

14.18d Thirteenth Judge, Samson: Gaza's Gate and Delilah's Deceit (Judges 16:1–21)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Beka Flash-a-Cards for Judges are recommended.
- Leather shoe laces
- 1,100 pennies (22 rolls of pennies) to show an approximate weight and amount of silver offered by each Philistine lord

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *weaver's beam*: a large wooden cylinder on a loom on which the threads are wound. “It is about 2.5 in. thick and 7 ft. long”
(https://www.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_meaning_of_%27%27the_weaver%27s_beam%27%27).
- *weaver's pin*: a piece of wood used as a fastener or support on a loom
- *weaver's web*: the fabric being woven
- *to lie in ambush*: to hide, waiting to surprise attack an enemy
- *fetters*: iron rings on the ankles connected to chains that keep a prisoner captive
- *Nazirite*: one dedicated to the Lord as demonstrated in his not eating grapes or unclean food, not touching a dead body, and not cutting his hair

Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 16:1 Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. 2 The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here.” And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, “Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him.” 3 But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

4 After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” 6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.”

7 Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound.” 11 And he said to her, “If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to

him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

15 And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies.” 16 And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. 17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.”

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison.

Introduction/Review:

When Samson was wronged by the Philistines, he took revenge by tying pairs of foxes together by their tails. Then he released those three hundred foxes into the wheat fields with torches to burn up the crops. Again, he slew an unknown number of men “hip and thigh.” When bound by ropes and turned over to the Philistines, he broke loose from the ropes and destroyed one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. But God had even more work for Samson to do as he began to subdue the Philistines.

Story:

Gaza’s gates

Samson went visiting overnight in Gaza [locate south by the Mediterranean coast]. The people of this Philistine city all knew Samson was there and prepared to kill him in the morning by closing and guarding the gates of the city. But, for some reason, Samson got up at midnight and decided to leave Gaza at that time. When he got to the city gates and found them locked, he just picked up the gates and their posts and bar, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of a hill facing Hebron, about twenty miles away from Gaza.

Philistines’ foul play

Now, Samson loved another Philistine woman. Her name was Delilah, and she lived in the valley of Sorek, near Samson’s hometown of Timnah [locate these places].

The Philistine cities numbered five—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath [locate]. Generally, ✓when the Bible speaks of the lords of the Philistines, it means all five lords of the five Philistine cities. Since the chapter we’re studying today does not number the lords of the Philistines, ✓we will assume there were five.

These lords came to Delilah, saying, “Find out for us how Samson is so strong so that we may tie him up and hurt him. If you learn the secret of his strength, each of us will pay you 1,100 pieces of silver.” ✓Eleven hundred pieces of silver would be worth about \$4000 today [in 2020]; so five times that amount, 5,500 pieces, would amount to about \$20,000. That was a chunk of money!

Delilah's deceit

Delilah wanted that silver; so she began bugging Samson, just as his wife had. “Tell me why and how you are so strong and what it takes to tie you up so that people can hurt you.” What an obvious manifestation of the intent to hurt Samson!

But Samson, ✓either clueless or teasing, played along with Delilah. “If you tie me with seven moist (raw leather) bowstrings (withes), then I’ll be as weak as others.”

Delilah wasted no time in getting seven green withes from the Philistines, and *she* herself tied him up with them while he was sleeping. She had Philistine men lying in ambush in an inner room of her house, hiding and waiting.

Delilah roused sleeping Samson, crying, “The Philistines are getting you, Samson!”

Samson got up and broke those seven green withes as if they had been threads of flax touched by fire. “So the secret of his strength was not known” (v. 9)—not yet, that is.

Delilah, as only some women can do, pouted and whined, “You have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me how you can be bound.”

Samson again went along with the game. “If they tie me tightly with brand new ropes, then I’ll be as weak as others.” (Did brand new ropes work when the men of Judah had turned him over to the Philistines? No.)

When Samson fell asleep, Delilah again did the deed, tying him up with new ropes and then crying out, “The Philistines are here to get you, Samson!” The men indeed were waiting and hiding nearby. But Samson got up again and popped those ropes as though they were thread.

Again, Delilah pouted and whined. “Up until now you have made fun of me and told me lies. Tell me how you may be tied up.”

Samson's senselessness

✓Senseless* Samson! He told Delilah something that was getting close to the truth, for he spoke about his hair: “If you weave the seven locks of my hair in the weaver’s web, I will be as weak as others.”

