

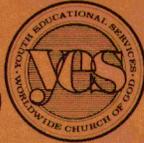
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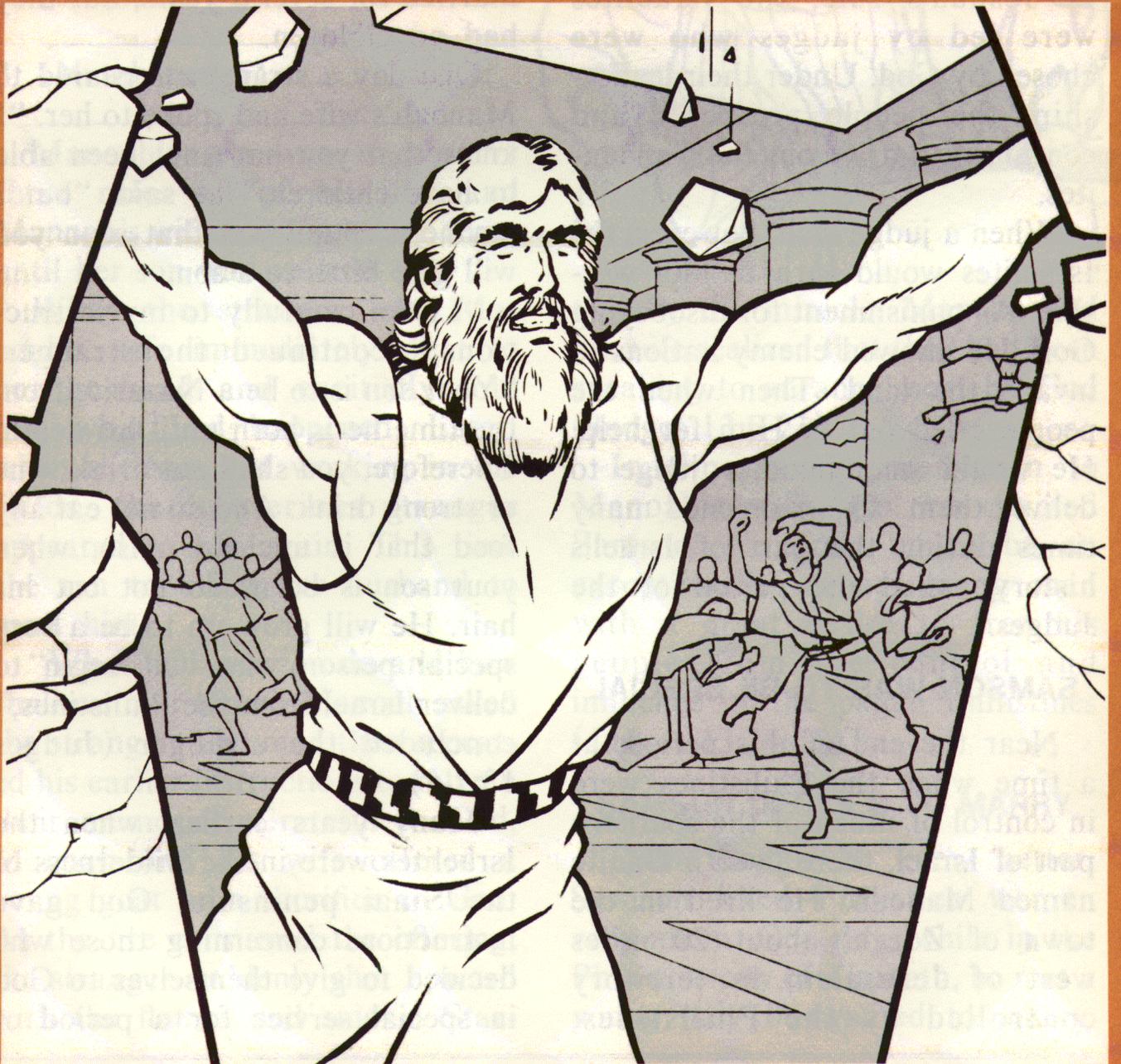
LEVEL 4

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 9



Samson—A Judge of Israel

SAMSON—A JUDGE OF ISRAEL

During the years that followed Joshua's rule, the Israelites were led by judges who were chosen by God. Under their leadership, the people prospered and continued to drive out the Canaanites.

