



## PROBING

## THE PROPHETS

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Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

Throughout my years of studying the story of Shimshon HaGibor, whose birth is detailed in this week's haftarah, I faced difficulties in understanding this biblical hero - his successes and failures – difficulties that I have shared with you in these pages and in my book, “Bringing the Prophets to Life”. Samson’s seeming inability to unite the local tribes oppressed by the Philistine nation contributed to his apparent failure to break their hold on our nation. His strange behavior – including marrying a Philistine wife, ignoring his parents’ directive and falling under the influence of the Philistine Delilah – all contribute to our difficulty in fully comprehending the character of this biblical “gibor”.

Rav Soloveitchik suggests a different approach to understanding the story of Shimshon, an approach that begins by asking why Shimshon revealed to Delilah that the source of his strength lay in his hair when, as a nazir, he was also prohibited from imbibing wine – something which would, logically, could also have removed Hashem’s gift of strength from him.

The Rav responds by stating that the hair of the nazir is the central defining characteristic of nezirut, as the Torah states (B’midbar 6:7): “Ki nezer Elokav al rosho. – ‘For the crown of G-d IS UPON HIS HEAD’”. This is also indicated by the fact that, upon completing the nezirut period, the individual

must cut his hair and burn it upon the mizbe’ach. In effect, Rav Soloveitchik contends, Shimshon’s hair, his “crown of G-d”, functioned like the head tefillin of which the Torah states (D’varim 28:10): “Vra’u kol amei ha’aretz ki shem Hashem nikra alecha – v’yar’u mimeka” – that when the nations see how Hashem’s name is upon you, they will fear you, a pasuk explained in the G’mara (Berachot 6a) as referring to the Tefillin shel Rosh – the head tefillin that is “upon you” and that causes fear in the hearts of the enemy. It was this that was the “power” of Samson that struck fear in the hearts of the Plishtim. The power of Samson, the Rav continues, emanated from his unique spiritual personality that paralyzed others in confrontation. They did not understand the power that he held over them which is why they asked Delilah to ascertain his secret.

But the Rav did not suffice with this explanation, for he then adds:

“A similar paralysis was obvious in the Six-Day War of 1967, when Arab armies were overcome by fear and fled in panic before the Israeli Army. This was a manifestation of the special sanctity that B’nai Yisrael have in their land.”

“It is the ‘crown of G-d’ ”. ■

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