What was Samson thinking? Could he not figure out that his girlfriend was out to get him? This was the third time he had given her a clue. Would she act on this one too?

Of course, she would. Delilah, when Samson was asleep, wove the seven locks of his hair into the cloth on a weaver’s loom and then called out, “The Philistines are here to get you, Samson!”

Samson woke up and walked away with the weaver’s beam, the pin of the beam, and the web—the finished woven piece—attached to his hair. Somehow he must have untangled himself. Then he went back to deceitful Delilah’s house.

Delilah plied her pleas with more and more serious pouting and whining. “How can you say you love me when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times and haven’t told me how you are so strong.” She kept this up day after day, urging him to tell her, so that his soul was eventually “vexed unto death.” ✓That sounds as if he was so torn up that he felt ready to die!

Final foolishness

Finally, he could stand it no longer; he told her “all his heart,” saying, “I am a Nazirite from my mother’s womb. If my hair—the sign of God’s strength in me—is cut, I will become weak, just like other men.”

Oh, this clue was different. Delilah could tell that Samson had poured out all his heart to her. She called the Philistines, told them Samson had bared his soul, and collected their money. That night while Samson slept with his head in her lap, she called for a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to poke at him, ✓perhaps because she realized that he had now lost his strength. Then she awoke him, crying out,

“Samson! The Philistines are here to get you!”

Samson awoke, thinking he was as strong as before and not knowing that “the Lord was departed from him.” He said, “I’ll go just as I have before. But—what? Where is my strength? Why do I feel so weak?”

Now the Philistines could take him down, and they did. They blinded him by gouging out his eyes. Then they put metal fetters on him and put him in prison in Gaza. His job for the next few years was, like an animal, to push a millstone and grind grain.

But that is not the end of the story. We will find out about Samson’s final “victory” in our next lesson.

*I would say, “Stupid Samson,” but today’s children think the word *stupid* is a naughty word.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Samson’s strength and victory in carrying away the gates of Gaza is “a type of Christ’s victory over death and the grave. He not only rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and so came forth himself, but carried away the [figurative] gates of the grave. . . . Thanks be to him that not only gained a victory for himself, but giveth us the victory!”
(<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/judges/16.html>).
- Delilah and the Philistine lords assumed that tying up Samson would weaken him. They were wrong. We must be careful not to make false assumptions.

Activities:

- Play dough: gate, ropes, pillow, scissors, millstone
- Snack: Barbell made from stick pretzels with grapes, and cheese cubes attached to the ends. See a photo at <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/a0/9b/91/a09b918626679957cb9812a081839db8--psalm--psalms.jpg>.
- Girls may braid seven braids of hair on each others’ heads. (Perhaps it would be wise to secure parental permission before doing this activity.)
- Sing the names of the judges to the tune, “Ten Little Indians.”
Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah,
Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair,
Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon,
Samson, Eli, Samuel.
- Review questions: (Game: Before class, make yarn braids using the following directions. Cut 21 one-yard lengths of yarn, any color. For each braid fold three strands in half. Secure the folded ends with a safety pin to a pillow or cushion and braid with two strands in each of the three sections to be braided. After the braid is complete, secure the cut ends with small rubber bands or twists. Make seven braids. Attach the braids to a Styrofoam® mannequin head, to a pillow, or to a flannel board. For each correct answer a student may take a braid away. These braids will also be used in Lesson 14.18e.)
 1. What did Samson do in Gaza in the middle of the night? [Took the gates of the city away to Hebron.]
 2. What did the ✓five Philistine lords want Delilah to do? [Find out how Samson was so strong so that they overpower and capture him.]
 3. How much money did they promise Delilah? [Eleven hundred pieces of silver each; 5,500 pieces of silver total, which is about \$20,000 today.]
 4. What did Samson suggest could be done with his hair and the weaver’s loom? [To weave his hair

with the fabric on the loom.]

5. How did Delilah finally learn the true secret of Samson's strength? [She badgered him, claiming Samson didn't love her because he wouldn't tell her his secret.]
6. What part of Samson's body represented God's strength in Samson? [His uncut, Nazirite hair.]
7. Name two things the Philistine lords did to Samson when his strength was gone? [Took out his eyes; brought him down to Gaza; put metal fetters on him; made him turn the mill to grind grain.]