When a judge died, however, the Israelites would turn to idol worship. As punishment for disobeying God, He allowed enemy nations to invade the land. Then when the people cried out to Him for help, He would send another judge to deliver them. This happened many times during the part of Israel's history called the period of the Judges.

SAMSON WAS TO BE SPECIAL

Near the end of this period, at a time when the Philistines were in control of much of the southern part of Israel, there lived a Danite named Manoah. He lived in the town of Zorah, about 20 miles west of Jerusalem in territory controlled by the Philistines.

Manoah and his wife had been married for several years, but they had no children.

One day a stranger appeared to Manoah's wife and spoke to her. "I know that you have not been able to have children," he said, "but I am here to tell you that soon you will give birth to a son.

"Listen carefully to my instructions," continued the stranger. "Your son is to be a Nazarite from the time he is born until his death. Therefore, you shall not drink wine or strong drink. And do not eat any food that is unclean. Also, when your son is born, do not cut his hair. He will grow up to be a very special person who will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines," concluded the stranger (Judges 13:2-5).

Many years earlier, when the Israelites were in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula, God gave instructions concerning those who decided to give themselves to God in special service for a period of

time. The promise to enter such service was known as the Nazarite vow. Anyone who made this vow kept three special rules.

Look up the scriptures below and list these three rules.

1. (Numbers 6:3-4) _____

2. (Numbers 6:5) _____

3. (Numbers 6:6) _____

Manoah's son was to observe these rules all of his life, and Manoah's wife was to observe them until her son was weaned.

When the stranger left, Manoah's wife immediately went to her husband and excitedly told him what had happened. Later, when she was out working in the fields, the mysterious stranger appeared to her again. This time she ran to bring her husband to meet him.

"What will our son do and how shall we rear him?" Manoah asked the stranger. The man then repeated his earlier instructions to refresh their memories. Grateful to God, Manoah and his wife offered a young goat as a sacrifice to God. As the fire consumed the offering, the stranger suddenly shot upward with the flames and smoke! Star-



tled by the miracle, Manoah and his wife realized that they had been speaking to an angel sent by God (Judges 13:6-21).

In time, a son was born to Manoah's wife. He was named Samson. He grew up to be an exceptionally strong young man with a great desire to free his people from the control and influence of the pagan Philistines (Judges 13:24-25).

SAMSON DECIDES TO MARRY

Even though he knew better, Samson liked Philistine women very much. One day, while in the Philistine city of Timnath, he met a young lady he wanted to marry.

His parents were shocked and disappointed, but Samson insisted on the marriage. They finally agreed to meet her parents and arrange for the wedding (Judges 14:1-4).

While on the way to Timnath, Samson went ahead of his parents to see if the trail was safe. Suddenly, a roaring lion leapt toward him. With tremendous strength given to him by God, Samson killed the lion with his bare hands!

Samson and his parents finally arrived in Timnath. After arranging for his marriage to the Philistine woman, they returned home.

After a couple decided to marry in those days, it was customary to allow a period of time to pass until the time of the wedding. Therefore, it was some time later that Samson and his parents journeyed to Timnath for the marriage ceremony.

When they arrived at the place where Samson slew the lion, he went aside by himself to the spot where he left the lion's dead body. Only the skeleton remained. Inside he discovered a beehive filled with honey. After taking some of the honey to eat, Samson rejoined his parents on their way to Timnath. He gave them some of the honey,

but did not tell them about the lion (Judges 14:8-9).

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

During the seven-day wedding feast, Samson posed a riddle to 30 Philistine men who were attending. "I've got a riddle for you," he said. "If you can answer it before the end of the feast, I'll give each of you a fancy shirt and an expensive robe. But if you can't, then you must give me 30 of each."

After thinking it over, the men agreed. "Now, what is your riddle?" they asked.

Samson then said, "Out of the _____ came forth _____ [something to eat], and out of the _____ came forth _____" (Judges 14:14).

