



Context of Samson

By Marcus Lander (1993)

This was one of my earlier poems, written when I was 16 years of age, that drew inspiration from the fabled life of one of Israel's more eccentric characters, who lived during the time of the judges. His life was intense, but brief, and filled with much grief and frustration. Although he is known as a judge, he does not seem ideally suited to that vocation, as he comes across as rather impulsive and irresponsible. Indeed the Biblical narrative does not mention him acting as a judge of affairs within Israel, so much as carrying out his own vigilante style judgements against Israel's enemies, the Philistines. Apparently the chronicler of this period saw the hand of God at work in this, rather than merely the vengeful acts of a man with a grudge. Samson however is an interesting person, not just for his legendary strength and his unwillingness to submit to the rules of engagement laid down for him by others, but also for his passion, whether misguided or not.

Though he belonged to a downtrodden people who were destined to be separate, yet he dared to love without borders, bridging the cultural divide between two peoples. Had not long-standing animosities between the warring factions intervened, as they did in the case of Romeo and Juliet, things could have turned out differently. In contrast to the objects of his love affairs, Samson remained faithful to those he became enamoured by, returned to them after he was left feeling hurt and betrayed, and avenged their deaths. It seems likely that he was aware of what Delilah was up to and where it might lead, and he would have had the opportunity to leave and find someone worthier of his affections. Yet he chose to stay, and eventually stopped resisting her machinations. It seems therefore, that even before he was captured and blinded by the Philistines, he was already a captive and blinded by love for a woman who cared more about wealth and status.

The original story can be found in the book of Judges, chapters 13-16.