

THE HISTORY OF SAMSON¹

PART I.

The Angel's First Visit.

Judg. xiii. 1 8.

AFTER the death of Jephthah, other judges ruled; but they could not keep Israel from returning to their idols.

This time the Lord delivered Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

These Philistines lived in the land of Israel, and had strong cities of their own, with great lords to rule over them.

During forty years Israel groaned under these cruel tyrants, when the Lord again graciously gave them a deliverer. This time it was not a man nor was it a woman that the Lord chose but a babe.

The Lord caused a babe to be born, and to grow up to be a deliverer of Israel.

Who were the parents of this babe, and how did they know who their babe was?

You shall hear first about the babe's mother. I cannot tell you her name, only her husband's name. She was the wife of a man called Manoah. She lived in that part of the land where the Philistines had built their strong cities. It was called the tribe of Dan; the tribe that first set up idols in the land: but this woman was a faithful worshipper of God. She had no child, though she much wished to have one. One day when she was alone – an ANGEL appeared to her.

This angel had the form of a man; but his look was very grand: it was a look that showed he was not a common man.

The woman took him for some holy prophet; and she listened to all he said with great respect.

What was her astonishment to hear the angel say, "Thou shalt have a son!" The woman saw that he must be come from God; for who but God could give her a son?

Then the angel told her what sort of a child he was to be. He was to be a Nazarite. What is a Nazarite?

It is a person who makes a vow to drink no wine, and to eat no grapes, and not to cut his hair, but to let it grow long.

People often made a vow to be Nazarites for a month or a year: but this child was to be a Nazarite all his life long; and the mother was to make the vow for him, and *she* was to drink no wine till he was born.

Was this child to be a priest? No; for he was not of the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Dan.

He was to be a man of war, and to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

¹ Excerpt from Mortimer, Favell Lee, *Lines Left Out*. The whole book is available on The Mothers' Companion flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

The woman wished very much to know where the stranger came from, and what was his name; but she had not courage to ask him these questions.

As soon as he was gone the woman went to look for her husband. She was very anxious to tell him all about the visit. He was very sorry that he had not been there when this wonderful man spoke to his wife. There were many questions that he wished to ask.

He felt he should have courage to speak to this noble-looking stranger, if he were to see him. He would ask him how to bring up the child. He would even ask him his name.

What could Manoah do in order to see the angel? There was only one thing he could do. Was it to watch all day and all night? No! the best way was to pray to God.

This was the little prayer that Manoah offered up, with his wife, to the Lord:—

“O my Lord, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.”

Would not the Lord hear such a prayer as this?

Yes; He would certainly hear it; and He would grant what was asked, if He saw it to be a good thing.

GOD HEARS HIS PEOPLE'S PRAYERS.

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us. - *John, v. 14.*

After the death of Jephthah did the Israelites worship idols?

Into whose hands did God deliver them?

Who were the parents of the deliverer?

Who appeared to the woman one night?

Whom did she think it was?

What did the angel promise her?

What rules did God give respecting this child?

What is a Nazarite?

What did Manoah wish to ask the angel?

THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.

PART II

The Angel's Second Visit.

Judg. xiii. 9-23.

A LITTLE while after Manoah's prayer the angel came again: but *not* to Manoah. He came to the woman, as she was sitting out-of-doors, near a rock: for the shade of a rock is pleasant in that hot country.

But the woman did not stay to hear the angel talk. She knew how much her husband longed to see him, and she ran very fast to call him.

When she found him she said, "Behold the man hath appeared unto me that came unto me the other day."

Oh! how eagerly Manoah longed to see him. But he did not run before his wife; though, of course, he could run faster than she: but he let her show him the way.

Did he find the angel in the place where his wife had left him? Yes – he had stayed faithfully in the very spot.

Manoah was not afraid to speak to this great and glorious stranger, whose countenance was so terrible. He went up to him and said, "Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman?"

The angel replied, "I am."

Then Manoah told him how much he wished for the child to be born; and then he asked him this question – "How are we to bring the child up?"

The angel repeated all he had said to the woman about the Nazarite's vow.

But now Manoah had a request to make. He wanted to show his gratitude to the angel, in the same way that Gideon once had shown *his*. He said, "Pray, stay with us, till we have got a kid ready for thee."

But the angel replied, "I will not eat of any of thy food; and if you will offer up a sacrifice, you must offer it to the Lord."

Manoah did not know that He who seemed a man was Himself the Lord; but he wanted to know who He was, so he ventured to inquire, – "What is thy name, that when thy words come to pass we may do thee honour?"

The angel replied, "Why dost thou ask my name? for it is a secret."

