

Birth of Samson



Scripture Reference: [Judges 13-15](#)

Suggested Theme: God keeps His promises. Keep your promises and think carefully before making one.

Memory Verse: “If you make a promise to God, don’t be slow to keep it. God is not happy with foolish people. Give God what you promised.” [Ecclesiastes 5:4, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

The Israelites drifted away from the Lord again, and the Philistines began to harass and hurt them. The Lord blessed a childless couple with the birth of a son named Samson. The Lord told Samson’s parents that Samson was to live by a vow (promise) never to cut his hair or drink any alcohol. He would be a Judge of Israel and have special strength from God. Samson kept the vow, and as he grew up, his strength became well-known throughout the land.

Background Study:

[Click here for The Book of Judges: The Big Picture.](#)

As soon as Gideon was dead, the Israelites once again drifted away from God. They turned to idols ([Judges 8:33-35](#)). The same cycle of the time of the Judges continued once again. This time, Samson would be the Judge. Three other Judges came and went in the years between Gideon and Samson. They were Tola, Jair, and Jephthah. These Judges, like Samson, acted on behalf of smaller parts of Israel.

The Philistines did not present the Israelites with as difficult a challenge as other peoples, such as the Canaanites and Midianites, but they presented a more chronic challenge. It was not until the reign of David that the Philistines were put down for good. The Philistines are believed to have been part of the Sea Peoples group. They probably were immigrants from islands in the northern Mediterranean. They occupied the coastal plain of southwestern Israel, taking over land that had been allocated to the Israelite tribes of Dan and Judah. In fact, the Danites (those from the tribe of Dan) suffered so badly from the Philistines that most of the survivors moved far to the north. The Philistines were using nonviolent means of trade and intermarriage to gain control over the Israelites. Consequently, many Israelites were not interested in antagonising them.

One Danite who stayed in Canaan was Manoah. He and his wife were not able to have children. An angel came to Manoah’s wife and promised that she would have a son. The angel told the woman that she must make a special promise. She was to raise her son by the Nazarite Vow ([Numbers 6:1-21](#)). “Nazarite” means one specially dedicated to God’s service. A person who made this vow promised not to cut his hair, only eat food approved by God’s law, never touch a dead body, and not drink alcohol. In this case, even the baby’s

mother was to be dedicated in this way. The angel said her son would begin to rescue his people from the Philistines.

The angel appeared again and spoke to Manoah. He explained everything to Manoah. This was very important because the Nazarite Vow would be very difficult to keep. This was a very important promise that Manoah and his wife were making. They would also have to teach their son how to keep the vow (promise). After Manoah made a sacrifice to the Lord, the angel disappeared up into the flames above the altar ([Judges 13:19-23](#)).

Manoah and his wife raised their son according to the Nazarite Vow. As he grew, Samson developed his own personality – and it was quite a personality. He seemed to travel around showing off his strength. Samson was not a leader in the sense that he was a godly man to follow. He was a hero-judge. He brought pride back to the Israelite people by antagonising the Philistines.

In chapter 14, the strong-willed Samson married a Philistine girl. He tried to fool everyone at the wedding feast with a riddle, but his new wife begged him until he told her the answer. She told the other Philistines. In his anger, Samson struck down 30 men. His wife was given to someone else. Later, when he found out that his wife was given to another, he caught 300 foxes and tied pairs of them together by their tails. He set the tails on fire and let them run through the Philistine grain fields, olive groves, and vineyards.

The violence continued ([Judges 15:1-16:3](#)). The Philistines killed Samson's wife and tried to capture him. They tied him up, but he saw a dried jawbone of a donkey and used it to kill 1000 Philistines. Later, Samson visited yet another Philistine woman, and the Philistines tried to trap him inside the city. He pushed the city gates down and carried them away.

This strong hero had a very big weakness – women.

For more about Samson, see: [Samson and Delilah](#) and [The Death of Samson](#)

Way to Introduce the Story:

There are a number of ways that you can introduce today's story: Bring weights to the gathering and let the children take turns trying to lift them or have arm wrestling contests to begin a discussion of strength. Or measure the length of everyone's hair to see who has the shortest or longest to begin a discussion of Samson's promise to never cut his hair. Or invite a mother and baby to begin a discussion on babies and how Manoah and his wife really wanted to have a baby.

The Story:

It happened again! The Israelite people began to forget about God. They began to worship idols. Once they stopped worshipping the Lord, bad things began to happen. The enemies, the Philistines, began to hurt them and make fun of them. The people asked God to save them. God listened to them and decided that the new Judge would not be like the other Judges. He would not lead an army. The new Judge would be strong and mighty. He would be stronger than any of the Philistines. The new Judge would be a hero that the Philistines would be afraid of.

A good woman, who was married to an Israelite man named Manoah, was all by herself one day. She was thinking, "I wish I had children. I have prayed and prayed to God, but He still hasn't given me a baby."

An angel of the Lord came to talk to her. "I know you have waited for a long time to have a baby. God has heard your prayers and you will soon have a son." A baby! The lady was so excited she ran to tell her husband.

