

Judges Chapter 16

Verses 1-3: God was merciful in allowing Samson to be delivered from this iniquity, but chastening was only postponed. Sin blinds and later grinds (verse 21).

“Gaza”, a Philistine capital city near the southern coast, was located along the caravan route from Egypt to Syria, Samson’s excursion into the depths of enemy territory reveals the extremes to which his sensual desires took him.

Judges 16:1 "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her."

One of the five principalities of the Philistines, which was ten miles from Ashkelon, as Sandys says. Who also describes it as standing upon a hill surrounded with valleys, and these again enclosed with hills, most of them planted with all sorts of delicate fruits. And, according to Bunting, forty two miles from Ramath-lehi, the place where we last hear of him (see Amos 1:6, Zeph. 2:4). What he went there for is not easy to say. It showed great boldness and courage, after he had made such a slaughter of the Philistines, to venture himself in one of their strongest cities, where he must expect to be exposed to danger. Though it is highly probable this was a long time after his last encounter with them.

"And saw there a harlot, and went in unto her": The Targum renders it an innkeeper, one that kept food in the house, so Kimchi, Ben Gersom, and Ben Melech interpret it. Into whose house he went for entertainment and lodging, and very probably in the dusk of the evening. And the woman that kept this house might herself have been a harlot. Or Samson saw one in her house, with whom he was captivated, and went in unto her, or had criminal conversation with her. It seems as if he did not turn in there with any such wicked design, but on sight of the person was ensnared to commit lewdness with her. And, as Lyra says, there were many hostesses in some places. And so here, who too easily prostituted themselves to their guests.

Gaza is a well-known city. It was one of the 5 chief cities of the Philistines. It was the last southwest town on the road from Jerusalem to Egypt. This woman is most probably, a Philistine. She is a harlot, as well.

Judges 16:2 "[And it was told] the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed [him] in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him."

The inhabitants of Gaza, the principal ones of it, the magistrates of the city. Either by some persons that saw him come in, who knew him, or by the harlot into whose company he fell, to whom he made himself known.

"Saying, Samson is come hither": The man so famous for his strength, and such an enemy to the Philistines. His name was well known for his great exploits, and rung throughout Palestine, and was a terror to the whole country.

"And they compassed him in": Not that they surrounded the house where he was, which perhaps they might not certainly know. But they secured all the avenues and gates of the city, made them fast, and placed guards there, that he might not escape their hands.

"And laid wait for him all night in the gate": Particularly at that gate, where, if he went out for his country, he must pass.

"And were quiet all the night": Did not attempt to disturb Samson, or seize on him, if they knew where he was. Knowing his great strength, and what a tumult might be raised in the city. They said nothing of it to anybody that passed, what they were placed there for, lest it should come to his ears. They made as if they were deaf and dumb, as some interpret it, and heard and knew nothing.

"Saying, in the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him": When they should better know him, and make sure their blow at him. And do it suddenly, unawares to him, as he came to the gate, to pass through it.

The Philistines were not only God's enemy, but Samson's as well. They wanted him killed. When the men of Gaza heard that Samson was with a harlot, they surrounded the building to try to take him. They wanted him so badly, they stayed there all night. They thought when he came out the next morning, they would catch him.

Judges 16:3 "And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put [them] upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that [is] before Hebron."

The huge "gate of the city" in the ancient Near East was often covered with metal to prevent its being burned during an attack. The combined weight of the door "posts" and doors, "bar and all", which "Samson" bore "upon his shoulders" some 38 miles mostly uphill to "Hebron": was, therefore, tremendous. Samson was a man of incredible strength!

The hilltop; "before Hebron" was some 40 miles away. While this was a superhuman feat, it was completely self-serving, done to anger and mock the Philistines rather than simply to escape. Both Samson's moral weakness and his physical strength were on display here.

Samson did not fear them. He left the city at midnight with the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts holding them on his shoulders. He not only left, but made it easy for others to come in by removing their gates.

