
JUDGES 16:1 Samson went to Gaza, and saw there a prostitute, and went in to her.

Samson comes to Gaza; they lay wait for him; he rises by night, and carries away the city gates, Jdg 16:1-3. Falls in love with Delilah, Jdg 16:4. The lords of the Philistines promise her money if she will obtain from Samson the secret in which his strength lay, Jdg 16:5. By various artifices she at last obtains this; and communicates it to the Philistines, who seize and bind him, put out his eyes, and cause him to grind in the prison-house, vv. 6-21. At a public festival to Dagon he is brought out to make sport; when, being weary, he requests to be placed between the two pillars which supported the roof of the house, on which three thousand men and women were stationed to see him make sport, Jdg 16:22-27. He prays to God to strengthen him, and pulls down the pillars; by which (the house falling) both himself, the lords of the Philistines, and a vast multitude of the people, are slain, Jdg 16:28-30. His relatives come and take away his body, and bury it, Jdg 16:31.

Verse 1

Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot - The Chaldee, as in the former case, renders the clause thus: Samson saw there a woman, an inn-keeper. Perhaps the word זונה zonah is to be taken here in its double sense; one who keeps a house for the entertainment of travelers, and who also prostitutes her person. Gaza was situated near the Mediterranean Sea, and was one of the most southern cities of Palestine. It has been supposed by some to have derived its name from the treasures deposited there by Cambyses, king of the Persians; because they say Gaza, in Persian, signifies treasure; so Pomponius Mela and others. But it is more likely to be a Hebrew word, and that this city derived its name, גזא azzah, from אצא azaz, to be strong, it being a strong or well fortified place. The Hebrew א in this word is, by the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Vulgate, rendered G; hence instead of azzah, with a strong guttural breathing, we have Gaza, a name by which this town could not be recognized by an ancient Hebrew.

JUDGES 16:2 The Gazites were told, "Samson is here!" They surrounded him, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, "Wait until morning light, then we will kill him."

Verse 2

They compassed him in - They shut up all the avenues, secured the gates, and set persons in ambush near them, that they might attack him on his leaving the city early the next morning.

JUDGES 16:3 Samson lay until midnight, and arose at midnight, and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron.

Verse 3

Took the doors of the gate - Though Samson was a very strong man, yet we do not find that he was a giant; consequently we may conjecture that the gates of the city were not very large, as he took at once the doors, the two posts, and the bar, with him. The cities of those days would appear to disadvantage among modern villages.

A hill - before Hebron - Possibly there were two Hebrons; it could not be the city generally understood by the word Hebron, as that was about twenty miles distant from Gaza: unless we suppose that על פני חברון al peney Chebron is to be understood of the road leading to Hebron: he carried all to the top of that hill which was on the road leading to Hebron.

JUDGES 16:4 It came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Verse 4

He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek - Some think Samson took this woman for his wife; others, that he had her as a concubine. It appears she was a Philistine; and however strong his love was for her, she seems to have had none for him. He always matched improperly, and he was cursed in all his matches. Where the valley or brook of Sorek was, is not easy to be ascertained. Eusebius and Jerome say it lay southward of Eleutheropolis; but where was Eleutheropolis? Ancient writers take all their measurements from this city; but as it is nowhere mentioned in the Scriptures, it is impossible to fix its situation for we know not its ancient name.

JUDGES 16:5 The lords of the Philistines came up to her, and said to her, "Entice him, and see in which his great strength lies, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

Verse 5

See wherein his great strength lieth - They saw that his stature was not remarkable: and that, nevertheless, he had most extraordinary strength; therefore they supposed that it was the effect of some charm or amulet. The lords of the Philistines were the five following: Gaza, Gath, Askelon, Ekron, and Ashdod. All these considered Samson as a public enemy; and they promised this bad woman a large sum of money if she would obtain from him the important secret wherein his strength lay, that, depriving him of this supernatural power, they might be able to reduce him to bondage.

JUDGES 16:6 Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and what you might be bound to afflict you."

JUDGES 16:7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven green cords that were never dried, then shall I become weak, and be as another man."