Why would not the angel tell his name? Because it was such a wonderful name – a name that none can understand: for this angel was the Son of God. The word "angel" means a messenger: so the Son of God is an angel or a messenger: but He is far greater than all other messengers, for He is equal with God His Father. Other angels can tell their names. The angel Gabriel told his name to the father of John the Baptist.

Though Manoah, had not yet found out who the angel was, yet he went for a kid to offer it to the Lord.

And he brought the kid with some flour, that he might offer both together on the rock near which the angel stood.

But Manoah and his wife had now done all they could. The angel did not rest; while they looked on, WONDERING. When the kid was burning on the rock, and the flame was rising up toward heaven, the angel WENT up in that flame!

What could Manoah and his wife do now?

They fell upon their faces to the ground. Now they knew who the angel was, even the Lord Himself.

Manoah had spoken very boldly as long as he thought it was a *man* he was speaking to; but now that he knew who it was, he was full of fear.

“Oh!” said he to his wife, “we shall surely die, because we have seen God.”

Then his wife began to comfort him. She said, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, would He have accepted these sacrifices? would he have shown us all these things? would He have promised us such things?”

This was a right way of speaking. It showed she believed in the Lord.

How strange it was that the woman, who had been the *most* frightened at first, was now the *least* frightened. She had not ventured to ask the angel a single question, while Manoah had talked to him freely: yet now she trusted, while Manoah trembled.

God can give courage to our faint hearts, and make us believe that He is kind, and means to do us good.

THE COMFORT OF BELIEVING.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.-Ps. Vii. 13, 14.

When the angel came again, whom did he find?

Whom did the woman call to see the angel?

What was Manoah most anxious to know about the angel?

Why is the Son of God often called an angel?

What did Manoah offer to the angel?

What wonder happened as he was offering up the kid?

Who was the most frightened?

What arguments did Manoah's wife give against being frightened?

CHAP. 5 3.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART III.
The Dead Lion.
Judg. xiii. 24,25; xiv. 1-9.

GOD did not forget His promise to Manoah's wife.

Soon she had a little son; and she called him Samson, which means "a little son." She obeyed all the angel's commands concerning this son; and she never gave him wine to drink, nor grapes to eat; nor did she ever cut off his hair.

In Samson's country grapes were more plentiful than apples are in England. Did Samson murmur at not being permitted to eat them? No; he was obedient to his parents and his God; and as he grew, the Lord blessed him.

He was a happy child: for the Lord's blessing makes anyone truly happy. He knew that he was born to deliver Israel from the Philistines. While he was still young, he used to visit the soldiers' tents about five miles from his father's house; and while he was there the Spirit of the Lord sometimes came upon him, and made him feel eager to go against the Philistines: but he waited till the Lord sent him.

The Lord did not make Samson a captain over an army, as he made Gideon. He gave Samson such wonderful strength, that he did not need the help of other men. He ALONE was as strong as a little army.

It was in a strange way that Samson began his great work of destroying the Philistines.

He visited a city where the Philistines dwelt, named Timnath. There he saw a woman, whom he wished to marry.

Would it be right of Samson to marry a heathen woman? Had not the Lord forbidden such marriages? Yes; but the Lord had a reason for choosing Samson to marry this woman; and whatever the Lord commands is right.

Samson returned from Timnath, and said to his parents, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnath, that I wish you to get me for a wife."

His parents were grieved on hearing their good, obedient son, wishing for such a wife, and they tried to persuade him not to have her.

They said, "Is not there a woman in Israel that you could have for a wife, rather than this heathen Philistine?"

Samson replied, "Get this woman for me; for she is a right wife for me."

But Sampson did not tell his parents *why* he wanted to marry this woman. It was because the Lord wished him to get into a quarrel with the Philistines, through this marriage.

But the parents placed great trust in their son, and were ready to do what he asked, thinking that he knew what was right.

So the parents went down with their son to Timnath. When they arrived there, Samson left

them for a little while, and wandered about the beautiful vineyards. He did not eat any of the grapes, for he was a Nazarite; but he wished to be alone in that place. Suddenly there rushed out from among the vines a terrible enemy. It was not a Philistine, but one more terrible than any Philistine giant. It was a lion – a strong, young lion; and this lion roared full in Samson’s face.

It must have been very hungry, for lions usually only prowl about in the *night*. It is only very hungry lions that come forth in the *day*. But God would not let His servant satisfy a lion’s hunger. Samson had neither sword nor spear in his hand. What could he do?

He went up to the lion, seized hold of him, and tore him in the midst, as easily as a man might tear a little kid. Oh, what strength! for a lion is so strong, that he can carry a cow in his jaws, and with his tail break the leg of a horse.

Perhaps this was the first time that Samson had found out *how very* strong he was. Now he knew that he could tear the Philistines in pieces without sword, or spear, or bow.