Memory Verse[s]: (ESV)

- Ephesians 6:10—Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Handwork:

- "Samson's Hair" found at <http://kidsandthebible.blogspot.com/2009/08/samsons-hair.html>.

weaver's beam

weaver's pin

weaver's web

to lie in ambush

fetters

Nazirite

Samson

Judges 13-16

1118-1078 BC, 40 Years

Zorah + Ashtaol: home
 Timna: wants woman
 Zorah: home
 Timna: riddle
 Ashkelon: kills 30, pay off debt
 Zorah: home
 Timna: Burns crops
 Etam: 1000 jawbone ass
 Gaza: harlot
 Hebron: Gaza gates
 Valley of Sorek: Delilah
 Gaza: blinded, jailed
 3000 killed
 Zorah + Ashtaol: buried

Ashkelon

Philistine Empire
 Five capital cities:
 Ashdod, Ashkelon, Lachish
 Gaza, Ekron, Gath

Gaza

Steve Rudd
www.bible.ca/maps



Lydda, Lod

Timnath-heres-serah (Buri el-Isaneh)
 Jeshanah (Tell esh-Si)

Jabneh (Jamnia)

Gizmo
 Beth-Horon (Bira, Jug. 20:27)

Bethel, Luz
 Beth-aven (Beiti)

Gezer (Tel Jezer)

Shaalbin (el Foga)

Beeroth (et Tahta)

Mitzpa (Tel Nasdeh)

Zorah: home

Timna: riddle

Ashalon: kills 30, pay off debt

Zorah: home

Timna: Burns crops

Etam: 1000 jawbone ass

Gaza: harlot

Hebron: Gaza gates

Valley of Sorek: Delilah

Gaza: blinded, jailed

3000 killed

Zorah + Ashtaol: buried

Ashkelon

Philistine Empire

Five capital cities:

Ashdod, Ashkelon, Lachish

Gaza, Ekron, Gath

Gaza

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Gibbethon (Tell Malat)

Emmaus (t.Yau)

Aialon

Chephirah (Kefireh)

Ramah, Naioth: (Samuel)

of Benjamin, Geba (Jaba)

Benjamin

Anathoth (Ras)

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Ashdod (Azotus)

Ekron (Tell el-Batashi)

Timnah (Kh. Shubeib)

