

• *The judgeship of Sampson comes to an end*

1. Samson uses a risky method of provoking the Philistines.

• *Once again Samson decides to use a woman as a means of provoking the Philistines*

• *Deterioration*

• *Ambush at the city gate*

• *Sampson's deliberate act of provocation*

• *Sampson's deliberate choice of a Philistine town*

The story moves forward about twenty years, from the beginning of Samson's ministry to the end of his ministry, from how his judgeship began to how his judgeship ended.

1. **Samson uses a risky method of provoking the Philistines.** He goes to Gath, the southernmost Philistine town. There must have been some plan in his mind involving the Philistines. He deliberately chose a Philistine town a long way from his home. Yet he must have known that his visit could not be kept secret. There was only one way into the town – through the town gates. Samson surely knew that it would hardly be possible for such a famous person as he was to enter the town unnoticed. Ancient towns were only small villages. Strangers could not enter them without being noticed. One remembers also Samson's long hair which must have made him conspicuous. It seems he was looking out for a way to provoke the Philistines once again and was walking deliberately into a dangerous situation – something he had done before. 'He saw there a prostitute' ¹. Once again Samson decides to use a woman as a means of provoking the Philistines.

Judges 16 begins in the same way as Judges 14–15. In both cases he makes use of a woman to provoke the Philistines ¹. Yet there is a deterioration between the events of Judges 14–15 and the events of Judges 16 twenty years later. The woman of Timnah he wanted for his wife. The girl in Gaza he wanted for a few hours. Judges 14–15 contain references to the Spirit's leading Samson, but chapter 16 contains no reference to the Holy Spirit.

The citizen's discover Samson's presence ¹. Of course! Samson must have known it would happen, and must have planned for it to happen. He was mixing business and pleasure again! The Philistines are nervous about apprehending Samson – he had been known to kill a thousand of them without help! They decided to ambush him at the town gate. When he passes through the gate in the morning he will – they think – have been awake much of the night with his new acquaintance. They plan to capture him then when he is tired and unprepared. They wait 'in' the city gate, that is, in the rooms by the side of the gate itself.

But Samson knows that they will be trying to capture him. He leaves the girl earlier than anyone would imagine, sets off home, and deliberately does something provocative that will vex the Philistines and provoke them into a fight. He walks off with large parts of the gate and dumps them on the top of a hill in Hebron, 40 miles away, in the heart of Judah ¹! Samson's purpose seems to have been to deliberately provoke the Philistines. He is once again, wanting to set in motion a train of events in which he will harass and trouble the Philistines.

Samson's habit of mixing business and pleasure was dangerous. Admittedly, there was more to what he was doing than simply spending a night with an immoral girl. He would not have needed to go to Gaza for that! Samson deliberately chose a Philistine town to visit and deliberately enraged the Philistines against himself in a way that did not drag the whole of Israel into a war they would not be able to win.

¹ 16:1

¹ 14:1; 16:1

¹ 16:2

¹ 16:3

2. Samson allowed himself to be pressed into unfaithfulness to God.

• Delilah – another good looking woman

• Seeks to exploit Sampson's love for her

• Delilah tries to find out his secret

• Initially Sampson maintains his secret and the sign of his special calling

• Eventually Sampson allows himself to be pressed into unfaithfulness to God

2. **Samson allowed himself to be pressed into unfaithfulness to God.** Before anything more could develop in the relationships between Samson and the Philistines, something happened which brought about a new turn of events. He fell in love with Delilah! He had always had an eye for a good-looking woman. He had always liked to mix business and pleasure and involve an attractive woman in his schemes against the Philistines. It always had dangers attached to it and now Samson gets into bad trouble. Delilah came from the valley of Sorek ^{¶1}, a deep valley about ten miles west of Jerusalem. She probably was an Israelite woman since her name is a Hebrew name. But she is more interested in how she can exploit Samson's love for her than she is in Samson himself. Samson is in love with her; she is only in love with what she can get out of him. The leaders of the five Philistine towns know how difficult it is to capture Samson and each offer her eleven hundred pieces of silver – a total of five thousand five hundred – if she can find a way of their being able to immobilize him ^{¶2}. Samson unbound would be too dangerous a prisoner.

Delilah tries to find out his secret. 'Please tell me where your great strength is...', she asks ^{¶1}. He gives three answers ^{¶2} and each time she tests his answer ^{¶3} and finds out that he has not told her the truth. Each time she wakes him up suddenly ^{¶4}, but three times he shows that he still has his strength ^{¶5}. She pretends it is a kind of playful game but each time she has Philistines nearby ready to capture Samson if he should be telling the truth ^{¶6}.

Samson maintains his secret. He knows that he has been chosen from birth for the work of beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines ^{¶1}, and he knows that his 'Naziriteship' – his special selection for his work – is signified by his never having his hair cut with a razor ^{¶2}. His uncut hair is a sign of his calling and a sign of God's unfailing faithfulness to him. When his hair is cut off, his special strength as a Nazirite will be cut off also.

Eventually Samson allows himself to be pressed into unfaithfulness to God ^{¶1}. Soon he betrays his secret, displeases God and ruins his life. It is not that Samson himself had his hair shaved. It was done to him while he was entirely passive, while he was asleep. But his bad company had led him into something he never intended.

¶1 16:4

¶2 16:5

¶1 16:6; see also 16:10, 13a
 ¶2 16:7, 11, 13b
 ¶3 16:8, 12a, 14a
 ¶4 16:9a, 12b, 14b
 ¶5 16:9b, 12c, 14c
 ¶6 14:9, 12

¶1 see 13:5

¶2 see 13:5

¶1 16:15-21

Note Part 25 completes the account of the end of Sampson's judgeship

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>		
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