He came back to his parents, but said nothing to them about what had happened.

He saw the Philistine woman, and promised to marry her. He liked her very much, though he knew her very little.

But he did not *marry* her at *that time*. He only betrothed her, or promised to marry her. So Samson returned home with his parents.

After some time² he set out with them, to go to Timnath to be married.

When he arrived, he went first of all to the vineyards – all alone, as before.

What did he go there for?

He wanted to see what was become of the lion’s body. The bones alone can have remained. Wonderful to say, the lion’s body was filled with a swarm of BEES, and also with the honeycomb they had made. Bees build in the hollows of trees, and of rocks: but who ever heard of a hive made of bones?

Samson was not afraid of the bees stinging him. He took out a quantity of honeycomb, and began to eat it as he walked along. When he came to the place where he had left his parents, he gave them some of the honeycomb, and they ate it; but they never imagined where it came from, nor did Samson tell them.

What wonderful things God makes happen! He can change the nature of bees, and make them choose a new dwelling-place. He can fill a filthy place with sweetness. He can fill a wicked heart with the sweetness of His grace and love.

GOD GOVERNS ALL CREATURES.

The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. *Ps. cv. 21, 22.*

² A year usually elapsed between betrothal and marriage.

What blessing did the Lord send to Manoah and his wife?

For what purpose was this son born?

What gift had God bestowed upon Samson that made him different from other men?

Why did Samson wish to go to Timnath?

As Samson was walking through the vineyards near Timnath, what happened to him?

What did Samson do to this lion?

When did Samson go to Timnath?

What did Samson find in the vineyard where he had slain the lion?

What did this wonder teach Samson?

CHAP. 54.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART IV.
The Wedding Feast.
Judg. 10-19.

THE time for Samson's marriage with the Philistine woman was now come. Samson's father went first to the woman's house, and afterwards Samson prepared the feast. It was the custom of the country for the men to feast together by themselves, and for the women to feast together by themselves.

But Samson did not invite his *own* friends to his feast. His wife's family chose thirty young Philistines for his companions. During a whole week these youths feasted with Samson. But as they could not eat and drink all day, they amused themselves in different ways.

One of the amusements was to tell riddles, and to offer rewards to those who found them out.

Samson, on the first day of the feast, said to his guests, "I will tell you a riddle. If you find it out before the seven days are ended, I will give each of you a sheet and a suit of clothes; but if you cannot find it out, then you must each give the same to me."

The people of that country used to dress in a loose garment, like a sheet or shawl; and underneath they wore a shirt, and a vest (called a *change*, or suit of clothes).

These were the rewards promised.

But what was the riddle?

It was this:—

"Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

You understand the riddle; but it was too hard for the Philistines to find out.

Surely they might have discovered it! Samson spoke of an *eater*. He meant some animal that devoured men. Then he spoke of the *strong*. Is there any animal as strong as a lion? Samson spoke of *food*; and then he spoke of *sweetness*. What is the sweetest food? It is honey.

But the Philistines could not find out the riddle.

After trying for three days to find it out, they went to the bride and said to her, "Persuade your husband to tell you the meaning of this riddle. If you do not get him to tell you, we will go and burn you and your father's house with fire."

The bride had not yet gone to live in Samson's house, and these wicked men threatened to burn her in her old home.

They were very much afraid of having to give Samson the clothes he had mentioned.

They said to the wife, “Have all of you asked us to the feast in order to rob us of our things?”

If this bride had loved her lord, she would not have listened to those wicked men. But she was a heathen woman, and loved her own countrymen better than a servant of God, like Samson: so she tried to persuade him to tell her the riddle.

She tried in a very cunning way. She began to cry; and when Samson wanted to know what was the matter, she said, “I see you don’t love me; for you have told a riddle to some of my people, and have not told it to me.”

Then Samson said, “I have not told it to my father or my mother, and shall I tell it to thee?”

But the woman would not leave off teasing him to tell the riddle. Day after day Samson refused; but she continued to plague and to worry him so much, that at last she got him to tell her the riddle. It was not till the *last day* of the feast that she knew it just in time for the men to win the reward. She told them immediately; and they came to Samson just before the sun set on the last day, and said, “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?”

Samson felt sure that his wife had told the men, and now he saw what a bad wife he had got – a wife who loved other people better than him, and who told them his secrets.

How was Samson to get the clothes he had promised to these men? He thought of a very strange way. He went down to one of the Philistine cities, and killed thirty men – stripped the clothes off their dead bodies, and brought them to the men who had explained the riddle.

Was it wicked of him to kill those thirty Philistines? Oh, no! the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (as when he killed the lion), and made him brave and strong. It was God’s will that he should destroy the Philistines. They had for many years been murdering and robbing the Israelites, and now God chose to punish them; and He made Samson strong on purpose that he might destroy the wicked Philistines.