Verse 7

Seven green withs - That is, any kind of pliant, tough wood, twisted in the form of a cord or rope. Such are used in many countries formed out of osiers, hazel, etc. And in Ireland, very long and strong ropes are made of the fibres of bog-wood, or the larger roots of the fir, which is often dug up in the bogs or mosses of that country. But the Septuagint, by translating the Hebrew יתרים לחים yetharim lachim by νευραις ὑγραις, and the Vulgate by nerviceis funibus, understand these bonds to be cords made of the nerves of cattle, or perhaps rather out of raw hides, these also making an exceedingly strong cord. In some countries they take the skin of the horse, cut it lengthwise from the hide into thongs about two inches broad, and after having laid them in salt for some time, take them out for use. This practice is frequent in the country parts of Ireland; and both customs, the wooden cord, and that made of the raw or green hide, are among the most ancient perhaps in the world. Among the Irish peasantry this latter species of cord is called the tug and is chiefly used for agricultural purposes, particularly for drawing the plough and the harrow, instead of the iron chains used in other countries.

JUDGES 16:8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green cords which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

JUDGES 16:9 Now she had an ambush waiting in the inner room. She said to him, "The Philistines are on you, Samson!" He broke the cords, as a string of tow is broken when it touches the fire. So his strength was not known.

Verse 9

Men lying in wait - They probably did not appear, as Samson immediately broke his bonds when this bad woman said, The Philistines be upon thee.

JUDGES 16:10 Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me, and told me lies: now please tell me with which you might be bound."

JUDGES 16:11 He said to her, "If they only bind me with new ropes with which no work has been done, then shall I become weak, and be as another man."

Verse 11

If they bind me fast with new ropes - Samson wishes to keep up the opinion which the Philistines held; viz., that his mighty strength was the effect of some charm; and therefore he says, Seven green withs which had not been dried; new ropes that were never occupied; weave the seven locks of my hair with the web, etc.; the green withs, the new ropes, and the number seven, are such matters as would naturally be expected in a charm or spell.

JUDGES 16:12 So Delilah took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said to him, "The Philistines are on you, Samson!" The ambush was waiting in the inner room. He broke them off his arms like a thread.

JUDGES 16:13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now, you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me with what you might be bound." He said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web."

Verse 13

The seven locks of my head - Probably Samson had his long hair plaited into seven divisions, and as his vow of a Nazarite obliged him to wear his hair, so, seven being a number of perfection among the Hebrews, his hair being divided into seven locks might more particularly point out the perfection designed by his Nazarite state. Every person must see that this verse ends abruptly, and does not contain a full sense. Houbigant has particularly noticed this, and corrected the text from the Septuagint, the reading of which I shall here subjoin: *Εαν ὑφανῆς τας ἑπτα σειρας της κεφαλῆς μου αυν τῷ διασματι, και εγκρουσης τῷ πασσαλῷ εις τον τοιχον, και εσομαι ὡς εις των ανθρωπων ασθενῆς· Και εγενετο εν τῷ κοιμασθαι αυτον, και ελαβε Δαλιδα τας ἑπτα σειρας της κεφαλῆς αυτου, και ὑφανεν εν τῷ διασματι, και επηξε τῷ πασσαλῷ εις τον τοιχον;* "If thou shalt weave the seven locks of my head with the web, and shalt fasten them with the pin in the wall, I shall become weak like other men: And so it was that, when he slept, Dalida took the seven locks of his head, and wove them with the web, and fastened it with the pin to the wall and said unto him," etc.

All the words printed here in italic, are wanting in the present Hebrew copies; but are preserved in the Septuagint, and are most obviously necessary to complete the sense; else Delilah appears to do something that she is not ordered to do, and to omit what she was commanded.

JUDGES 16:14 She fastened it with the pin, and said to him, "The Philistines are on you, Samson!" He awakened out of his sleep, and plucked away the pin of the beam, and the web.

JUDGES 16:15 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 have not told me where your great strength lies."

JUDGES 16:16 When she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, his soul was troubled to death.

Verse 16

His soul was vexed unto death - What a consummate fool was this strong man! Might he not have seen, from what already took place, that Delilah intended his ruin? After trifling with her, and lying thrice, he at last commits to her his fatal secret, and thus becomes a traitor to himself and to his God. Well may we adopt the sensible observation of Calmet on this passage: *La foiblesse du caeur de Samson, dans torte cette histoire, est encore plus etonnante que la force de son corps;* "The weakness of Samson's heart in the whole of this history, is yet more astonishing than the strength of his body."

