



BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

TOPIC: THE LIFE OF SAMSON

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION OF THE JUDGES	1
PROPHECY ON SAMSON'S BIRTH	3
THE LAWS OF THE NAZIRITE	4
SAMSON'S FIRST LOVE	5
SAMSON'S MARRIAGE AND THE RIDDLE	6
REVENGE SPAWNS MORE REVENGE	8
SAMSON'S BETRAYER	10
SAMSON HANDED HIS DESTRUCTION KEY TO DELILAH	14

laugh and jeer and mock him. Then he was forced to perform tricks for their amusement, like a dog at a dog show. With every insult, he regretted having allowed his character weaknesses to lead him to such humiliation and despair. He repented of his sins and hoped that God would use him just one more time. (An example of praying to God while in disgrace and humiliation, and begin heard by him. The result was a great deliverance to Israel (16:28-30))

Samson said to the lad, "Help me place my hands on the pillars so that I may lean upon them." The lad thought about it, and then, thinking there was no danger to fulfilling his request, he did what Samson had asked of him. With his knowledge of Philistine culture, Samson remembered that these two pillars were part of the foundation of the temple. If he could knock down the pillars, the temple would fall. He was now positioned between the two towering pillars. Then Samson softly prayed to God: "O Lord Almighty, I pray that you please remember me, and that, in your great mercy, you strengthen me only this once. Please, O God, allow me to have revenge upon the Philistines for taking away my eyesight." (Samson's concern was vengeance for his two eyes, but God's was the deliverance of a whole nation. Both realized their wish in the destruction of all the lords, leaders and prominent men of Philistia (16:30) with such a great number destroyed Israel was no doubt free from philistine oppression for many years.)

He then took hold of the pillars, which supported the temple's roof, and braced himself, saying, "Let me die with these Philistines!" And then Samson pushed.

God answered his prayer. Samson felt superhuman strength flow through him once again as he pushed the pillars apart. They tumbled over and collapsed, bringing down the entire temple upon the five overlords and their guests. Three thousand Philistines were dead more than Samson had ever killed before!

Afterward, Samson's family members boldly came to take his body to bury it in his father's tomb (Judges 16:23-31). Not the last words of Samson, the strong man. He was willing to die for the victory of Israel (16:29) and only two men in the scripture who did more to fulfill the will of God in their death than they did in life: Samson (16:30) and Jesus Christ (Mt. 26:28; 1Cor. 15:3; 2Cor. 5:15; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:20-22; Heb. 2:9-18; 13:12; 1Pet. 2:24) Though Samson had some shortcomings, Samson was truly a great servant of God. In fact, the Bible lists him among the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

SAMSON

The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the lord and this evil can be numbered as the 8th time before the Lord in judges.

Jdg. 2:11-2:15 when the generation of those that know the lord and the work he had done for Israel died those from the time of Moses to Joshua and the new generation (children of Israel) who did not know the Lord or the work or how he has brought the children out of Egypt forget the Lord God and served baalim or baal (a canaanite god) and the ashtaroth (a canaanite goddesses) and bowed down to them in provoking the Lord to anger. So the lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies who will plunder and despoiled them so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. And the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity wherever they went nevertheless, the Lord in His mercy raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them but yet they wouldn't listen to there judges.

Jdg. 3:7-3:11 the children of Israel didn't learn there lessons after been punished by the Lord and saved by the Lord through the hand of the judge who they didn't listen to until the death of the judge, then did they became more corrupted than their father by serving the baals and the asherahs (Name or Symbol for canaanite goddesses) and the lord's anger was hot against them and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia and the children of Israel served them eight years (8yrs). And cried out to the Lord for help and the Lord raised up Othniel to deliverer them from the hand of their enemy. Othniel then judged Israel for forty years (40yrs) and the land had peace in his time and he died.

Jdg. 3:12-3:30 when Othniel died the children of Israel again return to their sinful act as a dog return to its vomit so the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord therefore they served Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years (18yrs) and then cried out to the Lord for help and the Lord sent Ehud

to deliver them from the hand of Eglon king of Moab. And Ehud then judge Israel for eighty years (80yrs) and the land had peace in his time and he died.

Jdg. 4:1- 5:31 when Ehud died the children of Israel return to their sinful act and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of canaan and the children of Israel were harshly oppressed for twenty years (20yrs) then they cried out to the Lord for help and the Lord delivered them through the hand of Barak and Deborah and the land had rest for forty years (40yrs).

