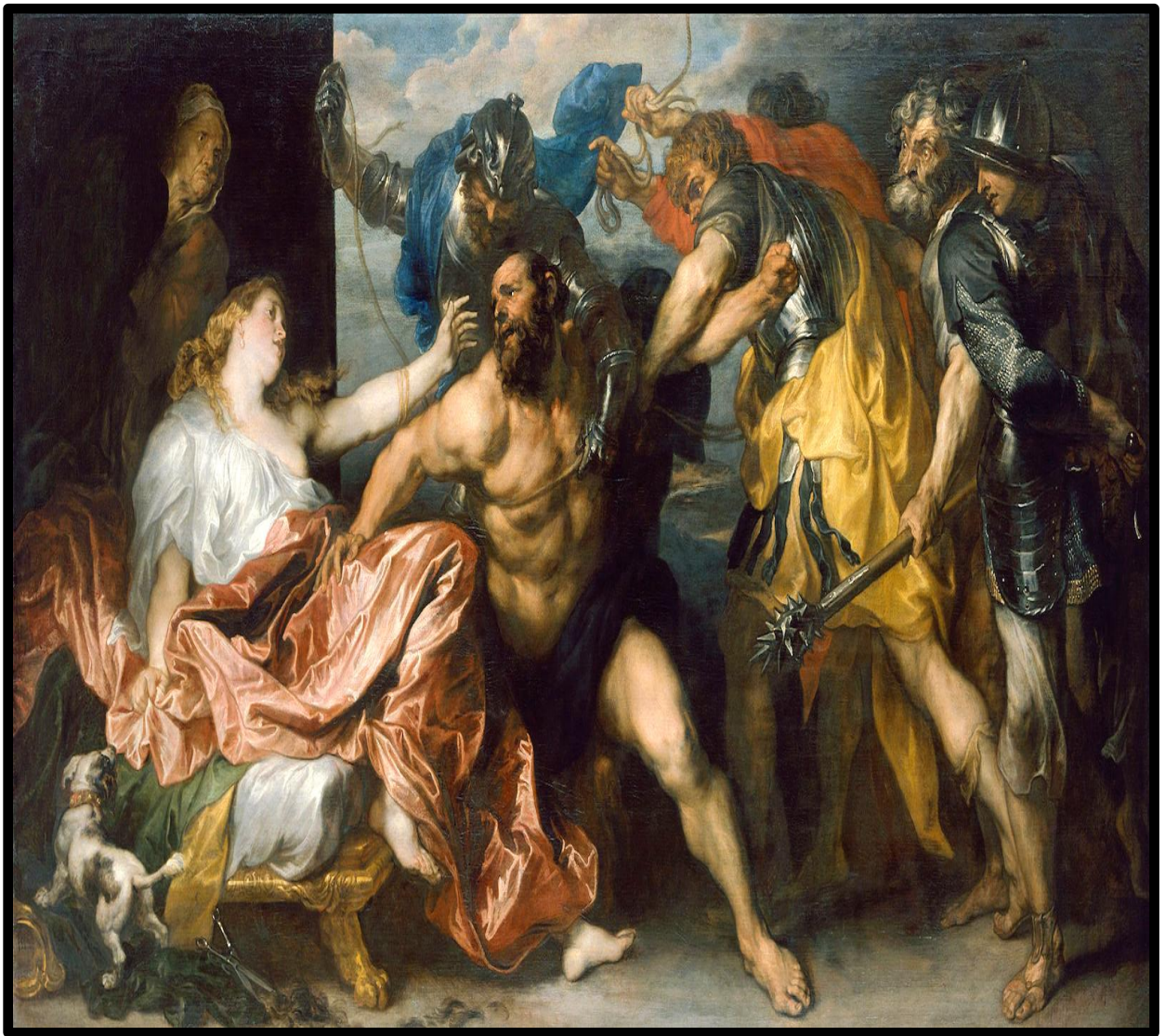


**LIVING GODS WILL**

**Vessel of God**

**SAMSON**



**Samson and Delilah by Anthonis Van Dyck**

**Born:** 1096 BC, Zorah, Canaan

**Died:** 1051 BC, Gaza, Canaan

**Samson** was born of a **miracle birth** by God.

**Samson** lived the life of a **Nazirite**.

**Samson** was a **Judge** of Israel for **20 years**.

**Samson** kills a **lion** with his bare hands.

**Samson's** life is one of contradiction. He was a man of great physical strength yet displayed great moral weakness. **He was a judge for 20 years and "a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth" (Judges 13:5)**, yet he continually broke the rules of a Nazirite.

The **Spirit of God** came upon him many times, giving him great strength to fight the Philistines, the oppressors of the Israelites. This in spite of the fact that **Samson** was a womanizer and a vengeful man.

**Samson's** life illustrates the necessity of saying "no" to fleshly temptation, God's use of even flawed, sinful men to accomplish His will, the consequences of sin, and the mercy of God.

### **The life of Samson – his birth**

**Samson's** story begins with the announcement of his birth. A Danite man named **Manoah** was married to a woman who was unable to have children (**Judges 13:2**). The angel of the Lord visited the wife and told her, "**You are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son" (verse 3)**.

The angel also commanded her to follow the rules of the **Nazirite** during her pregnancy—no fermented drink, nothing made of grapes, and no non-kosher food. The woman told Manoah, and he prayed that the angel would pay them another visit and give more information about their future son's upbringing (**verse 8**).

God answered Manoah's prayer. The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife again, and she ran to get her husband. The angel then repeated his message to Manoah, who asked the angel's name.