JUDGES 16:17 He told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come on my head; for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will go from me, and I will become weak, and be like any other man."

Verse 17

If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me - The miraculous strength of Samson must not be supposed to reside either in his hair or in his muscles, but in that relation in which he stood to God as a Nazirite, such a person being bound by a solemn vow to walk in a strict conformity to the laws of his Maker. It was a part of the Nazirite's vow to permit no razor to pass on his head; and his long hair was the mark of his Nazirate, and of his vow to God. When Samson permitted his hair to be shorn off, he renounced and broke his Nazir vow; in consequence of which God abandoned him, and therefore we are told, in Jdg 16:20, that the Lord was departed from him.

JUDGES 16:18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up this once, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the money in their hand.

JUDGES 16:19 She made him sleep on her knees; and she called for a man, and shaved off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

Verse 19

She began to affect him - She had probably tied his hands slyly, while he was asleep, and after having cut off his hair, she began to insult him before she called the Philistines, to try whether he were really reduced to a state of weakness. Finding he could not disengage himself, she called the Philistines, and he, being alarmed, rose up, thinking he could exert himself as before, and shake himself, i.e., disengage himself from his bonds and his enemies: but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him; for as Delilah had cut off his locks while he was asleep, he had not yet perceived that they were gone.

JUDGES 16:20 She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" He awoke out of his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." But he didn't know that the LORD had departed from him.

JUDGES 16:21 The Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he ground at the mill in the prison.

Verse 21

Put out his eyes - Thus was the lust of the eye, in looking after and gazing on strange women, punished. As the Philistines did not know that his strength might not return, they put out his eyes, that he might never be able to plan any enterprise against them.

He did grind in the prison-house - Before the invention of wind and water-mills, the grain was at first bruised between two stones, afterwards ground in hand-mills. This is practiced in China and in different parts of the East still; and women and slaves are the persons who are obliged to turn these mills. Such instruments were anciently used in this country, and called querns, from the Anglo-Saxon and cweorn and cwyrn, which has the signification of a mill; hence cweorn stan, a millstone: and as quern conveys the notion of grinding, hence, cweorn teth, the dentes molares or grinders in the jaws of animals. This clause of the verse is thus translated in the Saxon Octateuch: "And the Philistines laid their fangs, (seized) him soon, and led him away to their burgh, (city), and shut him up in prison, and made him grind at their hand-querne." So late as half a century ago I have seen these querns or hand-mills in these kingdoms.

JUDGES 16:22 However the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaved.

Verse 22

The hair of his head began to grow again - And may we not suppose that, sensible of his sin and folly, he renewed his Nazir vow to the Lord, in consequence of which his supernatural strength was again restored?

JUDGES 16:23 The lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, "Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hand."

Verse 23

Unto Dagon their god - Diodorus Siculus describes their god thus: Το μεν προσωπον εχει γυναικος, το δ' αλλο σωμα παν ιχθους; "It had the head of a woman, but all the rest of the body resembled a fish."

Dagon was called Dorceto among the heathens. Horace, in the following lines, especially in the third and fourth, seems to have in view the image of Dagon: -

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam

Pingere si velit; et varias inducere plumas,

Undique collatis Inembris; ut turpiter atrum

Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?

De Art. Poet., V. 1. "Suppose a painter to a human head

Should join a horse's neck; and wildly spread

The various plumage of the feather'd kind

O'er limbs of different beasts, absurdly join'd;

Or if he gave to view a beauteous maid,
 Above the waist with every charm array'd,
 Should a foul fish her lower parts infold,
 Would you not smile such pictures to behold?"

Francis.

JUDGES 16:24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, "Our god has delivered our enemy and the destroyer of our country, who has slain many of us, into our hand."

