Life of Samson – Winter 2026
Pleasant View Church of Christ

Lesson XI – Revenge*
(Judges 16:22-31)

A. Dynamics for Revenge (22-24)

1. Restoration of Samson's Hair in Prison

It was gradual

Num 6:5 / Judges 13:5

-Hair does not grow overnight!

-The outward sign of his Nazarite vow.

It was ignored - The Philistines did not seem concerned about his hair, even after finding out the "secret" of his strength (**16:17**)

2. Reproach of Samson's God in Philistia

Reproach in honoring Dagon

1Sam 5:1-7; 1Chr 10:8-12

-Dagon was the god of grain & chief deity (**v.23**)

-The Philistines attributed Samson's downfall to Dagon (**v.24**)

Reproach in having Samson

-The capture of Samson, due to his sin, led to the occasion for Dagon to be praised (**Jud 15:18**)

2Sam 12:14 – "by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (NASB95)

C. Deed of Revenge (26-27, 29-31)

1. Situation for the Deed

Largeness of the crowd

"on the roof, there were about 3,000 men and women"

Leaders in the building

"lords of the Philistines"

-There were five of them: (**Judges 3:3; Josh 13:3**)

22 But the ***hair of his head began to grow again*** after
it had been shaved.
23 Now the **lords** ***of the*** **Philistines** gathered to offer a
great sacrifice to **Dagon** their god and to rejoice, and
they said, "***Our god has given*** **Samson** ***our enemy***
into our hand."
24 And when the people saw him, they praised their
god. For they said, "***Our god has given our enemy***
into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has
killed many of us."
25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call
Samson, that he may ***entertain us***." So they called
Samson out of the prison, and he ***entertained them***.
They made him ***stand between the pillars***.
26 And **Samson** said to the young man who held him
by the hand, "***Let me feel the pillars on which the***
house rests, that I may lean against them."
27 Now the house was ***full of men and women***. All the
lords of the **Philistines** were there, and ***on the roof***
there were about 3,000 men and women, who
looked on while **Samson** entertained.
28 Then **Samson** called to the **LORD** and said, "***O Lord***
GOD, please remember me and please strengthen
me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on
the Philistines for my two eyes."
29 And Samson grasped the ***two middle pillars on***
which the house rested, and he leaned his weight
against them, his right hand on the one and his left
hand on the other.
30 And **Samson** said, "***Let me die with the Philistines***."
Then he bowed with ***all his strength***, and the house
fell upon the lords and upon ***all the people who***
were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death
were ***more than those whom he had killed during***
his life.
31 Then his ***brothers and all his family*** came down
and ***took him*** and brought him up and buried him
between **Zorah** and **Eshtaol** in the tomb of **Manoah**
his father. He had judged Israel ***twenty years***.

-Zorah / Manoah (**13:2**)

-20 years (**15:20**)

B. Desire for Revenge (25, 28)

1. Encouragement

Insulting of his person

"**entertain us**" - שָׂחַק (*śā·ḥăq*) lit. "amuse"

-Clearly the Philistines intended to mock Samson as he performed

Injury to his eyes

"avenged…for my two eyes" (**16:21**)

2. Entreaty - Samson cries out to God for only the second time (**15:18**)

C. Deed of Revenge (26-27, 29-31)-Cont.

Location of Samson

"pillars on which the house rests"

2. Size of the Deed

Might - "all his strength"

Numbers - "more than those…he had killed during his life"

-30 men…Ashkelon (**14:19**)

- "struck them hip and thigh…great blow" (**15:8**)

-1000 men with the jawbone of a donkey (**15:15**)

Government - "fell upon the lords"

Religion - God dealt Dagon a serious blow.

3. Sacrifice in the Deed

"Let me die with the Philistines"

4. Sepulcher After the Deed

-How devastating must the destruction have been that they did not prevent his family from removing his body from Gaza?

