

# Judges 14 - Samson Finds a Philistine Wife; Samson's Kills a Lion; The Wedding and the Riddle

II. Failure in rescue of Israel through the seven cycles (Judges 3:7—16:31)

(13) Samson defeats the Philistines (Judges 13:1—16:31)

(C) Salvation (13:2—16:31)

(d) Samson's conflict with the Philistines (Judges 14:1—16:31)

(i) Samson marries a Philistine (14:1-9)

(ii) Samson tells the riddle at his marriage (14:10-20)

According to Heb 11:32, Samson was a man of faith, but he wasn't a faithful man: he wasn't faithful to his parent's teaching, his Nazirite vow, or the laws of the Lord.

## Judges 14

(d) Samson's conflict with the Philistines (Judges 14:1—16:31)

(i) Samson marries a Philistine (14:1-9)

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**1** A while later, Samson went down to Timnah and observed a woman in Timnah who was of Philistine origin.

**1** And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

- "...Timnah" - 3-4 miles SW of Zorah

— It was given to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:43), but it was a city that the Danites never took, so at this time it was occupied by the Philistines

— The city was located in the flat valley, the perfect geography for the Philistine's chariot force

**2** So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines; so now, get her for me as a wife."

2 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

2 Then he returned and told his father and mother, "In Timnah I saw a woman of Philistine origin." He ordered them, "Get her for me as a wife. Now!"

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

- He wandered four miles into enemy territory and was captivated by a Philistine woman. Marrying a foreigner was contrary to God's Law (Ex 34:12-16; Deut 7:1-3; Cf. 2 Cor 6:14-18).

- Marriages at the time were negotiated by the parents, particularly the father and brother (Gen 21:21; 24:4; 34:8; Ex 21:9)

3 But his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the **uncircumcised** Philistines?" Yet Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, because she **is right for me.**"

3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."

3 His father and mother asked him, "Isn't there a woman suitable among the daughters of your relatives or among all of our people, since you're going to get your wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"

But Samson retorted to his father, "Get her for me, since she looks fine to me."

**3** Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

- The parents' reply: "Can't you find a nice Jewish girl to marry?"

- "...uncircumcised" - used exclusively for the Philistines, since other Canaanites (except the Shechemites) practiced circumcision

- "...is right for me" - literally, "right in my eyes" (Cf. 17:6; 21:25). The derogatory theme of the Book of Judges.

— Living by sight instead of by faith never turns out well...

— Samson's eyes are later plucked out...

4 However, his father and mother did not know that this was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. And at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

4 However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

4 Meanwhile, his father and mother did not know that she was from the LORD, because he had been seeking a favorable opportunity concerning the Philistines, since the Philistines were dominating Israel at that time.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

- God's hand arranged this connection; since Samson would not move on his own, God will use this situation to get him to move against the Philistines

— The Israelites accepted Philistine domination without resistance until the time of Samuel (15:11; 1 Sam 7:10-14)

5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion *came* roaring toward him.

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5 Then Samson went down in the direction of Timnah with his father and mother and arrived as far as the vineyards of Timnah. And—surprise!—a young lion came roaring at him!

5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

- The vineyards of Timnath: in the valley of Sorek ("choicest vines"), famous for its wines (Is 5:2; Jer 2:21)

— Partaking of the vine was forbidden to a Nazirite; this indicates that Samson and his parents separated at the edge of the vineyard

— Samson would take a longer route to Timnah to avoid walking through the vineyard, which is why the parents knew nothing about the lion attack

6 And the Spirit of the LORD **rushed upon him**, so that he tore it apart as one tears apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

6 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

6 The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he ripped the lion apart as one might dissect a young goat, even though he carried nothing in his hand. But he didn't tell his father and mother what he had done.

6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he

had done.

- "...rushed upon him" - reveals the source of Samson's strength; the Holy Spirit, not Samson's hair, was always the source of his strength (13:24-25; 14:19; 15:14)

- Samson ripped the lion in half, perhaps using its hind legs

7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked pleasing to Samson.

7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.

7 Then he went down and talked to the woman, and she looked fine to Samson.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

- He was living by sight, not by faith: the lust of the eyes (1 John 2:16); he was pleasing himself, not the Lord

— He should have been going to a war, not a wedding...but as a result he would kill 30 men (v19), burn up their crops (15:1-5), and slaughter a great number of Philistines (15:7-8,15)

8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

8 When he came back later to marry her, he turned aside to observe the lion's carcass. Amazingly, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, complete with honey.

8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

- This event would have occurred after the betrothal period of at least one year

— The year passed would've been enough time for the carcass to have been totally dried up

— Normally bees do not hive in a dead body; this could mean that by that time, the body had become a clean skeleton

- This would later be the basis of a riddle at a drinking party...

9 So he took out the honey on his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them and they ate *it*; but he did not tell them that he had took the honey out of the body of the lion.

9 So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them and they ate *it*; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.