JUDGES 16:25 When their hearts were merry, they said, "Call for Samson, that he may entertain us." They called for Samson out of the prison; and he performed before them. They set him between the pillars;

Verse 25

Call for Samson, that he may make us sport - What the sport was we cannot tell; probably it was an exhibition of his prodigious strength. This seems to be intimated by what is said, Jdg 16:22, of the restoration of his hair; and the exertions he was obliged to make will account for the weariness which gave him the pretense to ask for leave to lean against the pillars. Some think he was brought out to be a laughing-stock, and that he was variously insulted by the Philistines; hence the version of the Septuagint: και ερραπιζον αυτον, and they buffeted him. Josephus, Antiq. Jud. lib. v., cap. 8, s. 12, says: He was brought out, όπως ενυβρισωσιν αυτον παρα τον ποτον, that they might insult him in their cups.

JUDGES 16:26 and Samson said to the boy who held him by the hand, "Allow me to feel the pillars whereupon the house rests, that I may lean on them."

JUDGES 16:27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were on the roof about three thousand men and women, who saw while Samson performed.

Verse 27

Now the house was full of men - It was either the prison-house, house of assembly, or a temple of Dagon, raised on pillars, open on all sides, and flat-roofed, so that it could accommodate a multitude of people on the top.

JUDGES 16:28 Samson called to the LORD, and said, "Lord GOD, remember me, please, and strengthen me, please, only this once, God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

Verse 28

Samson called unto the Lord - It was in consequence of his faith in God that he should be strengthened to overthrow his enemies and the enemies of his country, that he is mentioned, Heb 11:32, among those who were remarkable for their faith.

JUDGES 16:29 Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and leaned on them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left.

Verse 29

The two middle pillars upon which the house stood - Much learned labor has been lost on the attempt to prove that a building like this might stand on two pillars. But what need of this? There might have been as many pillars here as were in the temple of Diana at Ephesus, and yet the two center pillars be the key of the building; these being once pulled down, the whole house would necessarily fall.

JUDGES 16:30 Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell on the lords, and on all the people who were therein. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than those who he killed in his life.

Verse 30

So the dead which he slew - We are informed that the house was full of men and women, with about three thousand of both sexes on the top; now as the whole house was pulled down, consequently the principal part of all these were slain; and among them we find there were the lords of the Philistines. The death of these, with so many of the inferior chiefs of the people, was such a crush to the Philistine ascendancy, that they troubled Israel no more for several years, and did not even attempt to hinder Samson's relatives from taking away and burying his dead body.

JUDGES 16:31 Then his brothers and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burial site of Manoah his father. He judged Israel twenty years.

Verse 31

He judged Israel twenty years - It is difficult to ascertain the time of Samson's magistracy, and the extent of country over which he presided. His jurisdiction seems to have been very limited, and to have extended no farther than over those parts of the tribe of Dan contiguous to the land of the Philistines. This is what our margin intimates on Jdg 15:20. Many suppose that he and Eli were contemporaries, Samson being rather an executor of the Divine justice upon the enemies of his people, than an administrator of the civil and religious laws of the Hebrews. Allowing Eli and Samson to have been contemporaries, this latter part might have been entirely committed to the care of Eli.