The men tried to solve the riddle, but could not. In desperation, they went to Samson's wife and demanded that she tell them. But she could not because Samson had not given her the answer.

"You'd better find out for us," the men told Samson's wife. "Otherwise, we'll burn down your father's house with you in it!"

Fearing what would happen, she tried to get Samson to tell her the answer to the riddle. But he would not. It was not until the last day of the wedding feast, after much

pleading and many tears, that he finally told her. She then revealed the answer to the men.

That afternoon, several hours before the feast ended, the men confidently approached Samson. “We have the answer to your riddle,” they said. “What is _____ than _____? and what is _____ than a _____?” (Judges 14:18.)

Samson was furious! Although he suspected that his wife had been forced to reveal the answer, he left to fulfill his promise. He soon returned, carrying a large sack. “Here are the clothes,” he said. Later, thirty dead Philistines were found in the city of Ashkelon without shirts and robes! Still angry, Samson returned home

without taking his wife with him.

When his anger had calmed, Samson returned for his wife. “I’ve come for my wife,” Samson told her father.

“I didn’t think you were going to return,” her father replied, “so I gave her to another man. She is now married to someone else.”

Samson burned with anger. He stormed off, intending to get even with the Philistines. As we shall see, God was allowing these events to happen in order to bring about the eventual deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines.

SAMSON TAKES REVENGE

Samson soon caught 300 foxes and took them to the Philistine grain fields. He tied their tails



together in pairs and then fastened a torch between each pair of tails. After lighting the torches, he released the foxes. They rolled and scampered through the grain fields, setting them ablaze! Many valuable crops were destroyed in the roaring flames (Judges 15:4-5).

When the Philistines discovered that Samson was responsible for the devastating fires, they went to his father-in-law's house and set fire to it. Both he and his daughter were burned to death.

Samson was very angry when he heard this, and told the Philistines that he would cause them trouble until the score was settled. So he and the Philistines fought until a great number of them had been killed.

Samson then fled the area and hid in a mountain cave in Judah. He had become a great enemy to the Philistines, and so they sent an army to Judah, near where Samson was hiding. They threatened violence to the people of Judah unless he was captured and delivered to them.

Frightened by their threats, the men of Judah promised to deliver Samson to the Philistines. Samson knew that he would have to go along with the plan or end up fighting his own people in an

attempt to escape. "I'll willingly go with you if you'll promise to keep me alive," he said to the men who came for him. They agreed.

The men from Judah then bound Samson with ropes and took him to the Philistines. Cheering as the bound Samson was brought into their camp, the Philistines began to mock and poke fun at him. Suddenly, with added strength from God, Samson flexed his muscles, snapping the ropes binding him as if they were mere threads!

Philistine soldiers began to rush toward him. Seeing the jawbone of a donkey, Samson grabbed it and began swinging with all of his might. The mighty blows crushed or severely wounded all who came near. By the time the remaining soldiers retreated, 1,000 of the enemy lay dead on the ground! (Judges 15:14-16.)

Exhausted and extremely thirsty, Samson looked for some water, but could find none. "You have given me this great victory," he cried out to God. "Please don't let me die of thirst and fall into the hands of the Philistines!"

Samson soon heard a faint bubbling sound. Before him appeared a spring of clear, fresh water! After being refreshed by the

