

General Church Education



Samson, a Mighty Judge

Judges 13, 14

Lesson 25

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Samson, a Mighty Judge

Judges 13, 14

Teacher Background

Samson, a judge of Israel, was from the tribe of Dan by Canaan's south border with the Philistines. The Lord raised up Samson from birth to rid Canaan of this enemy. An Angel promised Manoah and his wife that they would have a son who would deliver Israel. He was to be a Nazirite. He was not to cut his hair, drink wine or strong drink, or eat unclean food. From a literal perspective, Samson's actions may not appear to be virtuous. However as a Nazirite, judge, and hero of Israel Samson represents something good—a simple love of the Word. Samson's strength was in his hair, the outermost part of his body. Hair represents the power of Divine truth in the letter of the Word. Our strength comes from the Word when it is received in its simple literal form and lived.

Samson's tribe, Dan, represents the acknowledgment that we should believe in God and lead a good life. Israel's enemies, the Philistines, represent faith alone, or faith that rests on knowing the Word but not living what it teaches. Samson was tempted to ally himself with the Philistines—which is represented in the attack of the young lion. The sweetness that comes from overcoming this temptation is represented by the honey he found in the carcass.

Key Ideas

- Being a Nazirite is a symbol of following the Lord by staying away from evil.
- Samson's strength was in his hair; our strength is in keeping the law of the Lord.
- The Lord can give us amazing strength against evil, as He gave Samson strength to fight Israel's enemies.

From the Writings

The power of Divine Truth is exercised primarily against whatever is false and evil and therefore against the hells. These need to be resisted by the use of truths from the literal meaning of the Word. The Lord also has power to save us by means of whatever truth we have, because we are reformed and reborn by means of truths from the literal meaning of the Word; and we are then rescued from hell and brought into heaven. In the Jewish church, the Lord's power through the outermost forms of truth was represented by the Nazirites and by Samson, who is described as a Nazirite from his mother's womb and whose power was associated with his hair. No one could know why Naziriteship with its reference to hair was instituted, and therefore why Samson got his strength from his hair, except by knowing a head means the heavenly wisdom angels and people receive from the Lord by means of Divine Truth. So the hair of the head means heavenly wisdom in its outermost forms and also divine truth in its outermost forms. In short, divine truth or the Word has power in the literal meaning because that is where the Word is in its fullness and because that is where angels from both of the Lord's kingdoms come together with people in this world. See *Sacred Scripture* 49.

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Vocabulary

barren—to have no children

Nazirite—an Israelite consecrated to the Lord who was not allowed to cut his hair or drink strong drink