Jdg. 6:1- again the children of Israel sinned against the Lord and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the midian for seven years (7yrs) and when Israel was greatly impoverished because of the midian they cried out to the Lord and the Lord sent Gideon to deliver the children of Israel and the midian were subdued before the children of Israel and the land had peace for forty years (40yrs) in the day of Gideon and he died.

Jdg. 7:1- after the death of Gideon the children of Israel again played the harlot with the baals and made baal-berith their god and they forgot the lord their God who had delivered them through the hand of Gideon and conflict raised among them from the son of Gideon.

Jdg. 10:1 the Lord used Tola to save Israel there after and he judge Israel for twenty-three (23yrs) and he died

Jdg.10:3 after Tola arose Jair who judge Israel for twenty-two years (22yrs) and died then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord by serving the baals and the ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the god of Sidon, the god of Moab, the god of the people of ammon and the gods of the people of philistines and they forsook the Lord and did not serve the Lord and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the Ammon and from that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years (18yrs) then the children of Israel acknowledge their sin, for going after other gods and repented by putting away the foreign gods after some rejected conversation between them and the Lord nevertheless after putting away there foreign gods they

off Samson's hair. Immediately, Samson's superhuman strength left him as he continued to sleep. To find out if he had told the truth, Delilah bound his hands and then screamed, "Wake up, Samson! The Philistines are about to attack!"

Samson woke up. Seeing that Delilah had bound him again, he thought to himself, "I'll just break free like I did before." That was when Samson realized that something was wrong. "I can't break free! What has happened to me?" He looked down and noticed that his long locks of hair were lying on the floor that was when Samson finally knew he had been betrayed! As he continued to struggle against his bonds, the Philistine overlords and their troops came out of hiding. They shouted at Samson and took hold of him, beating him.

And then Samson looked on as the overlords handed their pieces of silver to Delilah. It was the last thing he ever saw for the Philistines had Samson's eyes put out (Judges 16:19-21)! Captured, beaten and made blind, Samson was brought to Gaza and paraded before jeering crowds of Philistines, who spat at him and mocked him. Thrown into prison, Samson was put to work grinding grain. This was considered woman's work too lowly for men to perform.

Even though his hair began to grow long again, the Philistines did not fear that Samson would get his superhuman strength back. Now that he was blind and bound in bronze fetters, the overconfident Philistines did not believe that he would ever be a threat to them again (Judges 16:21-22).

One day, the five overlords of the Philistines held a great feast at one of their temples. It was a special celebration, a great sacrifice in honor of their false god Dagon, whose carved imaged portrayed him as being half man, half fish. At the ceremony, the overlords addressed the people: "Our god Dagon has delivered the once-great Samson, our enemy, into our hands." Everyone attending the assembly, including many Philistine rulers and dignitaries, praised their false god, saying to its carved image, "You, Dagon, have delivered into our hands our enemy the destroyer of our country the one who slew so many of us." They were all drinking strong drink and making merry, and called for Samson to be brought before them. "Bring out this Hebrew" they chanted, "that he might perform for us!" The entire audience was amused to see Samson brought before them. He blindly groped around as he was led out by a lad and positioned between two giant pillars. Samson listened to the Philistines

loom, then my strength would be gone.” As a Nazarite, Samson had very long hair, which had never been cut. But, he did not look like a “wild man,” the way some rock stars and entertainers appear today; Samson's hair was tastefully gathered into seven long locks. After she had waited for Samson to fall into a deep sleep, Delilah tightly wove his hair into the web of her loom. Then she yelled, “Wake up, Samson! The Philistines are here!” Samson jumped up and pulled his hair out of the loom with ease. And Delilah saw that he was just as strong as ever.

She said, “How can you say that you love me when obviously you don't trust me with your heart? You have made a fool out of me three times and you still haven't shared your secret with me!” From then on, Delilah pressured, begged and nagged Samson day after day, night after night, hour after hour she would not give him a moment's rest.

One day, Samson's patience finally ran out: “Alright, alright! Here is my secret: A razor has never so much as touched my head, for I have been a Nazarite, separated to serve God, from my mother's womb. If my hair was shaved off, my vow would be broken and my strength would leave me. I would become weak. I would become just like any other man. Now stop pestering me!”

Samson's strength did not lie in his hair or in his muscles, but in the relationship and contact he had with God through the Holy Spirit, which was upon him (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14) and his faith in God (Heb. 11:32-40). His hair was a token of his vow to God and spoke of that relationship which gave him strength.