Verses 4-5: The mention of the Philistine "lords" who ruled each city underscores that capturing Samson was their number one priority. Realizing that they would never defeat him in a test of strength, his enemies decided to destroy him in a test of weakness, using Samson's infatuation with "Delilah" against him.

Judges 16:4 "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name [was] Delilah."

“Loved ... Delilah”: His weakness for women of low character and Philistine loyalty reappeared (compare Prov. 6:27-28). He erred continually by going to her daily (verse 16), allowing himself to be entrapped in her deceptions.

It is not apparent where this city is. All we know is that Delilah lived there, and Samson loved her. We do know this woman is another Philistine.

Judges 16:5 "And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength [lieth], and by what [means] we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred [pieces] of silver."

The offer of 5,500 shekels of silver (1,100 from each of the five lords) was an utterly stunning amount, 550 times the annual wage and three times more units of silver than the units of gold Gideon received after defeating the Midianite kings (8:26).

These pieces of silver were shekels. This would have been a great sum of money to pay for one man. They knew that Samson's power was supernatural, they just did not realize it was from God. The Philistines did not know about the Nazarite vow.

Verses 6-14: Seduction is usually subtle, exposing a person's vulnerability inch by inch. In each of Delilah's three attempts to discover the source of Samson's "strength", Samson revealed something without giving away his secret. By staying with her, however, he progressively revealed the truth, which led to his demise.

Judges 16:6 "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength [lieth], and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee."

At a proper opportunity, when in his hands and caresses, as Josephus relates, and introduced it in an artful manner. Admiring his strange exploits, and wondering how he could perform them.

"Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth": Which she proposed seemingly out of mere curiosity. And as it would be a proof of his affection to her, to impart the secret to her.

"And wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee": Not that she suggested to him that she was desirous to have him afflicted. Or to try the experiment herself in order to afflict him. But to know by what means, if he was bound, it would be afflicting to him so that he could not relieve himself. She knew he might be bound, if he would admit of it, as he had been, but she wanted to know how he might be bound, so as to be held, and could not loose himself.

Why in the world would he tell her how he could be defeated? That is exactly what she is asking of him, because she wants the silver shekels they have offered her as a bribe.

Judges 16:7 "And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man."

"Samson said": Samson played a lying game and gave away his manhood, here a little, there a little. He also played with giving away his secret, and finally gave it up, i.e., "told her all" (verse 17). He could be bought for a price, and Delilah paid it. Compare Esau selling his birthright (Gen. 25:29-33) and Judas denying Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16).

This is saying, he would be no stronger than any other normal man. Samson was not the giant of a man that many have shown him to be. He was not physically strong. He was strong in the Spirit of God. If he had big muscles and was a big man, they would not have been looking for another reason for his strength. They would have attributed it to his muscles. He has given Delilah a false reason.

Judges 16:8 "Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him with them."

To the chamber where she was with Samson, she having acquainted them with what he had told her.

"Seven green withes, which had not been dried": Just such as he had described and directed to.

"And she bound him with them": Taking an opportunity, very likely, when he was asleep, and drunk too, according to Josephus. The Philistines did not attempt to bind him, supposing that he would not admit them to do it, if aware of them. And they might fear, if asleep, he might awake before they could do it, and fall upon them and destroy them. But as for Delilah, if she had been found at it, she could have excused it as a piece of curiosity, being willing to try whether he told her truth or not.

The "withes" were catgut strings. Many surgeons used to use that to sew people up with, because of its strength. She tied him with the strings for the Philistines.

Judges 16:9 "Now [there were] men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines [be] upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known."

Very likely some of the servants of the lords of the Philistines, who were placed privately on purpose. That when an opportunity offered, they might rush out, and fall upon Samson. Josephus calls them soldiers.

"Abiding with her in the chamber": In a private part of it, or otherwise they could not be said to lie in wait. In it may mean near it. Perhaps it was in the next apartment to hers, where they were at.