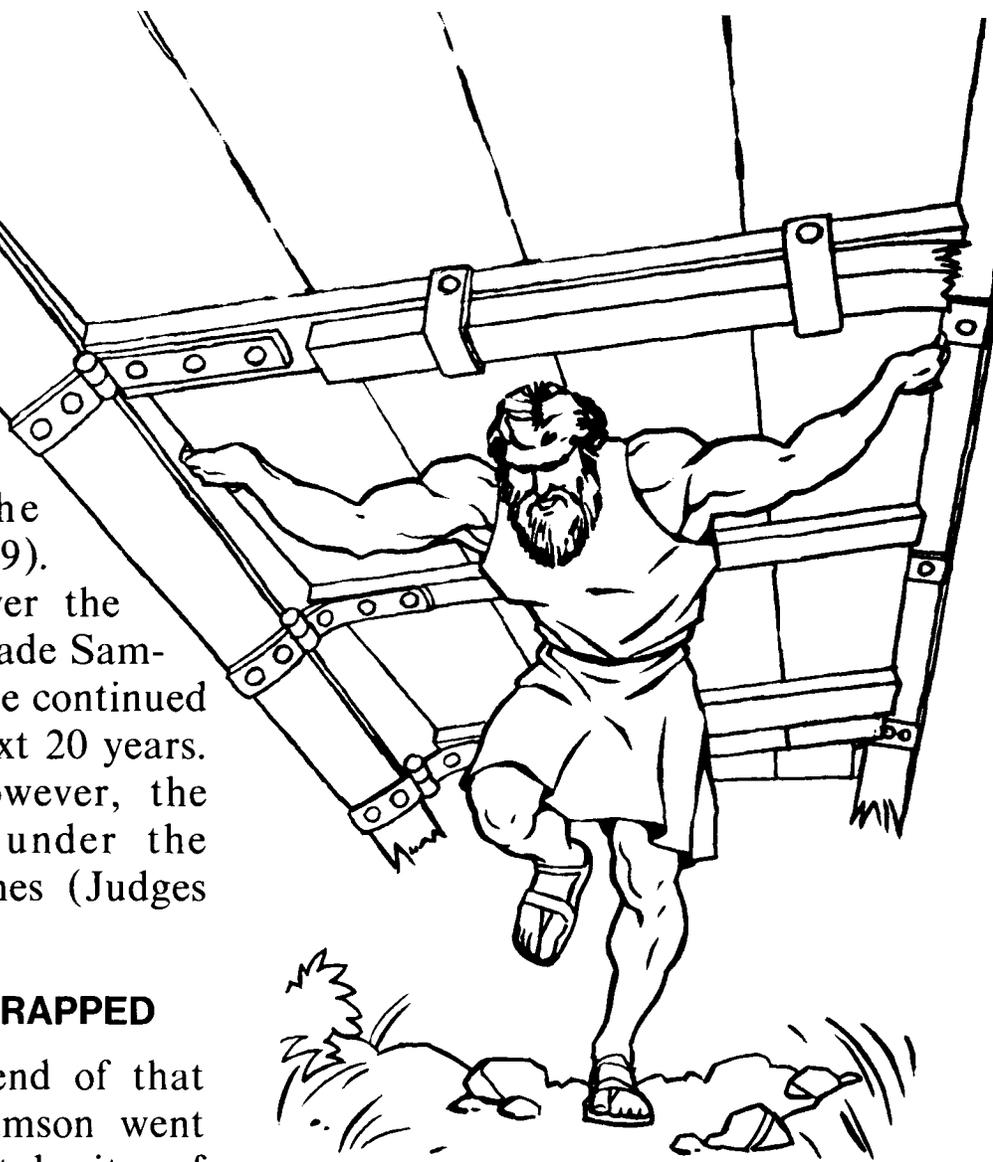
cool water, Samson's strength returned. He thanked God for the miracle and named the place "Well of the Implore" (Judges 15:19).

After his victory over the Philistine army, God made Samson judge over Israel. He continued in that office for the next 20 years. During that time, however, the Israelites were still under the control of the Philistines (Judges 15:20).

SAMSON NEARLY TRAPPED

One day, near the end of that twenty-year period, Samson went to the Philistine capital city of Gaza near the Mediterranean Sea. Because of his long hair and bulging muscles, the Philistines easily recognized him. He entered an inn, planning to stay there for the night. When the Philistine leaders learned that Samson was inside the city, they hurriedly gave orders to shut the gates of the city to prevent him from escaping.

At midnight, Samson left the inn and was about to leave the city when he noticed the main gates were locked. Deciding to play a trick on



the Philistines, he grabbed the left gate post and tore it loose from the wall. He then did the same with the right post, completely removing the gates from the walls. Samson was now free to leave.

Lifting one edge up, Samson squeezed under the gates and hoisted them onto his shoulders. After balancing them, he walked away from the city. Several miles later he stopped, leaving the gates atop a high hill! (Judges 16:3.)