Incredibly, Samson had just handed Delilah the key to his destruction!

She looked into his eyes and was convinced that he had finally revealed the truth. Later, she called for the Philistine overlords, telling them, “Bring me my pieces of silver. Samson shall soon be delivered into your hands” (Judges 16:8-18). With the money in tow, the overlords and their men quietly came to Delilah's home and hid.

Then Delilah lulled Samson to sleep in her arms. (Whether she used some drug to put him to sleep is not known, but how he could remain thus without such while his head was being shaved is hard to understand (16:19), Perhaps she bound him and cut off his hair at the same time, then began to torment him to see if his strength was gone, finally calling the lords of the philistines. It seems that he was already bound when they came to get him (16:21)) Next, she signaled for a soldier to sneak over to them and cut

gathered together to fight with their enemy and the Lord used Jephthah to save them and Jephthah the Gileadite judge Israel for six years (6yrs) and died.

Jdg. 12:8-10 after Jephthah, ibzan judge Israel for seven years (7yrs) and ibzan died.

Jdg. 12:11-12 after Ibzan, Elon judge Israel for ten years (10yrs) and died.

Jdg. 12:13 after Elon, abdon judge Israel for eight years (8yrs) and died.

After all these the children again did evil in the sight of God and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistine for forty years (40yrs).

Psalms 103:8-10. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, he will not always strive with us, nor will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Despite the constant sin of the children of Israel the Lord never forget them in their punishment he always make a provision on how to save His people out of pain and slavery. Forty years (40yrs)(the longest servitude of all the 7 in judges) under the philistine yet the children of Israel didn't cried out to the Lord for help, that should be because their punishment under the philistine was not been harassed and oppressed as before therefore they felt calm since the oppression was not as before.

THE COMING FORTH OF SAMSON

“Jer. 29:11” For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

God wanted the children of Israel to be free and have peace in their land serving Him only without anybody able to stand up against them.

While they were still under the philistine, God sent His Angel to a godly family, a man of Zorah of the family of the Danites whose name was Manoah (meaning REST) who's wife was barren having petition God for a child the Lord sent His angel to predict three things to him which are:

- You shall conceive and bear a son (13:3)
- He shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistine (13:5)
- He shall be a Nazarite from his mother's womb

Having told the woman, she ran to her husband to report all that had happen and the husband delight to see the man who had brought such a good news to them, that lead him to pray to God to send the man to come again and the Lord hearkened unto the voice of Manoah and the angel of the Lord came again and gave 5 commands to Manoah and his wife saying:

- To Wife: Beware, and drink no wine or strong drink (13:4,7,14)
- To Wife: Eat no unclean thing
- To Wife: No razor shall come upon his (your son's) head (13:5)
- To Wife: Do not eat anything that comes of the vine. This would include grapes and raisins (13:14)
- To Manoah: All that I have commanded her let her obey.

According to Number 6: These are the laws of the Nazirite.

- He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink (6:3)
- He shall not drink vinegar of wine
- He shall not drink vinegar of strong drink
- He shall not drink liquor of grapes
- He shall not eat ripe grapes
- He shall not eat dried grapes
- He shall eat nothing made of the vine, from kernels to the husk
- He shall have no razor come upon his head during his Nazariteship letting the locks of the hair of his head grow (6:5)
- He shall be holy
- He shall not be defiled for the dead, even for father, mother, sister or brother (means not touching or going near to a dead body Lev. 21:1,2,11) (6:6-8).

Therefore having heard these Manoah wanted to detain the man of God until a kid (referring to a young goat) is made ready for him to eat but the angel replied him that even if he detain him, he can not eat his food but instead he should offer it as burnt offering to the Lord, Manoah didn't know he was an angel from the Lord but hearing the angel's word and how he regarded and give glory to God by resisting the food but

than Samson's love: Money!

Samson should have trusted God to provide him with the right woman to love and marry. As our Creator, God knows us better than we know ourselves (Matthew 10:29-31; Luke 12:6-7). Delilah did not waste time putting her scheme into action. When she and Samson were alone, she said to him, "Tell me, dear, what is the source of your great strength? And what would it take for someone to bind you so that he could afflict you?" Samson said, "If someone managed to bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I would be weak, as normal as any other man." (Samson's strength came from God—and God would continue to give it to him as long as Samson did not break his Nazarite vow.) He lied to Delilah because he did not fully trust her. Yet, by being intimate with a woman he suspected of being untrustworthy, Samson was playing with fire. He was bound to get burned! Samson decided to play a kind of "lying game" with Delilah but such games only end with bad results (Judges 16:4-7). The first attempt to get his secret should have been a warning to Samson, but not so.