"And she said unto him, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson": Are just ready to fall upon thee, and seize thee. This she said to arouse him, and try whether he could break the withes or not, before she called in the men that lay in wait. And whether he had told her the truth or not.

"And he brake the withes as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire": Or "smells it"; as soon as it comes near it. A thread of tow or linen catches the fire presently, it being so weak that it cannot stand before the least force of it. So easily did the withes give way, and were broken, when Samson did but just stir himself, and move his arms.

"So his strength was not known": By Delilah, nor by the Philistines. That is, where it lay, so as that it might be weakened. For otherwise it was known by the easy breaking of the withes.

These men were lying in wait, to jump out and capture Samson the minute they realize he is helpless. They were afraid to try, if he were not tied. He had killed thousands of Philistines already. They did not want to be the next. Of course, when she cried out to Samson, the ties fell off of him.

Judges 16:10 "And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound."

Not on the same day, but some time after, as Kimchi observes. When an opportunity offered, and he was in like circumstances as before. For had she immediately attacked him, it might have created some suspicion in him of a design against him.

"Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies": Deceived her with lies, by telling her the other day that if he was bound with green withes, he should become as weak as other men. Which she, out of curiosity as she might pretend, had tried, and had found to be false. And which, she might add, was an argument of want of true love to her, to mock her in such a manner.

"Now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound": So as to be held.

She pretends to be embarrassed at what Samson has done to get him to tell her the real reason for his great strength. Why he is listening to her is hard to rationalize. This too, has to be the will of God.

Judges 16:11 "And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man."

Abarbanel presents Samson replying to her, that he had told her the truth at first, only forgot one circumstance. That the "cords", for so he takes the word for "wishes" to signify, should be "new", such as were never used, as follows.

"If they bind me fast with new ropes, that never were occupied": The word signifies thick ropes, which, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, were trebled, or made of three cords twisted together, and those such as were just made. And had never been put to any use, and so strong and firm.

"Then shall I be weak, and be as another man (see Judges 16:7).

"New ropes" (compare 15:13).

These were large twisted ropes. If anything will hold him, they should. This again, is just another delay from him to see if she will tell the Philistines.

Judges 16:12 "Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines [be] upon thee, Samson. And [there were] liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread."

Tried this experiment with him, according to his directions, being very desirous of getting the sum of money offered her.

"And said unto him, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson": Using the same words, and with the same view as she had done before (Judges 16:9).

"And there were liers in wait abiding the chamber": As before, ready upon occasion to rush in upon him, as soon as any notice was given them.

"And he brake them from off his arms like a thread": As easily as a thread of linen can be snapped asunder.

"Delilah" means pining with desire, or coquette. She was greedy for gain. She pretended to love Samson, but she really was trying to trick him so the Philistines could capture him. The Philistine men were lying in wait to jump out, and attack him the minute they find where his strength comes from.

Judges 16:13 "And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web."

At another time, when she thought it most proper to upbraid him with his deception of her.

"Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies": Both the times that she had solicited him to impart the secret of his strength to her.

"Tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound": Tell me the real truth, and deceive me no more.

"And he said unto her, if thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web": It seems that Samson's hair was parted into seven locks, which no doubt hung down very long. And now he tells her, that if these were interwoven with the warp which was upon the beam in a loom nearby. Perhaps in the same room, where Delilah used to weave, as was the custom of those times, and in various nations; his strength would be weakened.

It seems that Samson just will not realize that she does not care for him at all. She just wants to find where his strength lies, so she can help the Philistines capture him. She is interested in her reward for helping capture him. Again, Samson tells her something that is not true.

Judges 16:14 "And she fastened [it] with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines [be] upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web."

That is, after she had interwoven the locks of his hair into the warp. She fastened the beam on which it was with the pin, that it might not roll back. Or else her machine or loom to the ground, that it might stand more firmly. Or the web into which the hair was woven, with the hair itself. Which of them is right, it is difficult to say. The whole will be plain and easy, and which after the preceding verse runs thus; "and fastenest "them" with a pin to the wall, then shall I be weak as another man. And it came to pass when he slept, and Delilah took seven locks of his head, and wove "them" in the web, and fastened them with a pin to the wall;" and then it follows as here.