carcass—the dead body of an animal

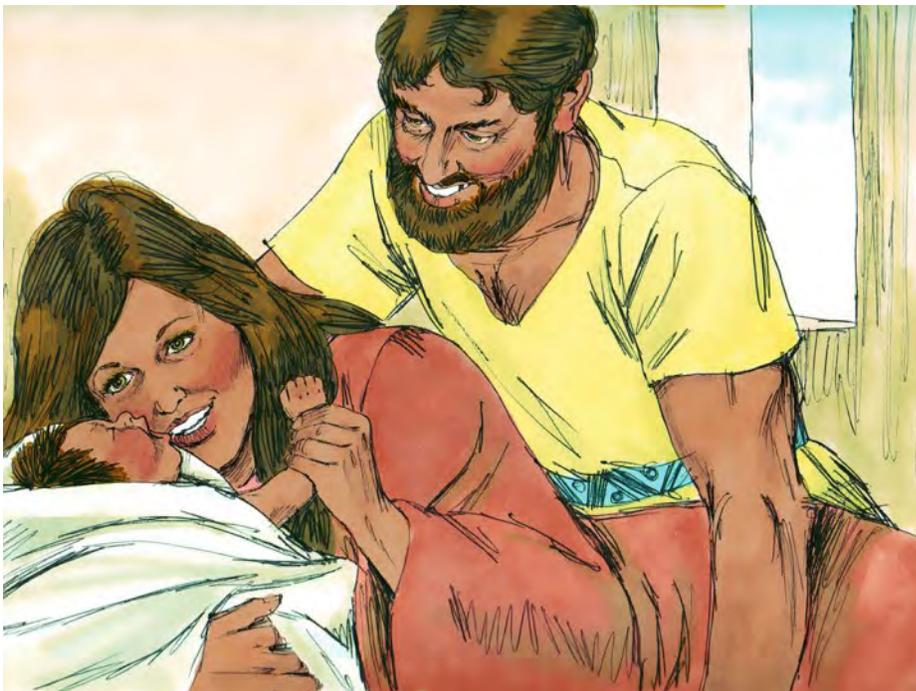
betrayal—to be disloyal

The Philistine nation lived along the Mediterranean Sea coast in the south of Canaan. When the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, He delivered them into the hands of the Philistines. The Philistines attacked the tribe of Dan and ruled them harshly for forty years.

Samson Is Born

During this time, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife, of the tribe of Dan. Manoah's wife was barren. She longed for a child. The angel promised they would have a son. The child was to be a Nazirite to God. Nazirites were set apart to serve the Lord in a special way. They were not allowed to cut their hair, or drink strong drink. Samuel, the last judge of Israel, was also a Nazirite.

When the baby was born, his parents named him Samson. Samson would grow up to become the next judge the Lord raised up to deliver the children of Israel. He would be a powerful champion



who could save the children of Israel from their enemies.

Samson Chooses a Wife

When Samson grew up he wanted to marry a Philistine woman who lived in Timnah. Do you remember that the Lord had commanded the children of Israel not to take wives from the nations around them? Samson's parents ob-

jected, but he insisted. They did not know that the Lord would use Samson's marriage to fight Israel's enemies, the Philistines.

Samson Fights a Lion

Samson went down to the Philistine town of Timnah to talk to the woman. As he reached the vineyards of Timnah, to his surprise a young lion came up, roaring at him. Samson was not carrying a weapon.



Amazingly, the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he tore the lion apart with his hands as though it was no stronger than a baby goat.

Read Judges 14:1-7.

The next time Samson went down to Timnah was for his wedding feast. On the way he stopped to look at the body of the lion and saw that a swarm of bees had filled it with honey. He took the sweet honey in his hand and ate it as he went on his way. He did not tell anyone about finding the honey in the lion's carcass.

Read Judges 14:8-13.

A Wedding Feast and a Riddle

In Timnah, Samson gave a wedding feast for thirty Philistine companions. He told them a riddle, and promised to give thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing to anyone who could guess the answer to his riddle. This was the riddle:

Out of the eater came something to eat,
And out of the strong came something sweet. (Judges 14:14)

The Philistines didn't know about the lion and the honey. They could never have guessed the answer to Samson's riddle. They tried and tried. On the seventh and last day of the feast they told Samson's new wife to find out the answer and threatened to burn down her father's house if she did not.

Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me." (Judges 14:16)

Day after day Delilah pestered Samson, until, after seven days, he gave in and told her the answer to the riddle. Then she secretly went and told the Philistine men, who came to Samson, pretending they had figured it out for themselves.

Samson, a One-man Army

Can you imagine how angry Samson was that his wife had betrayed him? He went down to one of the Philistine cities and killed thirty Philistine men. He took their clothes and gave them to the thirty companions as the payment he had promised.

When Samson returned to fetch his wife, he found that his father-in-law had given her to his best man for a wife. “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her,” he said. In the next lesson, you will read how Samson took revenge for this betrayal.

Samson judged Israel for twenty years. He was incredibly strong because the Lord filled him with His spirit, and gave him great strength. He led Samson to do great deeds in order that the children of Israel might be delivered from their enemies, the Philistines. He was a brave hero.

Effort and Reward

Have you ever worked very hard to achieve something, and felt happy when you succeeded? Killing a lion with his bare hands was a very difficult task for Samson. He succeeded because the Lord was with him.