The Lord will employ angels one day to destroy wicked men. He has made them strong, that they may be able to punish His enemies.

Now Jesus is willing to save us. But the day will come when He will be full of vengeance against His enemies.

THE COMING VENGEANCE.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His MIGHTY ANGELS, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel. - 2 *Thess. i. 7, 8.*

How was Samson’s wedding-feast kept?

What riddle did Samson propose?

What is the meaning of his riddle?

What had Samson to pay the Philistines for discovering his riddle?

How did he get the clothes?

Whom will the Lord employ one day to destroy the wicked?

CHAP. 55.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART V.
The Flaming Foxes
Judg. xi v. 19, 20; xv. 1-9.

SAMSON was very angry with the Philistines, for having deceived him. He did not stay in his wife's city, but returned home to his own parents.

When he was gone away his wife's father said, "I see Samson does not like my daughter, so I will let her marry someone else." He gave her to one of the thirty companions at the wedding feast – to the *chief* of them – one that had been *called* Samson's *friend*. But you know what a deceitful friend he had been.

After Samson had stayed at home a little time, he thought he would go back to his wife; for though she was a worthless woman, yet Samson did not mean to give her up.

He took a kid with him as a present, and came to the door of her father's house. The father came out to speak to him; and when he heard what Samson wanted he said, "I thought you hated her, so I gave her to one of your companions; but if you like, you may marry her younger sister, who is more beautiful than she is."

But Samson was very angry at his wife being taken away, and he determined to punish the Philistines for behaving so ill to him. He wanted a reason for quarrelling with them, and now he thought he had found a good reason.

What punishment would he give them? It was the time of harvest, when the wheat was just ready to be gathered, and when the grapes were almost ripe.

Samson resolved to destroy the corn and the vines. How could he do it? He thought of a very strange plan.

He caught three hundred foxes.

What a swift man he must have been, as well as a strong one! Other men could not even catch *one* fox with their own hands, though they might hunt it with dogs and horses. He must have had a place to keep the foxes in till he had caught the whole number.

When he had caught THREE HUNDRED, he took two of his foxes, and tied them to each other by their tails, and then fastened a burning torch between the tails, and let them loose among the fields. He did the same to *all* the foxes. What mischief these couples did among the corn, and the grapes! Some of the corn was already cut and bound up in sheaves, just ready to be carried; the rest of the corn was standing in the fields. All was set on fire by these terrified foxes.

Why did Samson tie them in pairs? To prevent their getting into their holes. *One* fox would soon have crept into his home underground, and have done very little mischief; but these struggling pairs kept running about everywhere.

The Philistines saw the burning corn, and inquired, "Who has done this?"

Some people answered, "Samson has done it, because his father-in-law has taken away his wife and given her to his companion."

Then the Philistines were angry with the wife and her father for having caused so much mischief, and they gave them a terrible punishment: they BURNED her and her father with fire. That was the punishment the Philistine companions had threatened to inflict on the woman, if she did not get Samson to tell her the riddle. She got nothing in the end by her deceit. People get no good by doing wickedly. Often the very things they feared come upon them at last.

When Samson heard that the Philistines had burned his wife he was more angry than ever.

He said, "I will punish them for this. I will punish them WELL."

So he went amongst them, and threw them down with his strong arms, and trampled them down with his strong legs. There was no running away from Samson. He who could catch foxes could more easily catch men.

Amidst the smoking corn-fields lay scattered in heaps the bodies of men, amidst pools of blood.

When Samson had done his dreadful work he climbed up to the top of a high rock, and there lived all by himself, nor did he try to hide himself.

The Philistines knew where he was, but not one was bold enough to climb up to attack this great enemy; for though Samson had neither sword nor spear in his hand, he could overcome armed men. He could wrench their swords out of their hands, as easily as a man snatches a stick from an infant.

Samson's garments must have been stained with blood, as he sat upon that rock; for he had trampled upon his enemies, and crushed them beneath his feet.

The day shall come when a greater than Samson shall crush His enemies by His great power. Our blessed Jesus, who died to save us, will come again in great wrath to destroy His enemies. None will be able to resist Him in *that* day; but NOW none will be cast out who come to Him for mercy.

CHRIST'S THREATENINGS AGAINST HIS ENEMIES.

I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. Isa. lxiii. 3.

Why was Samson very angry with the Philistines?

How did Samson's father-in-law behave ill to him?

What punishment did Samson give to the Philistines for taking away his wife?

What did the Philistines do to Samson's wife, and father-in-law, for having caused all this mischief?

To whom had this punishment been threatened before?

How did Samson punish the Philistines for burning his wife?

Where did Samson go after trampling upon the Philistines?