"And said unto him, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson; as she had twice before.

"And he awaked out of his sleep": In which he was during her weaving his locks into the web. And this makes it probable that he was in the same circumstances when she bound him both with withes and ropes, though it is not expressed.

"And went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web": Carried off not the pin of the beam only, but the beam itself, and the warp on it, and the whole web into which his hair was woven. The Septuagint version is, he took the pin of the web out of the wall; and the Vulgate Latin, the pin with the hairs and web.

She tries everything Samson tells her that will weaken him, and make him as other men. He is so strong, that the web is destroyed by his hair when he gets up.

Judges 16:15 "And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart [is] not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength [lieth]."

She took an opportunity, when he was caressing her, to upbraid him with dissembled love, and a false heart. Thou hast mocked me these three times. She had urged him to tell her where his strength lay, and by what it might be weakened. First pretending it might be done by binding him with green withes, and then with new ropes, and a third time by weaving his locks into the web.

"And hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth": The thing so frequently and so importunately requested.

Now she accuses Samson of not loving her. What about her love for Samson? She accuses him of mocking her three times. She is saying, if he really loved her he would tell her where his strength lies.

Judges 16:16 "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, [so] that his soul was vexed unto death;"

Lay at him day after day to communicate the secret to him, gave him no rest, but was incessant in her applications to him.

"She pressed him daily with her words": Though disappointed and mortified, this vile woman resolved to persevere. And conscious how completely he was enslaved by his passion for her, she assailed him with a succession of blandishing arts, till she at length discovered the coveted secret.

Her constant nagging to know his secret finally pressed so hard on him that it seemed it vexed his soul unto death.

Judges 16:17 "That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I [have been] a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any [other] man."

"If I be shaven": His strength came from his unique relation to God, based on his Nazirite pledge. His long hair was only a sign of it. When Delilah became more important to him than God, his strength was removed.

Samson's hair itself had no mystical strength, but Samson was "a Nazarite unto God", and his long hair was an outward symbol of dedication to the Lord (Num. 6:5). This dedication is what enabled Samson to do his mighty deeds. What a sad commentary on Samson's character that he gave in to a woman who he knows would use her knowledge against him.

This time he has been provoked into telling her the truth about his strength. She was not familiar with a Nazarite vow, so he tells her in detail about what the Nazarite vow is all about. All that he tells her this time, is true.

Judges 16:18 "And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand."

From the seriousness and solemnity with which he spoke, she concluded that she was at length mistress of the important secret.

"The lords of the Philistines brought money in their hands": See one of the bravest men then in the world bought and sold as a sheep for the slaughter! How does this instance tarnish all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength!

Delilah is assured this time that Samson is telling her the truth about his strength. It is strange that Samson could not see that she would destroy him when she finds this out. Her plan from the

beginning, was to turn him over to the Philistines and collect the large sum of silver they had offered her. The lords of the Philistines believed her, and this time brought money to pay her for her treachery.

Judges 16:19 "And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him."

Giving him, as some think, a sleepy potion. Or however encouraged him to take a nap upon her knees, and by her fondness lulled him to sleep.

"And she called for a man": A barber; in former times to shave was the work of a servant and sometimes of a woman. She gave orders for one to be sent for. Jarchi calls him a messenger of the lords of the Philistines.

"And she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head": This shows that they were not wove into one another, and made but one lock, as some interpret what she was before directed to do.

"And she began to afflict him": As his hair was shaving off. Though he was asleep, yet he discovered some uneasiness, the effects of it began to appear. Though the word "began" here may be redundant (as in Num. 25:1), and then the meaning is, that she afflicted him, or again afflicted him. For she had afflicted him, or at least attempted it, three times before, and therefore did not begin now. This Hebraism is used in (Mark 4:1), and frequently in Jewish writings.