No matter what attempts the

Philistines made to capture or kill Samson, they failed. God helped fight Samson's battles for Him. He would have been helpless without miraculous strength from God, as he would soon discover.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

Some time later, Samson fell in love with a beautiful Philistine woman named Delilah. When the Philistine leaders learned of this, they secretly offered her a large reward of 5,500 pieces of silver if she would discover and tell them the secret of Samson's strength (Judges 16:5).

Soon afterwards, Delilah began to question Samson about the source of his strength. "I admire your strength very much," she said. "Please tell me the secret of your great strength and how you could be captured."

Thinking for a moment, Samson replied, "If my enemies were to carefully bind me with seven strong, green strips of bark twisted together, then my special strength would fail me and I would be as weak as any other man" (Judges 16:7).

Delighted that Samson gave her the information so easily, Delilah soon contacted the Philistine leaders. They gave her the special cord she requested, and furnished sol-

diers to hide in her house to leap on Samson after he was tied up.

Later, when everything was ready, Delilah reminded Samson of what he had said. He then allowed her to tie him up. He was surprised when Delilah suddenly shouted, "The Philistines are here!"

Suddenly, Samson broke the cord as though it were only a thread. He was completely unaware of the hidden soldiers, who quietly left after seeing him break the cord (Judges 16:8-9).

"Why did you trick me about the source of your strength?" Delilah asked. "Please tell me the truth now."

Again, because of his deep feeling for Delilah, Samson felt that he should give an answer, but he was too cautious to tell her what she wanted to know. "If I were bound tightly with strong new ropes that have never been used, then I would be as weak as any other man," he said.

So later, Delilah obtained the new ropes and again hid a group of soldiers in her house. She then bound Samson tightly. After tying the last knot, she abruptly backed away and shouted, "The Philistines have come!" But Samson again broke free before the soldiers could rush out from their hiding place.

Delilah was frustrated, but not ready to give up. “You have mocked me twice now,” she said to Samson. “Don’t you love me enough to tell me your secret?”

After thinking for a moment, Samson replied, “If you weave my hair into the fabric of a loom, then I would lose my strength.”

One evening Samson allowed Delilah to weave his hair into the fabric of her loom. He fell asleep in the process. When she was done, she again screamed, “The Philistines are upon you!” But much to her disappointment, Samson awoke from his sleep and quickly freed his hair from the loom.

Delilah was becoming increasingly displeased and impatient. Nevertheless, she continued to question Samson. “How can you say you love me after mocking me three times about your great strength?” she asked in a very displeased tone of voice. But Samson refused to tell her.

From then on, Delilah kept questioning him daily. Finally, after her continual nagging, Samson gave in and told her the secret. “I have been a Nazarite from birth,” he said. “If my hair were cut, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else” (Judges 16:16-17).

Delilah was certain that at last Samson was telling her the truth. Later, she contacted the Philistine leaders and reported that Samson was about to become their prisoner. Once again she arranged for the soldiers to hide in her house.

When Samson arrived, Delilah met him with unusual warmth. She sat down and encouraged him to relax beside her with his head in her lap. As she softly stroked his hair, he closed his eyes and fell asleep.



Delilah silently signaled to one of the men in hiding, who came over and gently cut off Samson's long hair with a razor.

"The Philistines have come for you!" Delilah shouted. Samson awoke but did not realize that the great strength he had been given by God was now gone.

The Philistines charged out of hiding and swarmed over him. Samson at first tried to beat them off, but suddenly realized he no longer had his great strength. The soldiers were able to easily capture and bind him.

Later, Samson was blinded by the Philistines and led off to prison. There he was forced to push a heavy millstone in the grain grinding room.

GOD ANSWERS SAMSON'S PRAYER

One day the Philistines decided to hold a great celebration in honor of their pagan god Dagon, a half-human, half-fish idol whom they thought delivered Samson into their hands. It was to be a very special event at which all the Philistine leaders would be present (Judges 16:23).