Who will punish His enemies as Samson punished his?

CHAP. 56.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART VI.-*The, Jaw-bone.*
Judg. xv. 9 to end.

IT was wonderful to behold one man upon the top of a rock, and an army beneath, not daring to attack him. The Philistines in their tents surrounded the great rock, where Samson stood ALONE.

The Israelites were frightened at the sight of the Philistine army. They thought the army was going to fight against *them*; and they said to the Philistines, “Why are you come up against us?”

Then the Philistines answered, “We are come up to bind Samson, and to do to him as he has done to us.” They wanted to *kill* Samson as he had killed their countrymen.

Whose part would the Israelites take?

Would it not be Samson’s part?

No; they were afraid of the Philistines, and they wished to please them. So they determined to go up to Samson on the rock, and to bind him, if they could. Was not this ungrateful? Had not Samson tried to deliver them from their enemies?

It would be of no use for *one*, or *two*, or *three* Israelites, to go up the rock to Samson. Three THOUSAND went up, taking in their hands two very strong, quite new ropes, not the least worn or weak in any part. Were they afraid to approach Samson? No; for they knew that Samson would not hurt *them*; for he never used his great strength in doing harm to one hair of an Israelite’s head.

The three thousand found Samson alone upon his rock.

They began to reproach him for having made the Philistines angry.

They said, “Don’t you know the Philistines are masters over us? Why have you done all this to them?”

Samson answered, “I have done to *them* as they did to *me*.”

His own people replied, “We are come to bind thee and to deliver thee into the hands of the Philistines.”

Samson must have felt hurt by such ingratitude. He knew they could not bind him if he did not choose to let them. But he thought it would be well to let them bind him, for he had a plan in his mind. But first he said, “Will you promise not to *kill* me when I am bound?”

Samson placed no trust in these men, or he would not have asked them to make this promise. They promised, saying, “We will bind thee first, and deliver thee to the Philistines, but we will not kill thee.”

But would not the *Philistines* kill him? Yes, they certainly would, if they could. How cruel it was to bind him and deliver him up to his enemies! The ungrateful men brought forth the two new ropes. With one rope, they fastened Samson’s arms close to his firm sides; and then, with the other rope they tied tight those strong hands.

In this state they led the mighty warrior down the rock.

The Philistines in their tents saw the multitude coming down the rock, but they did not see Samson till he reached the bottom; and when they perceived that he *was bound*, great was the joy they felt, and loud the shouts they uttered.

But soon was their joy turned into terror; for the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he burst the rope that bound down his arms, and the rope that tied together his hands,— he burst them as easily when a candle-flame snaps a thread in two.

Now he was free, and now his enemies would gladly escape from him.

But this was not easy; for Samson could run swiftly, and overtake his enemies one after another.

But what weapon had he in his hand? None: neither sword nor spear. Samson could do better *without a sword* than any other man *with a sword*; but this time the Lord supplied him with a weapon. It was a strange one — a BONE!

Samson observed a dead ass on the ground. He seized the jaw-bone, and with it he slew a THOUSAND MEN!! All these men had intended to kill Samson; and they well deserved to die.

After this dreadful, slaughter, the conqueror looked upon the heaps of dead bodies, and cried out, “With the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men.”

Were these proud words? Yes; he said “I have slain,” and he did not speak of the power of the Lord.

He was very much tired after the slaughter, and threw the jaw-bone out of his hand. He needed rest; but such a parching thirst came upon him that he felt ready to die.

He looked for water, but there was none.

Where was the strength in which he had trusted? Without a drop of water, he was as weak as the weakest.

Now he remembered to thank the Lord for giving him strength, and he offered up this prayer, — “Thou hast given this great deliverance unto thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst and fall into the hands of the heathen?” He could not bear the idea of the Philistines having his dead body.

The Lord gave a wonderful answer to his prayer.

The jawbone had a hollow place in it.³ From that hollow place the Lord made a fountain of water to gush forth. The fainting warrior drank, and his spirit came again, and he was refreshed. He would have died on that spot had not the Lord mercifully heard his prayer.

Samson wished never to forget this great deliverance, and he called the fountain “The well

³ The original reads, “Near the place where he was lying stood a rock, with a hollow place in it.” with the following footnote: “All commentators agree in thinking that the word translated ‘*the jaw*’(xv. 19), ought to have been translated ‘Lehi,’ the name given to the place in consequence of the victory through the jaw-bone.

of him that cried.”

The Lord made Samson feel he was a weak creature, who could not do without His help. We are all unable to keep ourselves from harm for a single moment. The Lord alone can keep us. We should, therefore, always be looking up to Him.

THE BELIEVER’S THANKSGIVING.

Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.-*Ps. Cxvi. 8, 9.*

How many Israelites went up to take Samson?

What did he reproach them for?

What promise did he get them to make?

With what did they bind Samson when they took him from the rock?

What did he find lying upon the ground?

Why was Samson nearly dying?

How did the Lord send him water?

CHAP. 57.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART VII
The Wicked Arts of a Woman.
Judg. xvi. 1-14.

AFTER the slaughter with the jaw-bone, the Philistines were always watching for an opportunity of killing Samson. They were afraid of coming near him in the day, and they did not know where to find him in the night.

One day Samson went into a city of the Philistines called Gaza. It was evening when he went in, and he meant to spend the night there. He went to an inn, where a person lived whom he knew.

Some one saw Samson enter the city, and he went and told the rest of the people.

They were all so glad, for they hoped now to be able to seize him. There was only *one* gate to the city, and the people thought, that if they watched outside that gate they could lay hold of him suddenly, as he was going out.

They went to the gate in the night, and they intended to stay there all night hoping to kill Samson in the morning.

But Samson did not wait for the morning. He knew the Philistines were watching for him, and he got up in the middle of the night and went to the gate in the dark. He went so softly that his enemies did not hear him coming.

The gate was LOCKED.

How did Samson get through?

Did he break open the gate?

He could easily have done that; *but* he did something more wonderful still.

There were two great doors to the gate and two great posts on each side. All these Samson tore away, as well as the great bar; he put them on his shoulders, and WALKED OFF with them on his back ! It was a weight that would have crushed any other man.

The *men* who meant to seize Samson never heard him pass. What was their surprise in the morning to miss the doors and the posts! At last they were told that Samson had left them on the top of a hill before Hebron.⁴

Thus Samson escaped from the danger he was in. That city had been like a trap, and he like the bird caught in it; but he had been set free by the mercy of God.

It was through going to see a Philistine he had got into danger; yet he went on being *too*

4 The original reads "It was a hill just outside the city." with the following footnote: "It is written in Judges,- xvi. 3, that Samson carried the gates to a hill *before* Hebron; but the term means only a hill that *looked* towards Hebron. Gaza and Hebron were twenty miles apart."

intimate with these Philistines when they appeared to be kind and friendly.

At length he became very fond of a Philistine woman, named Delilah.

He had once been deceived by a Philistine woman – even by his wife; but she was now dead, having been burned in her father’s house.

Why did he trust *another* Philistine woman? It was very foolish of him to do so, as you will see.

There were five lords of the Philistines, the chief princes in the land. They hoped that Delilah might help them to conquer Samson. They felt that it was of no use fighting against him while he was so strong; for even three thousand men could not over-power him.

They thought, “If we could but find out *what* makes him so strong.”

They saw that he was not bigger than other men, and they could not think why he was stronger.

So they came to Delilah, and said to her, secretly, “Will you coax Samson to tell you what makes him so strong? and then, when he is weak, we shall be able to bind him.” They promised her a very great reward - eleven hundred pieces of silver from each altogether five thousand five hundred pieces. They were very rich, and could afford to give a great deal; and they thought it better to promise than to threaten: they were not like those Philistine companions, who once, instead of promising a reward to Samson’s wife, threatened to burn her up.

Was Delilah so wicked as to listen to those lords?

O yes; she loved money much better than she loved Samson: indeed she did not care for him at all.

One day when she was alone with Samson, she began to coax him, and to say, “Tell me, I pray thee, what makes you so strong, and what might you be bound with to make you weak?”

Samson answered, “If I were to be bound with seven *green withes* that were never dried, then should I be as weak as any one else.”

This was not true; but Samson said it to try the woman, and to see whether she would bind him with the withes. Green withes are ropes made of soft twigs of trees; and when fresh and green, they are very strong indeed.

Delilah hoped that Samson had told her the truth. So she sent a message to the lords of the Philistines; and they came bringing in their hands seven green withes.

They gave them to Delilah, and they hid some men in a corner of Samson's room.

When Samson was asleep, Delilah went softly and bound the ropes around him.

Then she cried, “The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!”

He started up, and broke the withes, as if they had been threads touched by the flame of a candle.

What did he *now* think of Delilah?

It was easy for her to laugh, and to say it was all in joke. Samson knew nothing about the men who had been hidden. If he had found them, surely he would have killed them by a touch of his fist.

Delilah soon began again to beg him to tell her the secret.

She said, "You have mocked me and told me lies. *Now* do tell me truly, what I can bind you with to make you weak."

Samson replied, "If I were bound with *new ropes* that have never been used before, I should become weak."

But do you not remember that he had been bound with new ropes on the rock, and that he had burst them like thread? I suppose Delilah did not know this.