1. Samson does not appear to have left any posterity. His amours with the different women mentioned in the history were unproductive as to issue. Had he married according to the laws of his country, he would have been both a more useful and a more happy man, and not have come to a violent death.
2. We seldom find much mental energy dwelling in a body that in size and bulk greatly surpasses the ordinary pitch of man; and wherever there are great physical powers, we seldom find proportionate moral faculties. Samson was a man of a little mind, a slave to his passions, and the wretched dupe of his mistresses. He was not a great though he was a strong man; and even his muscular force would have been lost, or spent in beating the air, had he not been frequently under the impulse of the Divine Spirit. He often got himself into broils and difficulties from which nothing but supernatural interposition could have saved him. His attacks upon the Philistines were never well planned, as he does not appear to have asked counsel from God; indeed, he seems to have consulted nothing but his own passions, particularly those of inordinate love and revenge; and the last effort of his extraordinary strength was, not to avenge his people for the oppressions which they had suffered under the Philistinian yoke, nor to avenge the quarrel of God's covenant against the enemies of his truth, but to be avenged of the Philistines for the loss of his two eyes.
3. Samson is a solemn proof how little corporeal prowess avails where judgment and prudence are wanting, and how dangerous all such gifts are in the hands of any man who has not his passions under proper discipline, and the fear of God continually before his eyes.
4. A parallel has been often drawn between Samson and our blessed Lord, of whom he has been supposed to be a most illustrious type. By a fruitful imagination, and the torture of words and facts, we may force resemblances everywhere; but that not one will naturally result from a cool comparison between Jesus Christ and Samson, is most demonstrable. A more exceptionable character is not to be found in the sacred oracles. It is no small dishonor to Christ to be thus compared. There is no resemblance in the qualities of Samson's mind, there is none in his moral conduct, that can entitle him even to the most distant comparison with the chaste, holy, benevolent, and immaculate Jesus. That man dishonors the law of unchangeable righteousness, who endeavors to make Samson a type of any thing or person that can be called holy, just, and pure.
5. Those who compare him to Hercules have been more successful. Indeed, the heathen god of strength appears to have been borrowed from the Israelitish judge; but if we regard what is called the choice of Hercules, his preference of virtue to pleasure, we shall find that the heathen is, morally speaking, vastly superior to the Jew. M. De Lavour, in his *Conference de la Fable avec l'Histoire Sainte*, vol. ii., p. 1, has traced the parallel between Hercules and Samson in the following manner: - "Hercules was figured by the poets as supernatural both in his birth and actions, and was therefore received by the people as a god of the first order. They attributed to him the miracles wrought by several illustrious chiefs among the people of God, which they found described in the sacred oracles, more ancient than their most ancient accounts, or which they had learned by tradition, and their commerce with the Egyptians and Phoenicians, who were spread through various countries, but particularly in Greece. It is also to the time of these chiefs, and to the government of the Israelites by their judges, that the heroes and grand events of fable owe their origin; to which time, indeed, they are referred by the common consent of authors, sacred and profane. "Every ancient nation, which had writers who left monuments of their country's glory, had a Hercules of its own, forged on the same plan." Varro reckons more than forty, and Cicero reckons six. (Book iii. *De Natura Deorum*). "Herodotus, (book ii., entitled *Euterpe*), only speaks of the Egyptian and Greek Hercules. Although a Greek himself, this father of history, as Cicero calls him, who lived the nearest of any of these writers to the period he describes, informs us that Greece had borrowed its Hercules from Egypt, and that