We have lions to fight too. We must fight hard against impulses such as thinking we are better than others. Our strength to wrestle against these strong feelings and make ourselves do what is right comes from obeying the Lord’s Word. The Lord gives us happiness when we stop wrong thoughts and actions instead of letting them be stronger than us, just as Samson found sweet honey in the lion.

Discussion Questions

- Manoah’s wife was barren. She had no children, and prayed to the Lord that they would have a baby. Can you think of other times in the Word when someone longed to have a baby?
- Do you know any riddles? Tell a riddle that you know, or make up a riddle.
- What was Samson’s riddle? How did the Philistines discover the answer?
- Where did Samson’s strength come from?
- Samson found honey in the carcass of the lion that attacked him. What kind of “sweetness” can we get from difficult situations?
- Have you ever pestered someone to do something they didn’t want to do? When would that be a good thing to do? When would it not be right?
- Describe a “lion” encounter you or someone you know has had. What happened?

Activity Overview | Samson, a Mighty Judge

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

You, through Your commandments,
Make me wiser than my enemies...
How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:98, 103

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Samson's Hair
- Judges Trading Card—Samson
- Picture to Color—Samson and the Lion (Judges 13)

Additional Activity Ideas

- For an additional picture to color, *The Angel of the Lord Appears to Samson's Parents*, go to <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/coloring-page-the-angel-of-the-lord-appears-to-samsons-parents-judges13.pdf>.
- Draw and write about three stories about Samson. This activity is online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-three-stories-about-samson-judges14.pdf>.
- Suggestions for creating a Samson Collage are available online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/project-samson-collage-judges13.pdf>.
- Discerning wisely can be difficult. Choose whether a statement is fact, fiction or deception. This activity is online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-making-good-judgments-judges.pdf>.
- An additional question and answer review is available at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-samson-review-questions-judges13-14.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Samson's Hair

Samson's great strength lay in his hair. Imagine how long your hair would be if you had never cut it. Samson's long hair gave him the strength of an army! Hair, the most outward part of our bodies, corresponds to the outmost part of our life—to actions we do that help or hurt others.

We receive the Lord's love and wisdom through His Word. When we have true ideas from the Word in our minds we have great strength to fight evil spirits—just as Samson's long hair gave him great strength to fight Israel's enemies. Samson lost his strength when his hair was cut. In the same way we can lose our strength to fight evil spirits when we are cut off from the Word.

Create a moving picture showing how Samson's hair is like having the Lord's commandments in our minds. Our spiritual "hair" is long when we keep the Ten Commandments in mind. When our "hair" is cut or short, the commandments disappear and with it, our spiritual strength.



Materials Needed

Samson Silhouette

Samson's Hair

scissors

markers or colored pencils

Directions

1. Cut around the outside of *Samson's Hair*, being careful not to cut off the tab. *Optional*: cut slits in the bottom of Samson's hair to make it more hair-like.
2. Use markers or crayons to color the hairband on the *Samson Silhouette*.
3. Make three cuts along the dark lines at the top of Samson's head. Take care not to cut through the headband, or to cut the corner between the headband and hair.
4. Slip the tab on *Samson's Hair* under the headband, over the head, and back down to the other side of the page at the top of the hair. Raise and lower Samson's hair. See the commandments disappear as Samson's hair is lowered and raised up.