"And his strength went from him": Sensibly and gradually. Though some understand it of her shaking him in a violent manner to awake him, and shrieking and crying out terribly to frighten him, with her old cry of the Philistines being on him. And of her binding him, though not expressed. Whereby she perceived his strength was gone, and he could not loose himself.

It was not actually the hair that gave him the strength, but what the hair stood for. It was the keeping of the Nazarite vow that made him strong. As long as he kept the hair, the vow was active. God was within him, strengthening him. The cutting of the hair symbolized the breaking of his vow to God. "Seven" means spiritually complete. Perhaps this number showed his standing with God. His strength is now gone. He is like any other man.

Verses 20-21: These are some of the saddest words in the Bible: "the Lord was departed from him" (Num. 14:42-43). This time, the now pathetic Samson was paraded through the city, a picture of helplessness. He went from a champion of the Israelites to a prisoner in the Philistine camp and a slave to his own sin. Sadly, the man who lived according to what was right in his eyes (14:2-3), lost his eyesight.

Judges 16:20 "And she said, The Philistines [be] upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."

He wist not that the Lord was departed from him”: Here was the tragedy of the wrath of abandonment. His sin had caused him to forfeit the power of God’s presence. This principle is seen (in Gen. 6:3; Prov. 1:24-31; Matt. 15:14; Rom. 1:24-32; see note on 10:13-14).

What a sad awakening. The strength of the LORD is no longer in him. He has broken his vow to God. He felt no different physically than he had before. He felt as if things would be the same as before, but they weren't. Samson's weakness for beautiful women had gotten him into this predicament.

Judges 16:21 "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."

“Gaza”: The last town encountered in southwest Palestine as a traveler went from Jerusalem toward Egypt, near the coast. It was nearly 40 miles from Samson’s birthplace, Zorah. There he was humiliated.

Now, that he did not have the strength of the LORD, they bound him and took him away. The first thing they did to him was poke out his eyes. This seems to have been a cruel punishment of that day. This would be a fate worse than death. This grinding was one of the most degrading forms of slave labor.

Judges 16:22 "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

“Hair ... began to grow”: His hair grew with his repentance, and his strength with his hair.

No matter how far God’s people fall away, His purposes are not jeopardized and the story is not yet finished. The detail that “the hair of his head began to grow again” suggests that God would yet work through Samson to accomplish the purpose for which he was born: delivering the people of Israel from the Philistines.

When a person breaks a Nazarite vow, he can start all over again keeping it and be restored in his vow. That is what is symbolized by the hair growing again. He has gone back into covenant with God. The hair symbolizes the presence of the Nazarite vow. His strength would come back, because he is filled with the power of God again.

Verses 23-25: The Philistines believed that their god “Dagan” was responsible for their capture of Samson. But their celebration would be short-lived, as God’s servant would prove God’s sovereignty.

Judges 16:23 “Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.”

“Dagon”: He was a sea-god, an idol with the head of a man and the body of a fish.

Dagon is probably to be identified with Dagan, a principal grain god often mentioned in the inscriptions of ancient Mesopotamia. Since Dagan/Dagon is attested in the Canaanite literature of ancient Ugarit as an important grain god, he probably occupied a similar status with the “Philistines”. The common Hebrew word for grain (*dagan*) is possible associated etymologically with the name of this pagan god.

The gathering together is like a festival, or a great party. They are celebrating the capture of Samson. They have given credit for his capture to their false god, Dagon.

Verses 24-30: The findings of archaeological excavations in the ancient Near East make certain the possibilities for such a large number of casualties. Also, excavations at Tell Qasile reveal a Philistine temple built in this very fashion. Not only would there be officials underneath the roofed patio, but a huge crown would have been on its roof, doubtless gathered at one end to see the spectacle of Israel’s hero, “Samson”. The collapse of the main supporting “pillars” would have killed large numbers instantly. Samson’s final act was more than one of mere vengeance; it wiped out the key Philistine leadership, thereby setting back the Philistine threat against Israel considerably. For once Samson had performed a selfless act, justifying his being mentioned among the heroes of the faith (in Hebrews 11:32).