Amphitryon his father, and Alcmena his mother, were both Egyptians; so that, notwithstanding the desire the Greeks had to make Hercules a native of their country, they could not conceal his origin, which was either Egyptian or Hebrew; for the Greeks and Phoenicians looked upon the Israelites, who were settled in Canaan or Phoenicia, as Egyptians, whose ancestors, after residing in Egypt some centuries, had certainly come from that country. "M. Jaquelot, in his 'Treatise on the Existence of God,' believes that the Tyrian Hercules, who was the most ancient, was no other than Joshua. But St. Augustine (City of God, book xviii., chap. 19). has made it appear that it was after Samson (because of his prodigious and incomparable strength) that they forged their Hercules; first in Egypt, afterwards in Phoenicia, and lastly in Greece, each of whose writers has united in him all the miraculous actions of the others. In fact, it appears that Samson, judge of the Israelites from about A.M. 2867 to 2887, celebrated in the book of Judges, and mentioned by Josephus in his history, is the original and essential Hercules of fable: and although the poets have united these several particulars, drawn from Moses and Joshua, and have added their own inventions; yet the most capital and considerable belong to Samson, and are distinguished by characteristics so peculiar to him, as to render him easily discerned throughout the whole. "In Hebrew the name of Samson (שמסון) signifies the sun, and in Syriac (servitium vel ministerium ejus) subjection to some one, servitude. Macrobius says that the name of Hercules signifies only the sun; for, he adds, in Greek Hercules means, it is glory of the air, or the light of the sun. The Greeks and Egyptians have exactly followed the Syriac signification by imposing on their Hercules, during the whole of his life, a subjection to Eurystheus in all his exploits, and who appointed him his famous enterprises. This necessity they attribute to fate and the law of his birth. Having spoken of his name, we will now examine the circumstances of his birth, as mentioned in the sacred writings, Judges 13:2-24, and in the History of the Jews, chap. x. "Manoah, of the tribe of Dan, had married a woman who was barren, which led them to pray earnestly that the Lord would bless them with an offspring. One day, this woman being alone, an angel appeared to her, and told her he was sent by God to inform her she should have a son of the most extraordinary strength, who was to raise the glory of their nation, and to humble their enemies. Upon the arrival of her husband, she imparted to him the message and discourse of the angel. Some time after this heavenly messenger showed himself to them both as they were in the house together, and ascended up to heaven in their sight, after having confirmed the promises made before to the woman, who soon after became pregnant, and was in due time delivered of Samson. "The singular birth of Hercules, in fable, is similar to the above account, with a trifling alteration taken from the ideas the poets entertained of their gods. Amphitryon, the most considerable person and the chief of the Thebans, had married Alcmena, whom he loved to distraction, but had not any children by her. Jupiter, desirous of making her the mother of Hercules, repaired to Alcmena one night, in the absence and under the figure of her husband. On Amphitryon's return, his wife said she had seen him before, on such a night mentioning the visit she had received. Amphitryon, transported with jealousy, and enraged with his wife, whatever good opinion he might entertain of her virtue, would neither be appeased nor consoled till Jupiter appeared to vindicate her conduct; and, in order to convince Amphitryon of his being a god, visibly ascended up to heaven, after informing him that he alone had visited Alcmena, assuring him of her virtue, and promising him a son, who was to be distinguished for his strength; whose glory was to confer honor on his race and family; who was to humble their enemies; and who, finally, was to be immortal. "The Spirit of God, with which Samson was from the very first endowed, caused him, even in his youth, to effect prodigies of strength. He once met with a furious young lion which attacked him; Samson, then unarmed, immediately rent the lion in pieces, as if it had been a lamb; and, resolving to revenge himself upon the Philistines, who had grievously afflicted the children of Israel, he slew vast numbers of them at different times, weakened them excessively, and thus began to deliver Israel out of the hands of their enemies as the angel had predicted. "Fable, likewise, causes

Hercules to perform exploits requiring prodigious strength; but, as its exaggerations are beyond all bounds, it attributes to him, while still an infant, the strangling enormous serpents which fell upon him in his cradle, and the first and most illustrious exploit of his youth was the defeat of a terrible lion in the Nemaean forest, which he slew without the help of any weapon of defense: the skin of this lion he afterwards wore as a garment. He likewise formed and executed the design of delivering his country from the tyrannic oppression of the Myrmidons. We ought not to be surprised that fable, which disfigures so many events by transforming them to its fancy, has altered the other adventures of Samson; that it has added to them others of its own invention; that it attributes to him the actions of other chiefs and heroes, and ascribes some of the performances of Samson to other persons than Hercules; for this reason we find the account of the foxes Samson caught and tied by the tail preserved indeed, but transferred to another country. "Fable then borrows in favor of our hero, Hercules, the miracle which God wrought for Joshua, when he assisted the Gibeonites against the five kings of the Amorites, when the Lord cast down great stones upon them from heaven, so that more of those who fled from the Israelites perished by the hail than did by the sword. In imitation of this miracle, fable says (Pliny, book iii., chap. iv.; Pomponius Mela, De Situ Orbis, book 2:, chap. v.) that when Hercules was engaged in a combat with the Ligurians, Jupiter assisted him by sending him a shower of stones. The quantity of stones which are still to be seen on the plains of Crau (called by the ancients Campi Lapidei) in Provence, has occasioned the poets to consider this place as the theater of the above miracle. "The jaw-bone of the ass, rendered so famous from Samson having slain one thousand Philistines with it, has been changed into the celebrated club of Hercules with which he defeated giants, and slew the many enemies that opposed him. The similarity of the Greek words *κορῆ* and *κορυβή* may have given rise to this alteration; *κορῆ* signifying jaw, and *κορυβή*, a mace or club. The change of one of these words for the other is not difficult, especially as it seemed more suitable to arm Hercules with a club than with the jaw-bone of an ass. But fable has, however, more clearly preserved the miracle of the spring of water that God produced in this bone, to preserve Samson from perishing with thirst, after the defeat of the Philistines; for it relates that when Hercules had slain the dragon that guarded the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, and he was in danger of perishing with thirst in the scorching deserts of Libya, the gods caused a fountain to issue from a rock he struck with his foot; Apol. book xxxvi. of Argonauts, ver. 1446. "The extraordinary strength of Samson was accompanied with a constant and surprising weakness, viz., his love for women. These two characteristics compose his history, and are equally conspicuous throughout the whole of his life: the latter however predominated; and after having frequently exposed him to great danger, at length completed his ruin. Fable has not omitted this characteristic weakness in its Hercules; in him this passion was excited by every woman that presented herself to his view; it led him to the performance of many base actions, and, after precipitating him into several dangers, at length put an end to his miserable existence. Samson, who well knew that his strength depended upon the preservation of his hair, was so imprudent as to impart this secret to Delilah, his mistress. This woman, whose sole design in importuning him was to betray him, cut his hair off while asleep, and delivered him, thus deprived of all his strength, into the hands of the Philistines, who took from him both his liberty and eyesight, and treated him as the vilest and most wretched of slaves. Tradition, which spoils and disfigures the ancient histories and those of distant countries, has transferred this adventure to Nisus, king of Megara, and his daughter Scylla. Megara was also the name of one of Hercules' wives the daughter of Creon, king of Thebes. The name of Scylla is taken from the crime and impiety of the daughter of Nisus, from the Greek verb *σὺλαω*, *sulao*, which signifies to rob or strip with impiety. The destiny or welfare of Nisus depended on the preservation of a lock of purple hair which grew on his head. Scylla, having conceived an affection for Minos, who was at that time besieging the capital of her father's kingdom, betrayed her parent, cut off this lock of purple hair while he was asleep, and delivered him into the hands of his enemy.