She sent again for the lords, and hid them again in the room; and again she bound Samson while he was asleep, and again she cried, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" and again he broke his bonds off his arms like a thread.

Delilah entreated Samson to tell her the truth, saying, "Hitherto you have told me lies."

He said, "If you were to weave the seven locks of my hair into the web, I should become weak as another man."

Samson's hair had never been cut since he was born; for he had been a Nazarite, devoted to God, as the angel had commanded. He wore his long hair plaited in seven tails.

There was in Delilah's house a machine for weaving flax into linen. This machine was fixed to the wall. It was into this weaving-machine that Delilah wove Samson's seven locks when he was asleep. Then she wakened him with the cry, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!"

He woke and rose up dragging after him the weaving-machine, with the wall to which it was fastened.

Samson had told Delilah *almost* the truth, when he had spoken of weaving his hair.

Would he ever tell her ALL the truth? Would he *ever* be so foolish? Why was he so foolish as to go on loving such a woman? Why did he not leave her the first time she bound him?

Alas! his heart was entangled by her coaxing words and her soft looks.

It is dangerous to be intimate with bad people. We can never tell what harm they will do us in the end.

A WARNING AGAINST UNGODLY WOMEN.

'The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. -Prov. v. 3-5.

What were the Philistines always trying to do to Samson?
Why could they not kill him in the night?
Into what city did Samson get one night?
How did Samson get through that city in the night?
Of what woman did he become very fond?
How many chief lords of the Philistines were there?
How did these lords try to find out the secret of Samson's strength?
What was the first thing he told Delilah?
What did he tell her the second time?
What did he tell her the third time?
What did the five lords promise Delilah if they got hold of Samson?

CHAP. 58.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART VIII.-*The Secret found out.*
Judg. xvi. 15-21.

DELILAH went on teasing Samson to tell her his secret, till he was wearied out of his life.

She said to him, “How canst thou say I love thee, when thou hast not told me everything in thy heart? Three times thou hast mocked me, and hast not told me what makes thee so strong.”

Thus she went on plaguing day by day, till Samson was almost worried to death.

Why did he not leave this cruel woman? He was *too* fond of her – he was foolishly fond, sinfully fond.

At last he said to her, “I will tell you the truth. I have been a Nazarite to God ever since I was born, and no razor has ever come upon my head to cut off my hair; and if my hair were to be cut off I should become weak like any other man.”

Delilah now saw that he had told her the real truth! so she sent again for the lords of the Philistines.

They must have been tired of coming up, and finding it of no use: but Delilah said, “Come up only *once* more: for now Samson has told me what really would make him weak.”

So they came. They felt so sure of getting hold of Samson this time, that they brought with them the five thousand five hundred pieces they had promised to Delilah.

They went to their old hiding-place in Delilah’s room.

Meanwhile that deceitful woman persuaded Samson to lay his head upon her knees, and to go to sleep. Then she sent for a man to shave off the seven locks of his head. She took pains to keep Samson asleep all the time the man was cutting off his hair.

When his hair was gone the cruel woman tied him up, and then called out, “The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!”

He awoke, and finding his hands tied, he was not uneasy, but said to himself, “I will go out as I used to do, and shake myself.” He did not know his hair was cut off. He tried to get free, but he **COULD** not: **THE LORD HAD TAKEN AWAY HIS STRENGTH!**

It was not his *hair* which made him strong, but his *obedience* to God, as a Nazarite: and when he **DISOBEYED** he lost his strength. Just in the same way it was not eating the fruit that made Adam die, but it was the *disobedience* of eating it.

Now the Philistines got hold of him, and did what they liked with him.

And *what* did they like to do with him? **THEY PUT OUT HIS EYES!** They thought it better to *blind* him than to *kill* him; because they could torment him, and make him miserable.



They took him down to Gaza, the city where he once had gone to see a wicked companion; and where he would have been caught had he not taken away the gate on his back. He returned to that city, weak as another man. He was led in through the very gate he once carried away.

What shoutings there must have been among the people to see their strong enemy helpless as a child – his hair cut off, his eyes put out. And what did the Philistines do with their blind prisoner? They placed chains of brass upon his feet, they thrust him into prison, and made him grind corn with mill-stones. This was the lowest employment that could be. Those hands that had wielded the sword were made to turn the stones round and round, hour after hour.

Now he had time to think of all his sins. Why had he loved bad companions? Had they not brought him to misery? Surely tears must have flowed from those sightless eye-balls!

While *he* wept, *many* laughed. What mocking there must have been of Samson around that prison!

The worst was, that the wicked scoffed at the God of Israel. Many said, “The god of the Philistines is stronger than the God of Israel.” How it must have grieved the pious heart of Samson to think of the disgrace he had brought upon the true God!

But the Lord had not forsaken him, as you will see in the end.