Judges 16:24 "And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us."

“They praised their god”: It is tragic when a person’s sin contributes to the unsaved community giving praise to a false god, for God alone is worthy of praise.

Their god can do nothing. He is a false god. Samson had done this to himself. He had been a mighty warrior for God. He had given that up for love of a woman, who did not love him back. God wanted him to destroy the Philistines, so Israel would be free of them. He was destroying many of them single-handedly until he broke his Nazarite vow to God by telling Delilah where his strength came from.

Verses 25-27: The words “sport”, used twice in this verse, is a variation of the Hebrew verb “to laugh”. The entertainment provided by Samson was probably not connected to his wit or his strength but to his blindness. Placing obstacles in his way and striking or tripping him would be only a few of the cruel possibilities for tormenting a blind person in an unfamiliar place. So the

Philistine rulers brought out Samson to amuse and entertain as he stood blind between the pillars of the temple.

Judges 16:25 "And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars."

With wine, for which Gaza is famous in many writers. With eating and drinking, dancing, and music. For it was usual for the Heathens to feast in their temples, and especially no doubt they would on such an occasion as this.

"And they said, call for Samson, that he may make us sport": By which it seems that what is before said, "when the people saw him" (Judges 16:24), is said by anticipation. For as yet he was not in the temple, but in the prison. And therefore, a motion was made by some of the great personages, that he might be fetched from there, and they might have some fun with him.

"And they called for Samson out of the prison house": Sent some messengers to fetch him from thence.

"And he made them sport": Not actively, but passively. It cannot well be thought, that a man of so great a spirit as Samson was, and in such circumstances as he now was, would ever, either by words or gestures, do anything on purpose to divert his enemies, and make them laugh. But he was the object of their sport and scorn, and he bore it patiently. Their cruel mocking, buffeting, and spitting; in which he was a type of Christ. It was a diversion to them to see him in his rattling chains, groping, and blundering along from post to pillar. One perhaps giving him a box in the ear, or a slap of the face, another plucking him by his nose or beard, and another spitting in his face. And others taunting at him, and reproaching him.

"And they set him between the pillars": That he might be the better seen, and in which there was the direction of Providence to bring about what follows.

They wanted to entertain their guests by showing off the hopelessness of Samson, the great Philistine killer. "Making sport" means they were making fun of him. It appears, whatever they were doing with Samson became boring to them in their drunken state, and they brought him back and put him between the pillars.

Judges 16:26 "And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them."

And led him about; as nothing is more common now than for a blind man to be led by a boy.

"Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth": He might by information know in what manner the house was built, that it was supported by pillars. If he had never been in it before when he had his sight; and he might understand, by some means or another, that he was near these pillars. And placed between them, though being blind, did not know which way to

direct his hands towards them to feel them. As he proposed to do, and therefore desired the lad that led him to guide his hands towards them.

"That I may lean upon them": Being, as he might at least pretend to be, weary, as Josephus says. Either by grinding at the mill, or through being led to and fro in this house, that all might see him, and cast their flouts and jeers at him.

Since Samson was blind, they had to lead him everywhere. He tells the young man who was leading him, to take him to the pillars which held up the house that he might lean upon them.

Judges 16:27 "Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines [were] there; and [there were] upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport."

Within it, who were gathered together from all parts of the city, and perhaps from other places on this occasion.

"And all the lords of the Philistines were there": Their five lords, the lords of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

"And there were upon the roof three thousand men and women": It being a flat roof, as the houses in Canaan and Phoenicia, and the places adjacent, were; (see Deut. 22:8). And there might be some openings or windows in several parts of it, through which the people might see who were below them. And were within the house, and what was doing there, and particularly could have a sight of Samson through them as follows.

"That beheld while Samson made sport": Or was made a sport of; while he was buffeted and used in a ludicrous manner.