9 So he scraped some out into his hands and went on his way, eating all the while. When he met his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it, too. But he didn't

inform them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

- This act violated his Nazirite Vow against touching a dead body (Num 6:6), and also eating something that had become unclean

### **Samson as a Type of Israel**

Samson can be viewed as a type of Israel in nine different ways:

- (1) There was a supernatural element involved in both their births.
- (2) Both Samson and Israel are called to a high life of separation and devotion to God.
- (3) Samson has an immature personality as Israel had an immature faith.
- (4) He is drawn to foreign women just as Israel is drawn to foreign gods and plays the harlot.
- (5) Both Samson and Israel experienced oppression and bondage of the enemy.
- (6) Samson cried out to God from his oppression as Israel often did.
- (7) Samson was blinded physically as Israel was blinded spiritually.
- (8) Samson was abandoned by God and did not know it; and God hid His face from Israel, and Israel did not know it.
- (9) Eventually the relationship between Samson and God was restored, and Samson's strength was renewed, just as Israel was strengthened with the rise of a new judge.

(ii) Samson tells the riddle at his marriage (14:10-20)

**10** Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson held a **feast** there, for the young men customarily did this.

**10** Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this.

**10** Later on, when his father went down to visit the woman, Samson threw a party there, since young men customarily did this.

**10** So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

- Samson's father visited the woman to finalize negotiations for the wedding itself

- "...feast" - *mishteh*, drinking party; banquet

— Drinking would be yet another violation of his Nazirite Vow

11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

11 When they saw him, they brought 30 companions to accompany him.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

- These men would be the "sons of the bride-chamber" (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34)

— They were used as bodyguards to avoid an easy attack on the bridal party

— It may also have meant that the Philistines were afraid of Samson, so to not take any chances, they surrounded him with bodyguards

12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me now propose a riddle for you; if you actually tell me the answer within the seven days of the feast, and solve it, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty outfits of clothes.

12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.

12 "Let me tell you a riddle," Samson told them. "If you can solve it during this week-long festival, I'll give you 30 linen garments and 30 formal garments.

**12** And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

- Proposing riddles was common practice among ancient Greeks, so this reflects the Aegean origin of the Philistines

13 But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty outfits of clothes." And they said to him, "Propose your riddle, so that we may hear it."

13 But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Propound your riddle, that we may hear it."

13 But if you don't solve it, then you'll give me 30 linen garments and 30 formal garments." "Tell us your riddle and we'll solve it," they responded.

13 But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." But they could not tell *the answer to* the riddle in three days.

14 So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." But they could not tell the riddle in three days.

14 So he told them: From the eater came something edible; from the strong something sweet. For three days they couldn't solve the riddle.

**14** And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

- The Hebrew literally reads: "From the eater, out came eats; and from the strong, out came sweets"
- This was not a fair riddle since it would require knowledge only available to Samson

**15** Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? *Is this not so?*"

**15** Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? *Is this not so?*"

**15** The next day, they told Samson's wife, "Coax your husband to explain the riddle or we'll set fire to your father's house—with you in it! You've invited us here to make us paupers, haven't you?"

**15** And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?

- After three days of frustration, they knew they couldn't solve the riddle

- On the seventh day, they began to presume upon his new wife and threatened her and her family

— This was not an idle threat because shortly (15:6) that is exactly what they did

**16** So Samson's wife wept in front of him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have proposed a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told *it* to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told *it* to my father or mother; so should I tell you?"

**16** Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told *it* to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told *it* to my father or mother; so should I tell you?"

**16** So Samson's wife cried in front of him and accused him, "You only hate me. You don't love me. You've told a riddle to my relatives, but you haven't told the solution to me."

Samson responded, "Look, I haven't told my parents, either. Why should I tell you?"

**16** And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?

**17** However she wept before him for seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people.

17 However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people.

17 So she kept on crying in front of him for the entire seven days of the wedding party. On the seventh day he told the solution to her because she nagged him, and then she told the solution to the riddle to her relatives.

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

- For the first six days she only asked out of curiosity, but now on the seventh day she was more urgent because of the Philistine threat

— Women can be the measure of weakness in a man: she enticed him, controlled him, then betrayed him

18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not **plowed with my heifer**, You would not have found out my riddle."

18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have found out my riddle."

18 Then the men of the city answered him just before sunset on the seventh day: "What's sweeter than honey? What's stronger than lions?" Samson responded, "If you hadn't plowed with my heifer, you wouldn't have solved my riddle."

18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

- The men did not answer the riddle forthrightly; they also used the riddle form, a five-fold repetition in the Hebrew

- "...plowed with my heifer" - a proverbial usage; he accused them of cheating

— If they hadn't cheated, they would have lost the wager

— Samson realized that the source of their knowledge was his wife

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD **rushed upon** him, and he went down to **Ashkelon** and killed thirty men of them and took what they were wearing and gave the outfits of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of *clothes* to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, killed 30 men, took their belongings, and gave the garments to those who had told him the solution to the riddle. He remained furious, left for his father's house,

**19** And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

- "...rushed upon" - see note on v6

- "...Ashkelon" - one of the five major Philistine cities, 20 miles away from Timnath

- Thirty men died because of the party wager

— Samson, in his anger, went home without consummating the marriage

— Perhaps he planned to do so at the wheat harvest (15:1-3), but then learned that she wasn't his wife!

20 But Samson's wife was *given* to **his companion** who had been his friend.

20 But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion who had been his friend.

20 and Samson's wife went to the best man at his wedding.

20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

- "...his companion" - this was "the friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29)

— He was the conductor of the bride and one of the 30 companions whom Samson had entrusted with this office at the marriage feast; possibly the one who extracted the answer from Samson's wife

- Although Samson went home angry without his wife, he did not intend to dissolve the marriage, as the very next chapter shows

— The actions of the father of the bride in giving her to another now made reconciliation impossible...so now Samson's war against the Philistines will begin in earnest