On the day of the celebration, about 3,000 people were gathered in the temple of their god. They

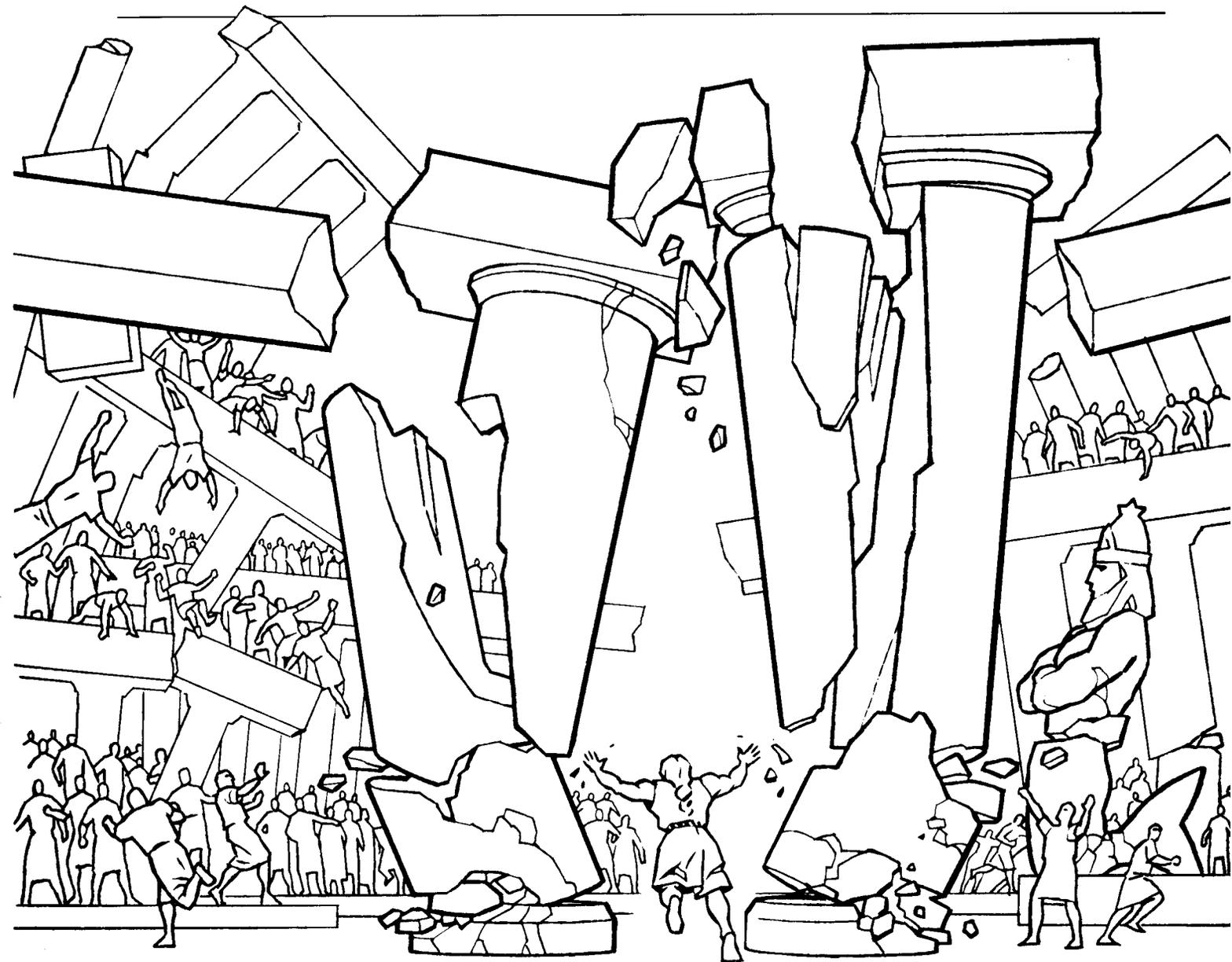
cheered as they saw Samson brought into the temple, being led by a small boy. They praised their god at the sight of the man who had once caused them so much trouble.