Nisus lost both his senses and his life, and according to fable, was changed into a bird. - Ovid, *Met.*, book viii. "But the most remarkable and striking event in the history of Samson, is that by which he lost his life. The Philistines, when offering solemn sacrifices to their god, by way of thanksgiving for his having delivered into their hands their formidable enemy, caused Samson to be brought out of prison, in order to make a laughing-stock of him. Samson, as though wishing to rest himself, requested his conductors to let him lean against the pillars which supported the temple, which was at that time filled with a great multitude of persons, among whom were many princes of the Philistines. Samson then, invoking the Lord, and exerting all his strength, which was returning with the growth of his hair, laid hold of the pillars with both his hands, and shook them so violently as to pull the building down upon the whole multitude therein assembled. By this fatal catastrophe Samson killed a greater number of Philistines than he had done during his life. "Fable and tradition could not efface this event in the copy of Samson, which is Hercules. Herodotus relates it as a fabulous tradition, invented by the Greeks, and rejects it as having no foundation either in the history itself, or in the manners and customs of the Egyptians; among whom the Greeks say this event had happened. They relate (says this historian, book ii., entitled *Euterpe*, p. 47) that Hercules, having fallen into the hands of the Egyptians, was condemned to be sacrificed to Jupiter. He was adorned like a victim, and led with much pomp to the foot of the altar: after permitting himself to be conducted thus far, and stopping a moment to collect his strength, he fell upon and massacred all those who were assembled to be either actors in, or spectators of, this pompous sacrifice, to the number of many thousands. "The conformity between these adventures of Samson and Hercules is self-evident, and proves beyond a doubt that the fable of the one was composed from the history of the other. The remark of Herodotus respecting the impossibility of this last adventure, according to the Greek tradition, and the folly of attributing it to the Egyptians, serves to confirm the truth of its having been borrowed, and of its being but a disfigured copy, whose original must be sought for elsewhere. "In fact, it appears that Samson, judge of the Israelites, particularly mentioned in the book of Judges, and by Josephus, *Ant. lib. v., c. 10*, is the original and essential Hercules of fable; and although the poets have united some particulars drawn from Moses and Joshua, and have added their own inventions, yet the most capital and considerable belong to Samson, and are distinguished by characteristics so peculiar to him, as render him easily discernible throughout the whole."

The above is the substance of what M. De Lavour has written on the subject, and contains, as some think, a very clear case; and is an additional proof how much the heathens have been indebted to the Bible.