



Two links

- Classes on the Book of Judges <https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=8423>
- This series <https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=9986>

1. Song of Songs 5:11

His head is like fine gold; His hair is braided, black like a raven.

The Conventional Model (continued)

2. Sefer haChinuch (anonymous, 13th century), Mitzvah 374

Whenever our intellect can reduce its labour on behalf of the physical, and place as its goal the service of its Creator, it will be good for the person, so long as [the intellect] does not abandon the work of its 'house' entirely, destroying it, for that would also be a sin, as the King wishes to have such a creation... And this is the sanctity of the nazirite and his elevated level, when he leaves the service of the physical and he breaks his desires in a way that does not entirely demolish the 'house', such as avoiding drinking wine, and growing his hair, for this humbles the *yetzer*...

3. Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 10:5

It was revealed before Gd that Samson would follow his eyes, and so He commanded that he be a nazirite, not to drink wine, since wine leads to impropriety.

4. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (13th-14th century France), Commentary to Judges 13:3

And because it was clear and known before the Creator of the world that Samson would pursue women and suffer through them, Gd planned from birth and the womb and conception to prevent it...

5. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prohibited Relationships 13:14-16

Do not entertain the thought that Samson, Rescuer of Israel, or Solomon, King of Israel, who was called a "friend of Gd", married foreign women when they were not Jewish. Rather, the secret of the matter is thus: The proper mitzvah is that when a male or female outsider comes to convert we investigate him to see whether he is coming to join the religion to gain money or power, or out of fear...

And because Solomon converted women and married them, and Samson also converted and married, and it was known that [the women] pursued this only for benefit and were not converted by a [true] court, the text viewed them as idolaters, remaining prohibited. Further, their end demonstrated their original intent, for they served their idols and built altars, and the text viewed it as though [Solomon] had built them, as Kings I 11:7 says, "Then Solomon built an altar."

6. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th-16th century Spain), commentary to Judges 14:1

We have seen many times in the stories of the prophets that they occasionally acted against the rules, so that the service of Gd would emerge from those deeds... Gd enabled him to do this, because even though those activities were in themselves mixed up, vengeance against the Philistines would emerge from them.

7. Talmud, Sotah 9b

Judges 14:4 says, "And his father and mother did not know that it was from Gd" – but when he did it, he followed what seemed good to him.

Finally: A Man of Restraint

8. Judges 15:11-14 (JPS 1985 edition, c/o sefaria.org)

Thereupon three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, "You knew that the Philistines rule over us; why have you done this to us?" He replied, "As they did to me, so I did to them." "We have come down," they told him, "to take you prisoner and to hand you over to the Philistines." "But swear to me,"

said Samson to them, "that you yourselves will not attack me." "We won't," they replied. "We will only take you prisoner and hand you over to them; we will not slay you." So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

9. Judges 16:2-3 (JPS 1985 edition, c/o sefaria.org)

The Gazites [learned] that Samson had come there, so they gathered and lay in ambush for him in the town gate the whole night; and all night long they kept whispering to each other, "When daylight comes, we'll kill him." But Samson lay in bed only till midnight. At midnight he got up, grasped the doors of the town gate together with the two gateposts, and pulled them out along with the bar. He placed them on his shoulders and carried them off to the top of the hill that is near Hebron.

10. Judges 16:5-20 (JPS 1985 edition, c/o sefaria.org)

So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me, what makes you so strong? And how could you be tied up and made helpless?" Samson replied, "If I were to be tied with seven fresh tendons that had not been dried, I should become as weak as an ordinary man." ...

11. Judges 16:21 (JPS 1985 edition, c/o sefaria.org)

They brought him down to Gaza and shackled him in bronze fetters, and he became a mill slave in the prison.

The Role Model Model

12. Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (19th century Ukraine), Commentary to Samuel I 1:3

The text said that no one ascended from Shiloh, only that man ascended...

13. Samuel I 3:1

And the youth, Samuel, served Gd before Eli, and the word of Gd was rare in those days; prophecies were not common.

14. Prof. Yechezkel Kaufmann (20th century Israel), Judges, pg. 243

Here we see magical substance change its nature, a magical idea clothed in the form of a religious idea... Beside the magical sign we find its Israelite translation. Immediately after "And his strength left him" it says, "for Gd had left him."

15. A Demonstration

- Chosen by Gd
- A Divine agent
- Source of his strength
- Source of the loss of his strength
- The final prayer

Review Questions

- 1) Why does the Torah present the nazirite's brand of vow separately from other vows?
- 2) Why does Samson's mother take on some of the laws of a nazirite?
- 3) What are the two models of a nazirite?
- 4) Within each model, why was Samson required to be a nazirite?
- 5) Why was Samson required to be an eternal nazirite, without a break even to cut his hair?
- 6) Did Samson succeed as a nazirite?

Layers of Betrayal

16. Of Others

- 14:3 The Philistine Wife
- 16:17 The Haircut
- 16:26 The Philistine Youth?

17. By Others

- 14:15 The riddle
- 14:20 His wife, given away
- 15:6 The Philistines who attacked his wife and in-laws?
- 15:12 The tribe of Judah
- 16:2 The *zonah*?
- 16:18 The haircut

18. Jerusalem Talmud, Terumot 8:4

We have learned: If groups of people were traveling on the road and they encountered non-Jews, who said, "Give us one of yours and we will kill him, or we will kill all of you," then even if all of them will be killed, they may not surrender a single life of Israel. If the attackers designated one, as happened with Sheva ben Bichri, they surrender him and are not killed.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Only if the victim is liable for death like Sheva ben Bichri.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Even if he is not liable for death like Sheva ben Bichri.

19. Jerusalem Talmud, Terumot 8:4

Ulla bar Koshev was demanded by the government, and he fled to Lod, to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. They surrounded the area and said, "If you don't give him to us, we will destroy the area!" Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi appeased him, and turned him over to them. Eliyahu, who is remembered for the good, was accustomed to appearing to him, and no one he did not. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi fasted multiple fasts, and he appeared to him. [Eliyahu] said to him, "Shall I appear to traitors?!" He replied, "Did I not follow the mishnah [lesson]?" He responded, "Is this the lesson of the pious?!"

20. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (20th century Egypt, Israel), Yabia Omer 10:Yoreh Deah 6:2

It is also possible that they thought he would be saved from them, as happened in the end.

Samson's Faith

21. Expressions of Faith

- 14:3 "My eyes"
- 15:12 I'll go quietly
- 15:18 Gd, please send me water!
- 16:2 Here I am, come and get me!
- 16:17 Divulging his secret
- 16:20 I will rise!

22. Judges 16:20 (JPS 1985 edition, c/o sefaria.org)

She cried, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" And he awoke from his sleep, thinking he would break loose and shake himself free as he had the other times. For he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

23. Rabbi David Kimchi (12th-13th century France), Radak to Shoftim 16:20

Had he not told her his entire heart, knowing that when he would shave his strength would leave him...? But he forgot in his sleep that which he had told her... Or the meaning of "And he did not know" is that he knew that his strength had left him, but he did not know that Gd had left him, for he thought that even though his strength had left him, Gd would help him this time lest he fall into the hands of the Philistines.