The entire roof and balcony of the temple were supported by two large pillars that were very close to each other. "Please lead me to the pillars so that I can rest against them," Samson told the boy.

Later as Samson stretched his arms out between the pillars, he fervently prayed to God. "Great God, help me to avenge the sight of my eyes upon the Philistines. Give me strength once more. Let me die with these people."

"And _____ took _____ of the two _____ upon which the _____ stood, and on which it was borne up, of the _____ with his _____ hand, and of the _____ with his _____" (Judges 16:29).

God answered Samson's prayer, giving him tremendous strength once again. As he pushed against the heavy stone pillars with all his might, they buckled and collapsed, causing the stone roof and balcony to come crashing to the ground! Samson died in the rubble along with the Philistine leaders and



other important officials.

Thus ended 20 years during which Samson judged Israel and delivered them from the Philistines. He was one of the last judges sent by God.

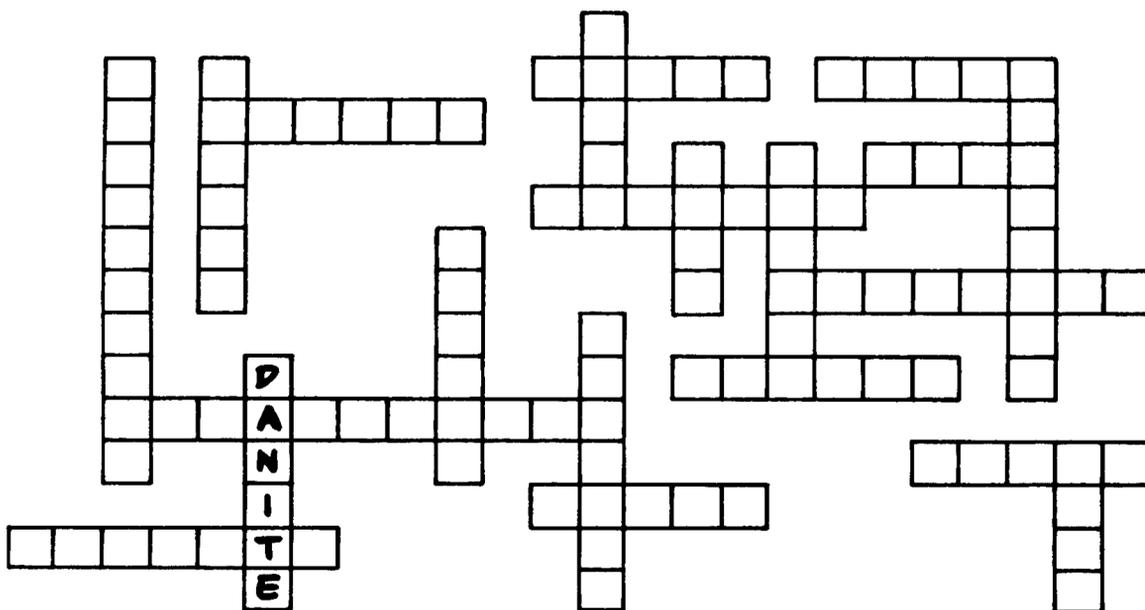
Samson's weakness for Philistine women had caused him much trouble. But despite this weakness, God used him to help deliver the

Israelites from their enemies. The miraculous feats he performed were not accomplished by his own strength alone, but through the great power and strength of the Creator God!

In our next lesson, we will learn about a young woman named Ruth, who also lived during the period of the Judges.

CRISS-CROSS PUZZLE

Using the words in the Word List below, write the correct letters in the squares of the puzzle. One word has already been done to help you get started.



Word List

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|--------------|----------|
| ✓ DANITE | HONEY | MANOAH | STRANGER |
| DELILAH | IDOL | NAZARITE VOW | STRENGTH |
| DONKEY | ISRAEL | PHILISTINE | TIMNATH |
| FOXES | JAWBONE | RIDDLE | |
| GRAIN | JUDGE | RULES | |
| HAIR | LION | SAMSON | |

After you finish the puzzle, choose 12 words from the Word List. On a separate sheet of paper, write 12 complete sentences using one of these words in each sentence.