The Correspondence of Hair

Nazirites represented the Lord as to the Divine natural. *Arcana Coelestia* 6437

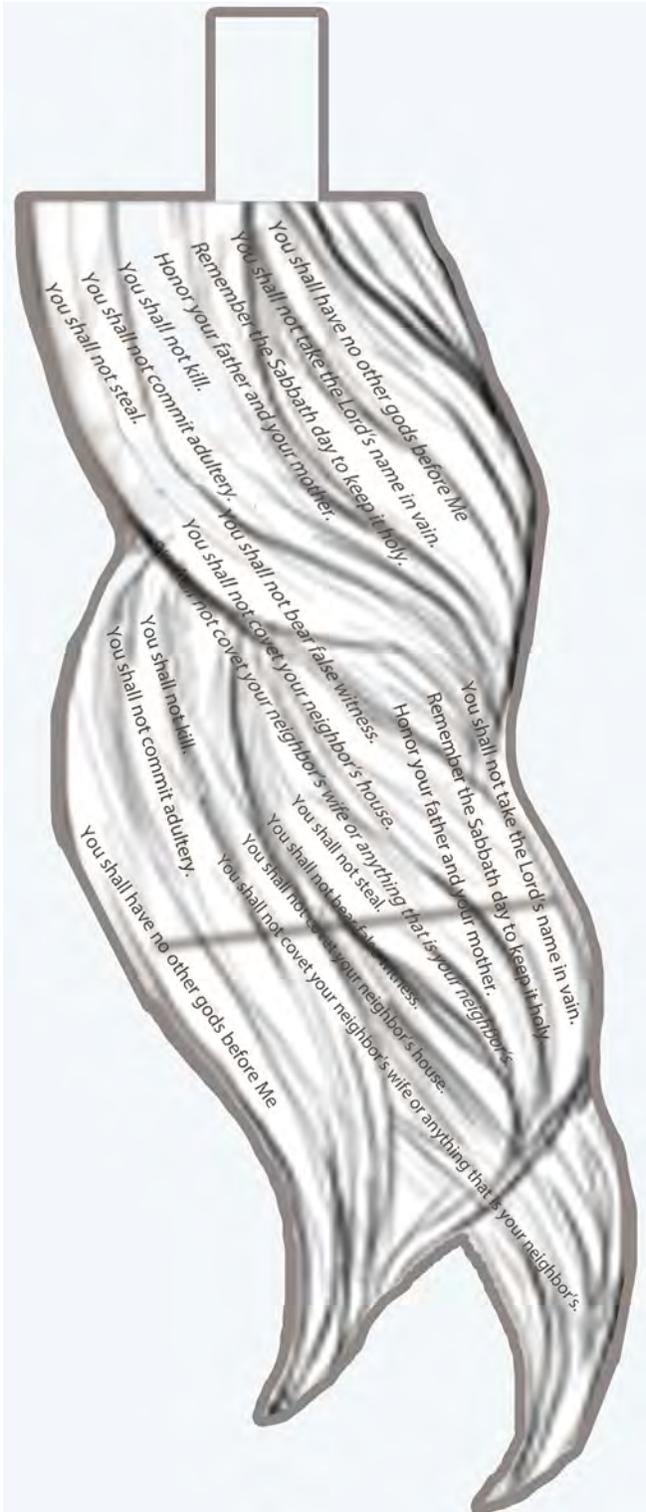
Hair corresponds to and signifies what is natural. *Arcana Coelestia* 6437

By hairs are meant the outmost things of a person's life. *Apocalypse Revealed* 47

Hair of the head symbolizes Divine truth in outmost expressions. *Sacred Scripture* 49.10



Samson's Hair



Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Samson

Learn about the Judges by making a trading card for each one. Collect the trading cards and use them to review or sequence the stories of the judges. This activity is repeated in future stories.

Do the following on the front of each card:

1. Write the name of the judge in the space at the top of the card.
2. Write the number of years of peace Israel had after this judge conquered Israel's enemy.
3. Draw a picture of the judge.

Fill in any of the following details given in the story on the back of each card:

1. Write the name of the region(s) or city in Israel being attacked.
2. Write the name of the judge's tribe.
3. Write the name of the enemy attacking Israel.
4. Write the kind of weapon used to fight the enemy.
5. Fill in the "other" box with any details from the story that interest you, e.g. how a judge escaped, the number of years he or she judged Israel, other things he or she did.

When you have completed the card, cut it out. Fold the card in half and tape the edges together.

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Samson

JUDGES FROM THE WORD		YEARS OF PEACE		
OTHER	WEAPON	ENEMY	TRIBE	PLACE OR CITY