That evening, Delilah playfully tied Samson with seven fresh bowstrings, which had been supplied by the Philistine overlords. Samson was unaware that Philistine soldiers were hiding in the room, waiting for Delilah's signal to attack. When she was certain that Samson was bound tight, Delilah yelled, "Samson, look out! The Philistines are upon you!" Suddenly, Samson broke free from the bowstrings as though they were but a single strand of yarn. He laughed, happy with the little "game" he was playing.

But Delilah was far from pleased. She said, "You've mocked me and told me lies! How can I trust you if you don't trust me? Now tell me what it would take to bind you up." Samson continued to toy with Delilah with more lies: "If I was bound with new ropes that had never been used, then I would become as normal as any other man." So Delilah waited when he was caught off-guard and bound him with new, never-used rope. Then she yelled, "Watch out, the Philistines are upon you!" However, the Philistine soldiers lying in wait did not reveal themselves, which was fortunate for them. Samson easily broke free from his bonds as though they were thread!

Delilah was furious! She said, "Why have you mocked me so, and told me lies? What is your secret, Samson if you loved me, you'd tell me!" Samson said, "If the seven locks of my head were woven into the web of a

up, along with two adjoining gateposts. He then carried them away on his shoulders and dropped them on top of a hill that faced Hebron, over in Judah about 38 miles away! This embarrassed the Philistines, who thought they could outsmart Samson. It also enraged them even more. The Philistine people were now more determined than ever to get rid of Samson (Judges 16:1-3).

Samson's loves always got him into trouble. He had one-weakness foreign women, and all three in his life were philistine:

- His wife from Timnath (14:1-4)
- The harlot in Gath (16:1)
- Delilah of Sorek (16:4-22)

Samson was always mismatched and found women who did not really love him. They either had other lovers or were friends of his enemies who always caused trouble between them. He seemed to love deeply and this caused the others to take advantage of him to deceive and betray him. In the first and last cases both the other lovers of the women and their people agreed together to take advantage of him (14:1-20; 16:1-22).

Sometime later, the overlords of the Philistines learned that Samson had fallen madly in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah, who lived in the Valley of Sorek. Unfortunately, Samson's latest unwise romance would bear the rotten fruits of betrayal, extreme humiliation and misery. Sin always produces bad results.

The five Philistine overlords made Delilah a proposition: "Seduce Samson for us, and discover the secret to his great strength and how we can defeat him. We intend bind up this Hebrew and afflict him. In return for your services, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver." (If shekels of silver at 64¢ each, then Delilah was to receive the equivalent of \$704 (N254, 222) from each or \$3,520 (N1,271,111) from the 5 lords, for betraying Samson, such an amount would be tempting to the ungodly and wicked of the world.)

The overlords did not want to kill Samson right away. They wanted to take their revenge through torture and humiliation.

Also, they may have thought that Samson was using some kind of "good luck charm." Many people today put their trust in so-called charms rather than in God.

"Eleven hundred pieces from each of you?" said Delilah. "That comes to 5,500 pieces of silver! which is \$3,520 (N1,271,111)" She did not hesitate to accept their offer. Delilah found something she valued far more

instead requesting it to be offered as sacrifice, Manoah asked his name that he might honor him when his word come to past but since the angel wont respond to what he wanted Manoah would have understood that he has just came to deliver the message he was told and not to be entertained therefore Manoah took a kid(referring to a young goat) with a meat offering and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD and as the flame of the burnt offering went up toward heaven from off the altar that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar and while Manoah and his wife saw it they fell on their face to the ground, then did Manoah realized that the man of God was an Angel and the angel appeared to them no more.

And the woman bare a son, though the time the message was fulfilled was not started like that of Abraham which is a year interval nevertheless the word of the Lord came to past at the appointed time of God (God time is the best) and Manoah called the name of his son Samson meaning "of the sun" and the child grew and the Lord blessed him.

Being a child growing in the blessing of the Lord, the LORD chose to let His Spirit began to move in him (Samson) at that age and time in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol by doing things that are extra-ordinary, ability to move or do thing with his strength that's not possible for his age or physical appearance.