This was a very large gathering of Philistines having a party here. The weight of three thousand people is great. The pillars that held all of this up had to be very strong. The sudden removing of these two supporting pillars would bring the entire building, roof and all, tumbling down.

Verses 28-30: As one who had been humbled, Samson prayed for the opportunity "that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines" for gouging out his eyes. The Hebrew word for "bowed" suggests a twisting motion inferring that Samson turned the pillars off their stone bases, thus removing the support of the roof and causing its collapse. Samson accomplished more as a deliverer in his death than in his 20 years of judging Israel. Although unfaithfulness on the part of God's people does not prevent God's purposes, it proves tragic for the unfaithful ones.

Judges 16:28 "And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, 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."

In a pious manner, by mental prayer. Though he might possibly express it aloud, without being heard and observed by the people, amidst their noise and mirth. And if it was heard, it might only furnish out more ridicule and contempt. And be it as it may, the prayer must have been preserved by the Lord himself, and given by inspiration to the writer of this book. Since there were none that heard it that lived to relate it to others, no, not Samson himself.

"And said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee": A prayer of repentance and trust pours from Samson. The office that I bear as judge of Israel, the reproaches cast upon me, and which fall upon thy people, cause, and interest. Remember thy lovingkindness, formerly expressed to me, the gracious promises made unto me, and the help and assistance I have had from thee.

"And strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God": And it was a prayer of faith, as appears by its being heard, accepted, and answered. And shows that his strength did not come with his hair, but was owing to the immediate communication of it from the Lord.

"That I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes": Once for all, and no more; take his last and final vengeance on them. Or one vengeance for his two eyes, or vengeance for one of his two eyes; either senses will bear. This was said not from a private spirit of revenge for personal injuries; but as a civil magistrate. A judge of Israel, whose office it was to be a revenger, to execute wrath. And though he mentions only his own eyes, yet he suffered the loss of them, and every other indignity and injury, as a public person. The common enemy of the Philistines, and destroyer of their country, and protector of Israel. And in this character he now acted.

Before God had strengthened Samson without him asking. This is like a prayer of restoration to good relationship with God for Samson. Samson wants his supernatural strength back this one time, so he can take vengeance on these Philistines who are God's enemies, as well as his. They have poked his eyes out, and he wants to take vengeance.

Verses 29-30: Some Philistine temples had roofs overlooking a courtyard, above wooden columns planted on stone foundations. The central pillars were set close to furnish extra support for the roof. Here the victory celebration and taunts flung at the prisoner below drew a big crowd. The full strength of Samson, renewed by God, enabled him to buckle the columns. As a result, the roof collapsed and the victory was Israel's, not Philistia's. He died for the cause of his country and his God. He was not committing suicide, but rather bringing God's judgment on His enemies and willing to leave his own life or death to God. He was the greatest champion of all Israel, yet a man of passion capable of severe sin. Still, he is in the list of the faithful (compare Heb. 11:32).

Judges 16:29 "And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left."

Some have objected, that a building so large and as spacious as this was could not be supported by two pillars. And those placed in the middle, and so near to each other that Samson could lay

hold on them. On which it has been observed, that the architecture of the ancients is little known to us, and they might have curious and ingenious arts of building, now lost. And several authors have taken notice of two Roman theatres built by Curio that held abundantly more people than this house did, which were supported only by a single pin or hinge, as Pliny relates. And Westminster hall, which was built by William Rufus, and is two hundred and seventy feet long, and seventy four broad, and has a roof the largest in all Europe, is supported without any pillars at all. Add to all which, that mention being made of the two middle pillars of this house, supposes that there were others in other parts of it. Though these were the main and principal ones, on which the weight of the building chiefly lay. Kimchi observes, that the word signifies to incline or bend, as if Samson made the pillars to bend or bow. But it is a better sense that he laid hold of them.

"Of the one with his right hand, and the other with his left": And thus he stood with his arms stretched out, as Jesus on the cross, of whom he was a type, as often observed.

