

Who was Delilah in the Bible?

Delilah in the Bible is best known as the one who brought about the ruin of Samson. Delilah lived in the Valley of Sorek, which lay on the border between the territories of the ancient Philistines and the Israelite tribe of Dan. Samson, one of the judges of Israel, had an affair with Delilah, and she betrayed him to the Philistines (Judges 16:19).

Samson was a man of incredible strength, whose exploits are recorded in the book of Judges. Samson's strength was legendary, unlike anything that was seen before or since. He singlehandedly struck down 1,000 Philistines using only the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15), by the power of God's Spirit he tore a lion to pieces (Judges 14:6), and he uprooted the gate of the town of Gaza and carried it up a hill (Judges 16:3). All of Samson's mighty acts were done in opposition to the Philistines, with whom he had a bitter, long-standing rivalry, described in Judges 14 and 15. The Philistines were always trying to understand Samson's strength and find a way to defeat him. They were always thwarted—Samson was just too strong—until they teamed with Delilah. This woman was eventually Samson's downfall.

When Samson began consorting with Delilah, the Philistine leaders saw an opportunity. They came to Delilah with an offer: "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver" (Judges 16:5). It was an offer she couldn't refuse, and she began to seek a way to subdue her beau.

From the very beginning of Delilah's relationship with Samson, it was clearly her intention to discover Samson's weakness and report back to the Philistines. Appealing to

his supposed love for her, Delilah asked him repeatedly to confide in her the secret of his great strength. Repeatedly, Samson hides the truth from her. He lies about the source of his strength on three different occasions, and on each occasion, Delilah reports his lie to the Philistines and they come to attack him, thinking him weakened (Judges 16:5-14). Samson's response to Delilah's actions is puzzling. He obviously knows she plans to betray him. Despite her wicked game, Samson stays with Delilah and refuses to acknowledge the danger. Eventually, Samson makes the quite irrational decision to tell Delilah the truth— his strength comes from his long hair, uncut because he was a Nazarite. He tells Delilah that, if his head is shaved, he will become like any other man (Judges 16:16-17). Scripture gives the reason for Samson's foolish revelation: Delilah was nagging him daily so that his soul was “annoyed to death” (Judges 16:16, NASB).

The wise course of action would have been for Samson to leave Delilah, rather than tell her the truth. He surely must have known that she would betray him—but his feelings for her proved stronger than wisdom. Samson did not leave her; in fact, he fell asleep with his head in her lap, and the inevitable occurred. Delilah had his hair cut, and she betrayed him, allowing the Philistines to bind him, gouge out his eyes, and take him away as a slave (Judges 16:18-21). All this she did for a quantity of silver promised her from the Philistines (Judges 16:5). Delilah, the original femme fatale, illustrates the truth of 1 Timothy 6:10, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”