SAMSON'S FIRST LOVE

When Samson had become an adult, he visited Timnah, a town that belonged to the Philistines. There he spotted an attractive Philistine woman. Samson desired her so much that he raced home to plead with his father to acquire her to be his wife. (As head of the family, fathers used to exercise authority in nearly all matters; this often included choosing wives for their sons.) But Samson's parents said, "Why don't you marry a nice Israelite girl? There are plenty for you to choose from. You don't need to get yourself a wife from these pagan Philistines."

What Manoah and his wife said was wise. Long ago, God forbade His people to marry outside their race and religion. Yet many Israelites ignored what God had commanded; they married into the pagan nations of the Canaanites, and ended up serving their false gods. But Samson would not listen to reason. He said, "Get her for me. She looks like the right girl for me." Unfortunately, Samson was judging this woman solely by her

attractive features and personality when he should have taken a close look at her character.

God knew that Samson had a weakness for being attracted to foreign women, especially those who had ungodly character. If Samson did not overcome this, it would lead to a lifetime of misery, suffering and ultimately death. All sin follows this path. God is so wise and powerful, He is able to take a person's weaknesses and use them to fulfill His purpose. In Samson's case, God decided to use His servant's weakness for foreign woman as a means to punish the Philistines, delivering Israel from their hand. Samson's parents did not yet understand this (Judges 14:1-4).

Giving in to Samson's insistence, his parents accompanied him down to Timnah so that he could get the Philistine woman for a wife. Along the way, they came to the famed vineyards of Timnah, which was in the Sorek Valley. Suddenly, a roaring lion sprang from the brush. Poised to attack, the beast sought to rip Samson to pieces. But God's Spirit came upon Samson, giving him supernatural strength and power. He tore the lion apart! (But Samson's parents did not see this happen, for it took place away from their sight.)

At Timnah, Samson courted the woman for marriage. In his eyes, she appeared to be the perfect woman for him. According to the custom of the day, a year may have passed before Samson and his wife to be would get married. Whatever the length of time, when it had passed, Samson traveled back down to Timnah for his fiancée. On the way, he heard the sound of buzzing coming from the side of the road. Curious, he followed the sound until it led him to the carcass of the lion he had slain previously. Now it was just bones. Samson notices that a hive of bees had made their home inside the lion's skeleton. Urged on by hunger pains, Samson reached in with his hand and took some honey to eat along the way to Timnah. Once again, he kept what happened to himself.

SAMSON'S MARRIAGE AND THE RIDDLE PROPOUNDED

With his father's reluctant permission, Samson and his fiancée were married. Then Samson held a grand wedding feast, celebrating for seven days. Among the guests were 30 companions Philistine guests of the bridegroom who were to protect the wedding party from invading marauders. The telling of riddles at feasts and special occasions was a popular amusement back then. So Samson posed

Philistines were armed with swords and spears, they were no match against God's awesome power, which was flowing through His servant. With the jawbone in his hand, and surrounded by 1,000 dead Philistine troops lying on the ground, Samson said to Israelite onlookers, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." Then he threw the jawbone to the ground. From then on, that place was called Ramath-Lehi, which means the "height of a jawbone."

Samson's miraculous one-man battle made him feel drained and thirsty. Though he had superhuman strength, he was still a mortal human being; he was capable of dying or being killed. In desperate need of water, he cried out to God: "O Eternal, You have given this great deliverance into the hand of your servant. But shall I now die of thirst, and fall into the hand of these idol worshipping Philistines? Please quench my thirst."

God answered his plea. He miraculously split open a hollow place, and out came cool, fresh water. Samson rushed to drink in as much as he could, until he was fully refreshed. Later, the place where this miracle occurred came to be called "En Hakkore" "spring of the caller." News of what Samson had done at Lehi struck fear in the minds of the Philistine people. It also became a witness to the people of Judah, clearly signifying that God was using Samson as His servant. For the next twenty years, God used Samson to judge Israel and deliver them from Philistine oppression (Judges 15:15-20).

Though Samson was blessed with miraculous physical strength, he lacked spiritual strength (godly character) when it came to overcoming his weakness for foreign women especially those of bad character. At one point, he got involved with a Philistine harlot. She resided in Gaza. As one of the five major strongholds of the Philistines, this city was a commercial seaport along the Mediterranean Sea. The men of Gaza soon find out about Samson's frequent visits to this harlot's home. They decided to lay a trap for him. That night, they shut up all the streets, secured the city gates, and secretly surrounded the woman's home, waiting for Samson to show up. They planned to kill him when he departed from the harlot's home the next morning.