Manoah said, "That's wonderful. God is good! But I hope the angel comes back and tells us how to raise the child." The angel did and told them their son would be special. Manoah and his wife were to keep a special

promise. This promise was called the Nazarite Vow. They must promise that the baby will never ever cut his hair or touch a dead body or drink any alcohol. Even Manoah's wife could not do these things when she was pregnant with the baby. They must never break the promise!

When their son was born, Manoah and his wife called him Samson. They taught Samson that he must always keep the Nazarite Vow – the promise. He must never cut his hair or drink alcohol. Samson grew up to be a strong man. Once he killed a lion with his bare hands. Israel was very proud of Samson because they knew that the Lord gave him strength.

Many days later, Samson saw the skeleton of the lion that he had killed. He noticed that bees had built a hive in the bones. Samson took some of the honeycombs and ate them. It was delicious. He even gave some to his parents to eat. They liked it too.

Samson was strong but he often got into trouble because he wanted his own way. He decided he wanted to marry a Philistine girl even though she did not believe in God. At his wedding feast, he told a riddle to the guests: "Out of the eater came something to eat; Out of the strong came something sweet." No one could guess the answer to the riddle. Samson's new wife wanted her friends to know the answer so she cried and begged Samson to tell her. Samson finally told her and she told her friends the answer. The next day Samson stood up in front of everyone and said, "Out of the eater came something to eat; Out of the strong came something sweet." This time, his wife's friends told Samson the answer, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?"

The Philistines had tricked Samson. The strength of the Lord came to him and he killed 30 Philistines. Later, he caught 300 foxes. He tied pairs of foxes together by their tails and then lit the tails on fire. He let the foxes go into the grain fields and vineyards of the Philistines. All of the fields caught on fire and the crops were destroyed.

The Philistines killed Samson's wife and then tried to capture him. Samson saw an old bone from the jaw of a dead donkey. He was so strong that he was able to kill 1000 Philistines with it.

Another time, the Philistines tried to capture Samson again by trapping him inside a city. They shut the city gates with him inside. The strength of the Lord came to Samson again and he just picked up the gates and carried them away to the top of a hill.

Even though Samson was not always good, the Lord gave him strength. The Lord wanted the Philistines to know that the Israelites were His people. He wanted them to know that God is strong and He can give strength to His people. Samson kept his promise. He never cut his hair or drank any alcohol.

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the "Samson Sets a Riddle" slideshow and/or illustrations above.](#)

[Click here to download the "Samson Attacks the Philistines" slideshow and/or illustrations above.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

Review:

1. Who told Manoah and his wife that they would have a son? (An angel of the Lord)
2. What is a Nazarite Vow? (A promise a person makes to never cut their hair, touch a dead body or drink alcohol in order to serve God in a special way)
3. What did the angel of the Lord say Samson would help Israel do? (Defeat the Philistines)
4. What was Samson's riddle about? (A honeycomb inside a lion's skeleton)
5. What are some things Samson did to the Philistines? (Tied fox's tails together, then set them on fire and let them run through the Philistines' fields; Killed 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey; Carried off the city gates when the Philistines tried to trap him in the city)
6. What did you learn about God from this story?

Reflection:

1. What is something you wonder about in this story?
2. What question do you have for God about this story?
3. How do you think Samson's parent's felt when the angel of the Lord told them they would have a baby?
4. How do you think Samson felt when the Philistines correctly answered his riddle?
5. Samson did not always make good choices. Why do you think God still used him to help fight the Philistines?
6. Do you think it was hard or easy for Samson to keep the Nazarite vow?
7. Did you ever make a promise that was hard to keep?
8. Has someone ever broken their promise to you?
9. Why is it important to God that we keep any promises we make?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Ask the kids to produce one long hair each. Who has the longest hair?
- Discuss the Nazarite Vow. Could a person today keep the Nazarite Vow? Do you know anyone who has never had one drink of alcohol? Anyone who has never cut their hair?
- Younger children can role-play Manoah and his wife taking care of their new baby.
- Write different scenes from the story onto little cards. Let the children draw a card and act out the scene on the card. The other children can guess which scene it is.
- The time of the judges can be depicted as a repeating cycle. Try this simple idea to illustrate the idea of a cycle that goes round and round. The [Judges Review Wheel](#) explains the cycle of the Judges.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Make a miniature model of the story. If you teach over a number of weeks, you could add to the model to form a collection that reviews the stories. You can place the models in boxes. One box could display one judge. Samson Box (ideas for all Samson lessons)- Hair, scissors, toy fox, old wine or beer bottle with a big red X on it, Barbie doll, sunglasses (blindness), white cane, paper “temple” crumpled up.
- Cut paper into the shape of a baby item (e.g., bottle, bib, bootie, etc.) and have children write words about the story on it. They could then decorate the items for a craft.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Dolls made from socks from Bible Class Creations.](#)

- [Illustrations for the Birth of Samson story from freebibleimages.](#)
- [Mobile craft from Jesus Without Language.](#)
- [YouTube clip showing how to draw a lion \(pre-school\).](#)
- [Colouring page of Samson fighting a lion from biblestoryclipart.com](#)

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