THE AFFLICTED BELIEVER'S COMFORT.

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.-*Mic.* Vii. 8.

Did Samson ever tell Delilah the true reason about what would make him weak?

How did she manage to cut off his hair?

Was it losing his hair that made him weak?

What did the Philistines do to Samson when he was made weak?

Into what city did they take him?

What wicked thing did they say about God?

CHAP. 59.
THE HISTORY OF SAMSON.
PART IX.
The Feast of Dagon
Judg. xvi. 22 to end.

DURING many months Samson, in his blindness, ground corn in the prison-house. At first he was *bald*, as well as *blind*, but soon his head was again covered with hair. It was not long, as it used to be, nor was it divided into seven plaits.

While Samson toiled in his prison the lords rejoiced over their prisoner, and praised their god.

They determined to have a great feast in honour of their god, and to offer sacrifices in his temple. People were invited from all the cities of the Philistines. They crowded into Gaza, and entered the temple of the god Dagon.

What a vile god was this idol! The top part of his body was like a man, and the lower part like a fish; he had arms, but no legs. Yet this frightful idol was praised and blessed by thousands of men and women on the feast-day. They cried out, "Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy the man who destroyed our country, and slew many of us!"

While they were shouting these praises, it came into their heads to send for Samson out of the prison-house. Why did they want him? To laugh at him, and to make game of him.

Samson was brought in by a boy. The poor blind man was led by the hand! Oh how those Philistines roared with merriment as he entered!

The temple of Dagon was an immense place. It was a large building all round a court. The roof was flat, and was covered with people who could look down into the court. There were three thousand men and women on the roof, and there were many very grand people inside the building; for the five lords were there, and all the chief men, and all the great ladies.

What did Samson feel when he heard their shouts and roars of laughter as he groped about in the court! He thought of the time when he slew a THOUSAND with a jaw-bone; and of that other time when he trampled upon his enemies as if they had been the mire of the streets. He knew that he was born to deliver his people from the Philistines, and yet for a long time past he had done nothing. Did he not lament the way he had lost his time with that deceitful Delilah? He had left off fighting for God when he was *strong*; and now he was *weak*, and *blind*, and *chained*, and unable to fight.

Samson now could neither see the people nor the building; but he *had* seen that temple when he used to come to Gaza to visit his heathen acquaintances.

He remembered that it was built upon large, strong pillars, and he said to the lad who led him, "Take me to the pillars, that I may lean against them."

The lad thought Samson was tired through being hunted about to make sport, and he led him to the two pillars, which supported the house.

There Samson – instead of *resting* began praying, but not loud enough for any one to hear, – "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only THIS *ONCE*, O God,

that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”



Then Samson stretched out his arms and took hold of the two pillars, then bowed himself with all his might, and instantly those great pillars shook, and cracked, and gave way, AND DOWN CAME THE HOUSE WITH ONE GREAT CRASH!

Oh! how dreadful were the shrieks of the falling people! Then all was still – a heap of ruins.

And where was Samson? Crushed to death under that great heap; but in dying he had killed ALL THE LORDS, and thousands of men and women. He killed more in his death than he had killed all his life long.

The Israelites heard of this great downfall, and they came from all parts to see the bloody pile.

Among the rest came Samson's relations. His father was already dead, and, no doubt, his mother too; but he had many cousins, who wished to get his dead body. There were not many Philistines left alive in those parts to bury their friends, and there was no one to prevent Samson's relations from digging out the body, and taking it away. Under what a load of rubbish – under what a mass of flesh – they had to search! And what a battered, bruised body they must have found at last! But they treated it with honour, and buried it in the tomb of Manoah the father of Samson.

Such was the end of the STRONGEST of men!

There was another Nazarite who judged Israel soon after he was dead – his name was Samuel. He was devoted to God as soon as he was born, but he did not act foolishly like Samson. Yet Samson also was a servant of the Lord. We *know* that he pleased God, for he is praised in the Bible. (See Heb. xi, 32-39.) Though he committed great sins, yet he loved God, and wished to serve Him; and the Lord has forgiven his sins for the sake of Jesus, who died upon the tree, the JUST for the UNJUST.

How much happier Samson would have been than he was, if he had been more careful to do what was right! If he had been more obedient to the Lord he would not have lost his sight, nor would he have been shut up in a prison, nor crushed under a heap of ruins.

ONE OF THE GREATEST TORMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS.

I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. -*Eccles*, vii. 26.

- How was Samson employed in the prison-house?
- What great rejoicings had the Philistines in their temples?
- What did Samson determine to do to all the people in the temple?
- Where did he tell a boy to lead him?
- How many people were killed in the crush?
- Who looked for Samson's body?
- How was Samson punished for his fondness for Delilah?