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*Outline for Life of Samson: *Butler, John G. (1992). Samson: The Weak Strong Man (Bible Biography Series, Number Six). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications*

Dynamics for Revenge (22-24)

Restoration of Samson's Hair in Prison

Numbers 6:5 (ESV)
5 "All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long.

Judges 13:5 (ESV)
5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines."

Judges 16:17 (ESV)
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."

Reproach of Samson's God in Philistia

Dagon (day'gahn), an ancient Semitic deity attested in the northern Mesopotamian area from the late third millennium and in the entire West Semitic area through biblical times. The etymology of the name is disputed; Jerome's derivation of it from Hebrew *dag,* 'fish,' is far-fetched. More probable is the root attested in Arabic *dagana,* 'to be cloudy, rainy,' appropriate to a god of rain and fertility. The common Northwest Semitic word for grain, *dagan,* is to be derived from the fertility god, like Latin *ceres,* 'bread, grain,' from the god Ceres. The texts from Ugarit give no information about the god except that he is the father of Baal Haddu, the major god of fertility at Ugarit; Dagon does have a temple at Ugarit so he must have been honored in public worship.

The Philistines, after they settled on the coast of Palestine in the twelfth century B.C., honored Dagon. The Bible sees the god as the chief god of the Philistines, at least as the god to whom thanks were given after a victory. In 1 Sam. 5:2-7, God represented by the captured Ark in the temple at Ashdod causes the statue of Dagon to fall before him; the second fall destroys the statue. In Judg. 16:23, the imprisoned Samson pulls down around his head the temple of Dagon with the help of God. According to 1 Chron. 10:10, the Philistines hung up the head of Saul as a trophy in the temple of Dagon, presumably at Beth-shean (cf. 1 Sam. 31:12). 1 Macc.

10:83 and 11:4 mention a temple of Dagon in Ashdod. The place names, Beth-dagon in Judah (Josh. 15:41) and Beth-dagon in Asher (Josh. 19:27) preserve the name of the deity.[1]

DAGON (דָּגוֹן, *dgwn*), also spelled Dagan. West Semitic and Mesopotamian deity. Prominent in the third millennium BC.

Dagon in the Hebrew Bible
The Philistines, who inhabited the coastal region, are linked with Dagon in the biblical text (1 Sam 5:2; compare 1 Chr 10:9–10). Dagon may also have been worshiped in Beth-dagon (Josh 15:41; 19:27). Events in which Dagon played a significant role include:

- Philistine lords offered a sacrifice to Dagon after procuring Samson's eyes in Judg 16:21. They credit Dagon for their victory over Samson (Judg 16:23).
- In 1 Samuel 5:1–7, the Philistines brought the ark of the covenant into the temple of Dagon, likely signifying their deity's victory over Yahweh. Dagon then fell down before the ark and was smashed, signifying the death of the deity.
- The prevalence of the cult of Dagon in later periods is evident from 1 Macc 10:83–84; 11:4, where the high priest Jonathan Maccabaeus burned down the temple of Dagon at Ashdod in the second century BC.

Etymology
The name "Dagon" may stem from the words for "fish" (דָּג, *dg*) and "grain" (דָּגָן, *dgn*). However, there is no solid evidence that Dagon was a fish deity or a grain god in the ancient Near East. The fish interpretation is based on folk etymology, supported by the Philistines' location by the sea. Dagon as a grain god is supported by the assertion that the word "grain" comes from the same root and is said to reflect the name of the deity. However, the word "grain" was likely derived from the name of the deity Dagon himself. This connection may also be a coincidence, as there are few connections between Dagon and grain in sources where the deity is attested.

Dagon in the Ancient Near East
Dagon was worshiped as early as the third millennium BC at Ebla. Additional evidence supports his prominence in other regions as well:

- Sargon credited Dagon for his conquest of the upper and western most region of Mesopotamia.
- Texts at Mari name Dagon as one of the chief deities of the Amorites, who were present in the upper and western most region of Mesopotamia.
- When Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Mari, he claimed that it was only by the power of Dagon that he was able to do so.
- A large temple to Dagon in Mari has been dated to the 18th century BC.