It seems this young man who led Samson, had indeed put him between the two main posts of the building. Samson wraps his arms around these two supporting posts of the building.

Judges 16:30 "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with [all his] might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that [were] therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than [they] which he slew in his life."

"Let me die with the Philistines": I.e. I am contented to die, so I can but therewith contribute anything to the vindication of God's glory, here trampled upon, and to the deliverance of God's people. This is no example nor encouragement to those that wickedly murder themselves; for Samson did not desire nor procure his own death voluntarily. But only by mere force and necessity, because he did desire, and by his office was obliged to seek, the destruction of these enemies and blasphemers of God. And the oppressors of his people. Which in these circumstances he could not effect without his own death. And his case was not much unlike theirs that in the heat of battle run upon the very mouth of the cannon. Or other evident and certain danger of death, to execute a design upon the enemy. Or theirs, who go in a fire-ship to destroy the enemy's best ships, though they are sure to perish in the enterprise. Moreover, Samson did this by Divine instinct and approval, as God's answer to his prayer manifests. And that he might be a type of Christ, who by voluntarily undergoing death destroyed the enemies of God, and of his people.

God indeed strengthened him, and the building came tumbling down. The three thousand guests died in the fall of the building. Samson had struck one more blow to free the Israelites from these wicked Philistines. He had killed many of the Philistines before. We do not know the exact number. It is interesting that one man, filled with the power of God, killed literally thousands of the Philistines. God and one are a majority, regardless of how large the enemy is.

Judges 16:31 "Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought [him] up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years."

This awful catastrophe seems to have so completely paralyzed the Philistines that they neither attempted to prevent the removal of Samson's corpse, nor to molest the Israelites for a long time after. Thus, the Israelite's hero rendered by his strength and courage signal services to his country, and was always regarded as the greatest of its champions. But his slavish subjection to the domination of his passions was unworthy of so great a man and lessens our respect for his character. Yet he is ranked among the ancient worthies who maintained a firm faith in God (Heb. 11:32).

We are not sure whether his mother had other children after Samson or not. At the time of his birth, she had no other children. We are not sure then, whether brethren here means natural brothers, or men of his tribe, the Danites. They all were indebted to Samson. They found his body in the rubble, and buried him in his father's buryingplace.

Chapter 16 Questions

1. Who did Samson go to Gaza to see?
2. What distinction did Gaza have?
3. When the Gazites heard he was coming, what did they do?
4. Whose enemy were the Philistines?
5. When did Samson arise, and leave the city?
6. What did he take with him, when he left the city?
7. Who had Samson fallen in love with?
8. Delilah is a _____.
9. What did the lords of the Philistines ask her to do?
10. How much silver did they offer her for the job?
11. What did Delilah ask Samson, when she saw him the next time?
12. What did he tell her?
13. How was Samson strong?
14. What were "withes"?
15. Where were the men hiding to capture Samson?
16. When she cried out to Samson, what happened to the withes?

17. What did Delilah say Samson had done to her?
18. What was the second thing Samson told Delilah would render him helpless?
19. Did it?
20. What does "Delilah" mean?
21. Why did she pretend to love Samson?
22. What was the third thing he told her would take his strength?
23. She accuses Samson of not _____ her.
24. Why did he finally tell her the truth?
25. Exactly what did he tell her?
26. Who did she immediately tell?
27. What did they bring to Delilah?
28. When did she have the man to cut Samson's hair?
29. How many locks did he have?
30. What happened, when his hair was cut?
31. Was the strength in the hair? Explain.
32. What did Samson's captives do to him?
33. While Samson was imprisoned, what began to happen?
34. What did this cause to happen?
35. How many people were at the party of the Philistines?
36. Who was the Philistine's false god?
37. What part did Samson have in the party?
38. When the partygoers were through with Samson, what did he ask his guide to do?
39. What did he ask God for strength to do?
40. Where did they take his body to bury it?