



## **NEWSCAST 8. SAMSON**

One of the most colorful of the biblical figures was Samson – a man of love and war. Although he is considered one of the Judges, the Bible concentrates on his many exploits rather than on his career as a judge.

The Samson account dramatizes the early Israel/Philistine conflict. By this period the Philistines had established a strong presence in their five cities along the Mediterranean coast — and posed a constant military threat to the confederation of Israelite tribes further inland.

During the Judges period the Philistines held a monopoly on the use of iron, which, for many years upset the balance of power in the region. Consequently, their military superiority enabled them to support garrisons as far east as the Jordan valley — deep into Israelite territory.

Little is known about the origins of the Philistines since they left no literature of their own. The Bible records that the Philistines emanated from Crete, which was once a major sea-power in the Eastern Mediterranean. In an earlier period— roughly five hundred years before Samson — two civilizations dominated Crete. One, the Mycenaeans, were the ancestors of ancient Greece. The others, the Minoans, built their famous Palace of Knossos under their leader, Minos. A great volcanic eruption devastated Crete and caused the total collapse of the Minoan Empire — which probably led to the Philistine migration to other shores.

The Philistines next appear on the world scene when they invade Egypt, only to be repulsed by Rameses II — the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Finally, the Philistines take their place in history as the supreme threat to Israel's sovereignty in Canaan.

**Biblical references: Judges, Chapters 13 – 16**