[1] Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper's Bible dictionary* (1st ed., p. 202). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

- Dagon is attested in the Amarna Letters.
- A temple to Dagon was discovered at Ugarit, where Dagon is described as the father of Baal (Hadad). However, Dagon appears very little in texts from Ugarit.
- Dagon was a prominent deity in 13th-century BC Emar, where he was known as "Lord of the Seed."[2]

1 Samuel 5:1–7 (ESV)
1 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 4 But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

6 The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god."

1 Chronicles 10:8–12 (ESV)
8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 And they stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people. 10 And they put his armor in the temple of their gods and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. 11 But when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men arose and took away the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh. And they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

2 Samuel 12:14 (NASB95)
14 "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

[2] Favara, A. (2016). Dagon. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Desire for Revenge (25, 28)

8471 שָׂחַק (*śā·ḥăq*): v.; ≡ Str 7832; TWOT 1905c—**1.** LN 25.135–25.145 (qal) **laugh**, be amused, i.e., make sounds which express a feeling or attitude of pleasure or amusement over a situation (Ecc 3:4+); **2.** LN 33.406–33.411 (qal) **laugh at**, mock, scoff, i.e., communicate through words and laughing sounds, making fun of an object, implying lack of concern over the object, or anger and disrespect for the object (Job 5:22; 30:1; 39:7; 39:18, 22; 41:21[EB 29]; Ps 2:4; 37:13; 52:8[EB 6]; 59:9[EB 8]; Pr 1:26; 29:9; 31:25; La 1:7; Hab 1:10+); (piel) **joke at** (Pr 26:19+); (hif) **scorn** (2Ch 30:10+); **3.** LN 50 (qal) **perform entertainment**, i.e., be an object used or controlled by others for merriment and amusement (Jdg 16:27+); (piel) **entertain**, use for entertainment (Jdg 16:25; Job 40:29[EB 41:5]+); **4.** LN 50 (qal) **have a contest**, i.e., pit one opponent against another in a physical fight (2Sa 2:14+), note: niv translates "fight hand to hand;" note: in context, this is very serious and deadly "play;" see also domain LN 55.2–55.6; **5.** LN 33.476–33.489 (qal) **smile**, i.e., make a motion of the mouth and face, as a non-verbal, non-sound communication expressing happiness or contentment (Job 29:24+); **6.** LN 51 (piel) **celebrate**, rejoice, make acts which show joy, happiness, and positive laughter, such as dancing, playing, frolicking, or reverent but joyful worship (1Sa 18:7; 2Sa 6:5, 21; 1Ch 13:8; 15:29; Job 40:20; Ps 104:26; Pr 8:30, 31; Jer 15:17; 30:19; 31:4; Zec 8:5+), see also domain LN 50[3]

7832. שָׂחַק **sachaq** (965d); a prim. root; *to laugh*:—amuse(1), amusing(1), celebrate(2), celebrating(3), hold a contest(1), joking(1), laugh(6), laughed them to scorn(1), laughs(6), merrymakers(2), mock(1), mocked(1), play(2), played(1), playing(1), rejoicing(2), scorns(1), smiled(1), smiles(1), sport(1).[4]

Judges 16:21 (ESV)
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.

[3] Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
[4] Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

Deed of Revenge (26-27, 29-31)

Lords of the Philistines

Judges 3:3 (ESV)
3 These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.

Joshua 13:3 (ESV)
3 (from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron, it is counted as Canaanite; there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim,

Size of the Deed

Judges 14:19 (ESV)

19 And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house.

Judges 15:8 (ESV)
8 And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

Judges 15:15 (ESV)
15 And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men.

Sepulcher After the Deed

Judges 13:2 (ESV)
2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children.

Judges 15:20 (ESV)
20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.