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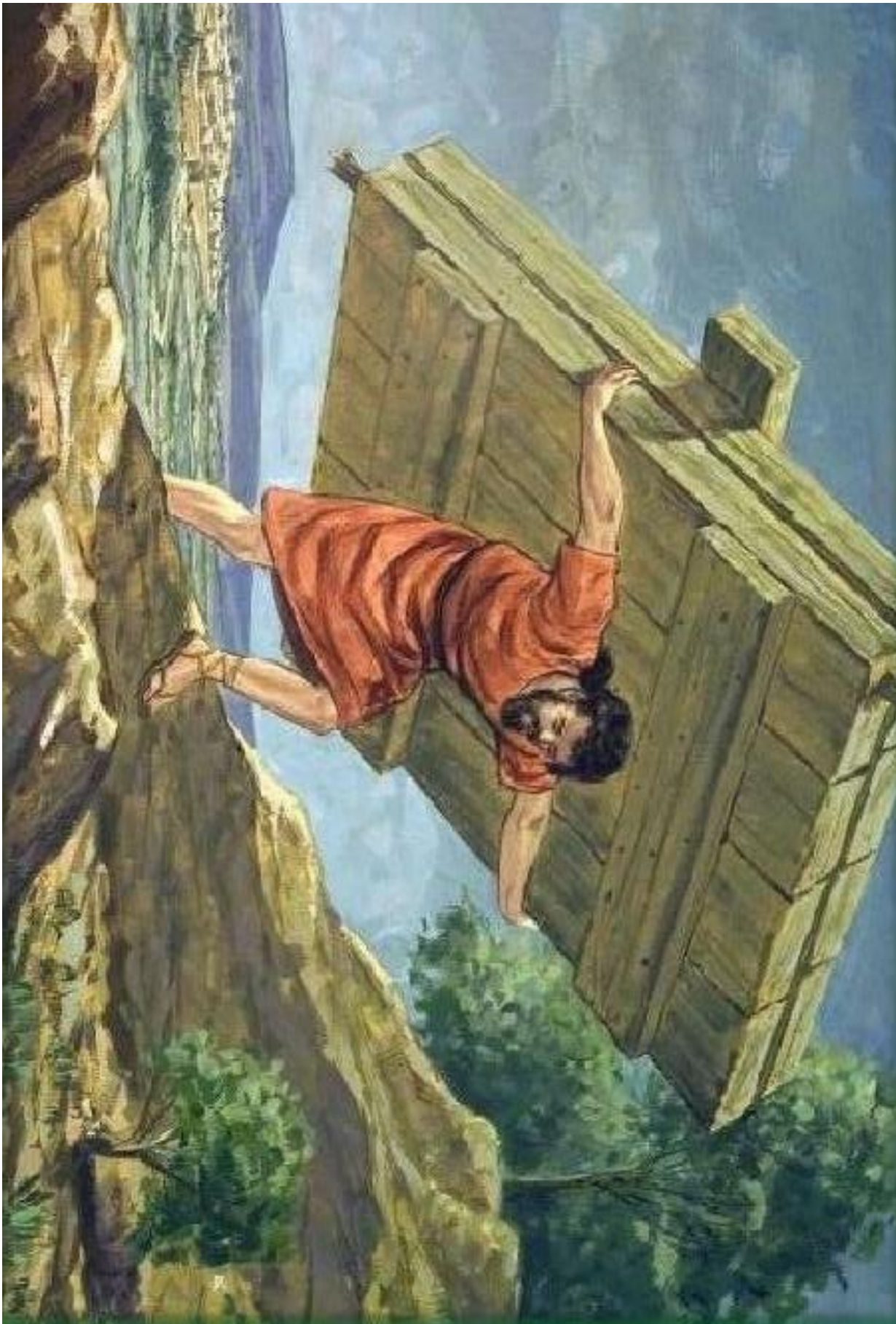
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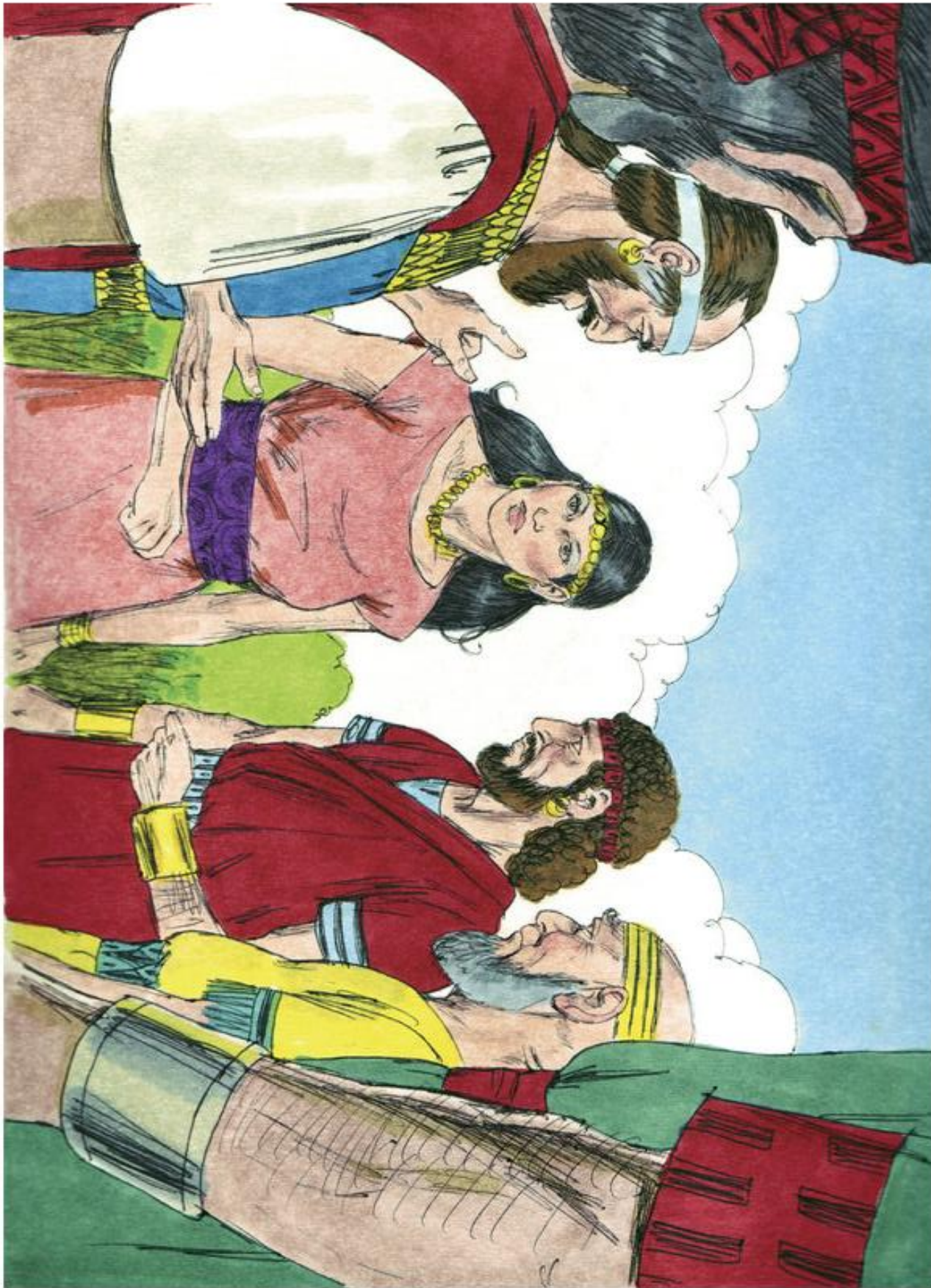
