the Lord in his choice but took what seemed good in his own eyes. [[2]](#footnote-2)

During a trip to Timnah, Samson once again shows a complete disregard of his promise to God when he tears a young lion to pieces. This is most definitely to be considered coming into contact with a dead animal and therefore breaks a statute of his Nazirite vow. To make things worse, on his way back from Timnah, Samson stops by to check on the dead carcass of the young lion he killed. Not only does he touch the dead lion but he scrapes honey from the inside of it and eats it as well as shares it with his family. For the simple treat of honey Samson ignores God’s command.

Although Samson likes to disregard the command of the Lord, he likes to use the blessing of the Lord in his favor. Sampson uses the Strength that God blessed him with as part of his Nazirite vow to settle a dispute he runs into after he gambles with some men and loses thanks to the wife he chose. In his retribution, Samson manages to strike down thirty men. This is not the only time Samson kills men in his time as a judge in Israel. He uses a jawbone of a donkey to kill one thousand Philistines. In this instance, Samson does seem to fight the enemy of Israel and although God may have used it for His own purposes as he did Samson’s wife, still Samson is motivated here by his own purpose and not by God’s. On top of that, Samson once again defiles his Nazirite vow by touching the jawbone of a hopefully dead donkey and participating in the death of one thousand Philistine men.

Other that the cutting off of his hair, Samson’s major weaknesses seems to be his choice in women. When Samson goes to Gaza he decides to have sex with a prostitute. Once the Gazaites find out they plot for to capture Samson. The means that they use to pull off this capture is a woman named Delilah. Delilah is hired by the Philistine lords to find out the secret of Samson’s strength so that they can capture once Delilah exploits his weakness and drains his strength. Well, Sampson holds strong for a while, lying to the woman three times but, after much nagging and pressing, Delilah is able to extract the truth from Samson about his strength. Samson once again trusts a woman and gambles with a power that does not belong to him but is given by the Lord and once again he loses. This time he will not escape the punishment. Samson’s hair is which takes from him the one aspect of the Nazirite vow that he actually kept. His flippancy cost him his hair and the spirit of the Lord left him. The Philistines gouged out his eyes and made him labor for them.

Although Samson is unfaithful, God is faithful. When Samson’s hair grows back, God grants Samson the strength to take part in one last act as a judge of Israel. When Samson is brought before the party of the Philistines as entertainment, God allows him to have enough strength to push over the pillars of the house everyone is in. This act of Samson kills more Philistines than Samson had killed in his whole life. This act also killed Samson himself. He judged Israel for twenty years and never once did it apart from selfish motives. He was quick to serve his own desires and do what seemed right in his own eyes but slow to obey they God that had blessed him so abundantly. God was able to avenge Israel of those who persecuted them by using Samson, but each time it was despite Samson’s motives and not because of them. Samson was a self-centered man who cared more about his lust for women and thirst for pleasure to see the opportunity that God had given him. He was most certainly a bad Judge but God was faithful to work despite him.

1. Sproul, R. C. "Characters and Themes." In *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, 4-5. Orlando, Fla.: Ligonier Ministries ; 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Old Testament Survey 1 Lecture*. Dr. Trey Bechtold, United States, 2014. Lecture Notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)