In response, the angel said, "**Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding" (Judges 13:18)**. Manoah then sacrificed a goat on a rock, and "**as the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame" (verse 20)**.

Only then did Manoah realize whom they had been speaking to: **“We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. ‘We have seen God!’” (verse 22)**. True to God’s word, Manoah’s wife gave birth to a son, and they named him **Samson**. The Lord blessed him as he grew.

### **The life of Samson – from temptation to sin**

The book of Judges then jumps ahead in **Samson’s** story to his search for a wife. He wanted to marry a Philistine woman despite his parents’ protests and in violation of God’s law against intermarriage with pagans.

His mother and father accompanied **Samson** to Timnah to make the arrangements for his betrothal. On the way a lion attacked **Samson**. **“The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands” (Judges 14:6)**.

Later, **Samson** passed by the carcass of the lion and found it filled with a honeycomb, which he ate. This was a violation of the Nazirite law: **“Throughout the period of his separation to the Lord he must not go near a dead body” (Numbers 6:6)**.

**Samson** seemed to know he had done wrong because, when he gave the honey to his parents, **“he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass” (Judges 14:9)**.

The customary wedding feast described in **Judges 14:10** was, literally, a **“drinking party.”** As a Nazirite, **Samson** was to **“abstain from wine and other fermented drink” (Numbers 6:3)**.

Although the author of Judges does not indicate whether **Samson** personally drank wine or fermented drink at this feast, it was yet another occasion that led to sin. During the feast, **Samson** offered a wager: whoever could solve his riddle would receive thirty changes of clothes and thirty linen garments (**Judges 14:12**).

**Samson’s** new Philistine wife betrayed him and gave the answer to his riddle to her countrymen. Furious, **Samson** killed thirty Philistines and gave their possessions to those who had **“solved”** the riddle.

**Samson’s** wife was then given to another man. The whole sordid matter was used by God for His purposes: **“This was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines” (verse 4)**.

### **The life of Samson – God will use flawed, sinful men to accomplish His will**

**Samson** willingly went into situations that led to sin, but, each time, God used him for His glory. **Even our sin cannot prevent God’s sovereign will from coming to pass.**

**Samson**, full of anger and vengeance, swore to “**get even with the Philistines**” for stealing his wife from him (**Judges 15:3**). He burned the Philistines’ crops (**verses 4–5**) and, later, after the Philistines murdered his wife, “**attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them**” (**verse 8**).

**Samson** hid out in Judah for a while, but the Judeans, worried that **Samson** was worsening their situation with the Philistines, tied him up and delivered him to the enemy (**Judges 15:8–13**).

As the Philistines approached their incapacitated prey, “**the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon [Samson]. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands**” (**verse 14**). **Samson** picked up the jawbone of a donkey and slaughtered 1,000 Philistines with it (**verse 15**).

In Gaza, **Samson** hired a prostitute. That night, the people of Gaza learned that **Samson** was in their city, and they lay in wait to kill him at dawn. **Samson** escaped by rising in the middle of the night, when “**he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron**” (**Judges 16:3**).

### The life of Samson – sin has consequences

God’s purpose of defeating the Philistines was advancing through **Samson**, but **Samson** was still held accountable for his sin, and he experienced consequences for his foolishness and disobedience.

**Samson** met and fell in love with a Philistine named **Delilah**. The rulers of the Philistines bribed Delilah to discover the secret of **Samson’s** strength and betray him into their hands (**Judges 16:5**).

Delilah began to beg **Samson** to know the secret of his strength. After telling her some lies, **Samson** finally revealed that his strength was due to his separation to the Lord; specifically, the fact that his hair had never been cut (**see Numbers 6:5**).

Delilah informed the Philistine rulers of **Samson’s** secret and then waited until **Samson** was asleep, and she called for someone to come shave his head. She woke him with a cry: “**Samson, the Philistines are upon you!**” (**verse 20**). **Samson** stood up to fight, “**but he did not know that the LORD had left him**” (**verse 20**).

**Samson’s** continual, willful disobedience had reached an end. He had grown confident in his strength to the point that he felt he could spurn any law; it seems he finally reached the point that he thought he did not need God.

As a result, “**the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison**” (**Judges 16:21**). **Samson** finally had to face the consequences of his actions.

**The life of Samson – God is merciful**

The Philistines thought they would celebrate their great victory over **Samson**, and the rulers assembled in the temple of their god, Dagon, to praise him for delivering **Samson** into their power (**Judges 16:23**).

During the festivities, they brought **Samson** from prison to entertain them. Leaning against the support pillars of the pagan temple, "**Samson prayed to the LORD, 'O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes'"** (**verse 28**).

God mercifully granted **Samson's** request. **Samson** "**pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it"** (**verse 30**). **Samson** killed more when he died—about 3,000 Philistines—than while he lived.

**Samson** was a man of faith—he is mentioned in the Bible's "**Hall of Faith**" (**Hebrews 11:32**). At the same time, he was a man of the flesh, and his many mistakes serve as a warning to those who would play with fire and expect not to get burned.

The life of **Samson** shows us the importance of relying on God's strength, not our own power; **following God's will**, not our own stubbornness; and seeking the Lord's wisdom, not our own understanding.

**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE**

**Judges 13:1** Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. **2** Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was **Manoah**; and his wife was barren and had no children. **3** And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. **4** Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. **5** For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a **Nazirite to God from the womb**; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

**Judges 13:24** So the woman bore a son and called his name **Samson**; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. **25** And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Judges 14:5** So **Samson** went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. **6** And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.



**Samsons Youth by Léon Bonnat**