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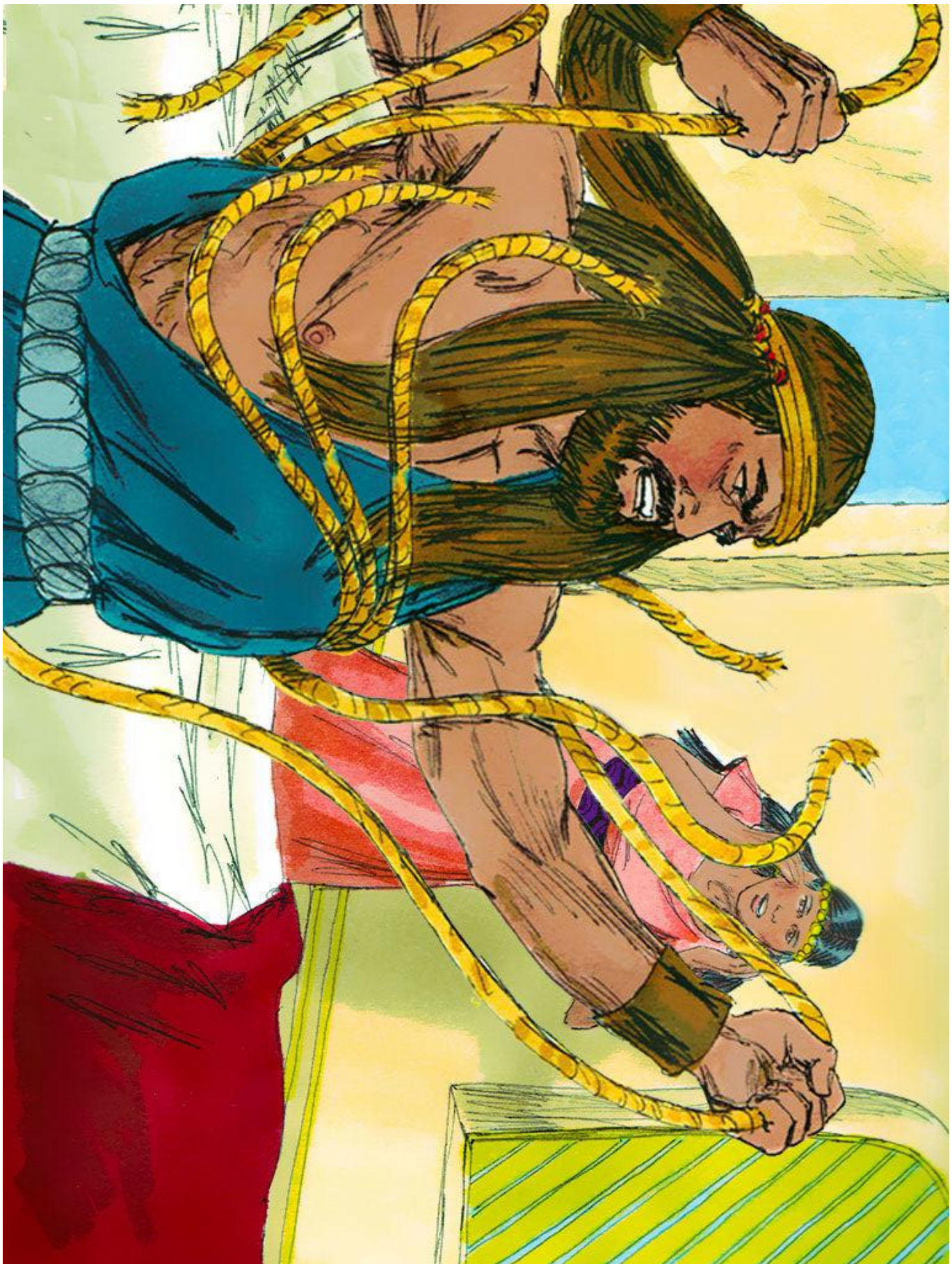
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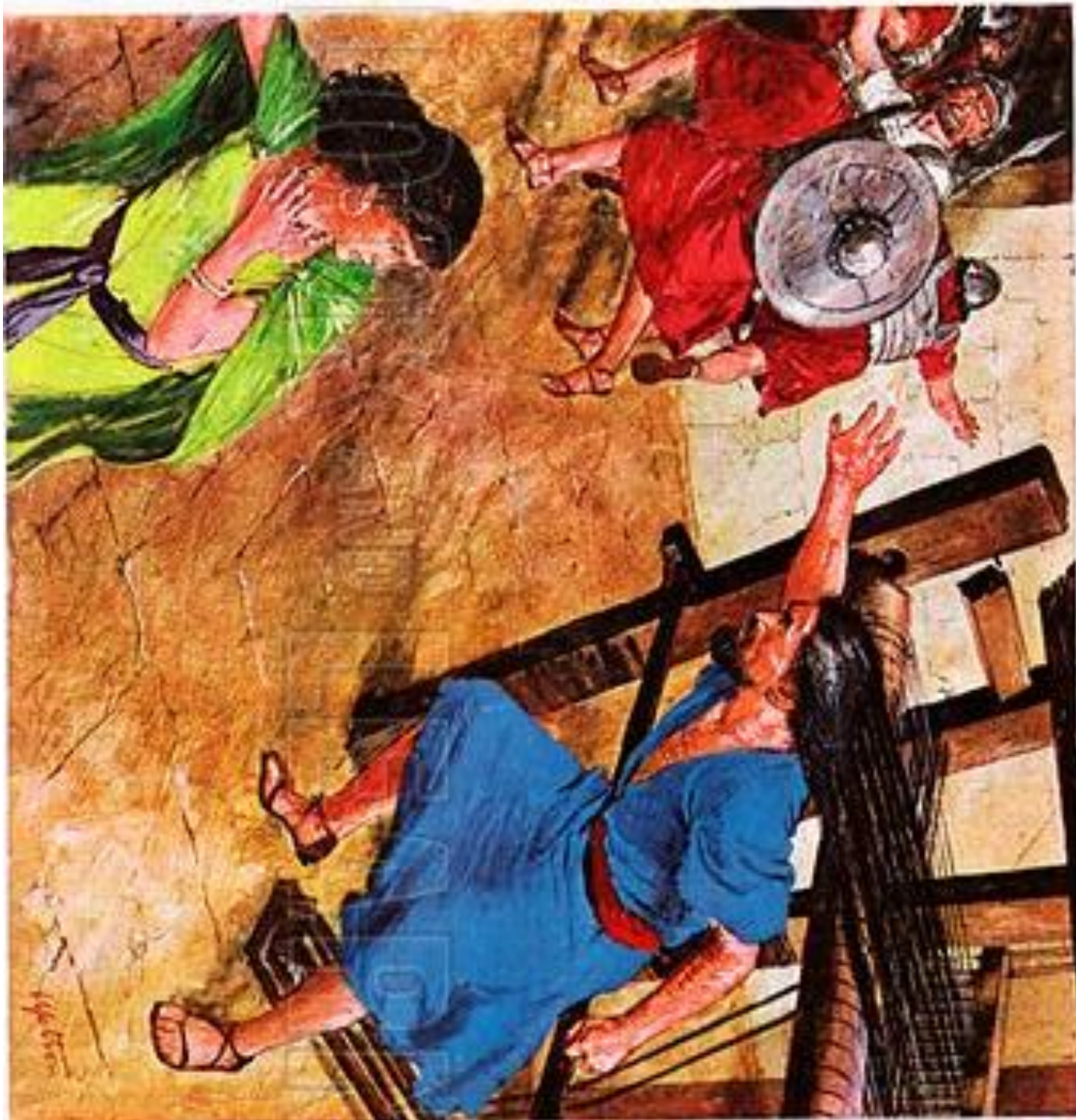
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https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/preview/TR/TR0177/TR0177-009-00_Samson.jpg