But Samson was aware of the ambush. He laid low until midnight, then quietly slipped out and headed for the city gates. Then, empowered by God's Spirit, Samson grabbed hold of the towering doors, pulling them

in jeopardy! Let's get rid of him." Eventually, they all agreed.

Then one leader said, "Hold on. Samson's great strength and power is known throughout the land how are we supposed to deliver him to the Philistines?" It was a question that brought much fear among the men. So they decided to send 3,000 of their warriors to Samson's fort. Confronting him, the leaders said, "What is this you have done to us? Because of you, Judah is being overrun with hordes of Philistines. They are searching throughout our territory and harassing the people about your whereabouts. Don't you realize that the Philistines control this land? Your constant attacks against them cannot change that. You are only making matters worse for our people." Samson replied, "I am only doing to them what they have done to me. I'm paying them back for their treachery." "That may be, Samson, but your actions are endangering our lives. It's bad enough that the Philistines have garrisons and troops stationed in Israel. The last thing we need is to make them angry at us." Samson looked carefully at the men, taking note of their faces, which were filled with worry and anger. Then he said, "Why are you here and why did you bring all these thousands of men with you? Obviously, you are not here to join me in fighting the Philistines."

"We are here to arrest you. Afterward, we will deliver you to the Philistines." Samson slowly nodded. "Alright then," he sighed. "But before you arrest me, swear that you will not kill me yourselves." Samson knew that if he was forced to defend himself against his fellow Israelites, he would end up killing many of them. He did not want that to happen. The men said, "We promise. All we will do is bind you with rope and deliver you to the Philistines." Samson turned himself in (Judges 15:7-13).

SAMSON'S BETRAYAL

The Philistines rejoiced when they saw Samson being delivered to them, bound by ropes. Every soldier shouted and jeered. "So this is the great troublemaker! Now we will make trouble for you!" The laughter and shouts from the troops were as the roaring of lions. For the Philistines, the sight of Samson's capture was cause for great joy and celebration. However, as the officers and their troops shouted and hurled insults, the Spirit of God suddenly came upon Samson. God's power enabled him to break free from his bonds as though they were strands of straw made brittle from fire. Spotting the jawbone of a donkey lying in the dust, Samson grabbed it and used it as a deadly weapon. Though the

one to his 30 wedding companions: "If any of you can answer my riddle within the seven days of the feast, I will give you 30 sheets and 30 changes of fine garments. But if you cannot give the right answer, then you shall give me 30 sheets and 30 changes of garments."

These Philistine men said, "We accept. Present your riddle."

Samson said, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. What is the answer?" The riddle was about the lion Samson had slain ("Out of the eater...out of the strong") and the honey he ate ("came forth meat" and "sweetness"). Samson never told anyone about them not even his parents. For three days, none of the 30 guests could explain Samson's riddle. So they pressured Samson's bride to reveal it to them. They said, "Seduce your husband and get the answer to his riddle for us, otherwise we will set you and your father's house ablaze. Have you invited us to your wedding feast so that you might take whatever belongs to us?" (Samson's bride yielded to this blackmail and betrayed him for fear of being burned with all her family (14:15-18). This did not save her from such destruction, for his enemies burned the whole family anyway because of Samson's deed of burning up their crops (15:3-6). If she had stayed true to him he would have protected her by his gift of power.)

Bowing to their pressure, the woman later wept in Samson's arms, crying, "You don't truly love me you hate me! Why else would you pose a riddle to my fellow countrymen and not share your answer with me, your beloved wife?" But Samson said, "I haven't even told my own parents, so why should I explain it to you?" Again and again, his bride pestered him for the answer, weeping in his arms throughout the remainder of the feast. By the seventh day, Samson gave in to her emotional manipulation and told her what she wanted to know.

Later, the 30 companions of the bridegroom came before Samson to answer his riddles. Samson noticed the men were very confident, even cocky. Right then, he suspected that something may be wrong. They smirked and said, "Here is the answer you have been waiting for: What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" Samson knew they had cheated. He also knew that they had help. "If you had not cheated," he said, "you would not have discovered the answer to my riddle." What Samson was saying was that his wife was unfaithful, revealing his secrets to these men. The woman's betrayal allowed Samson

to see past her beauty and catch a glimpse of her weak character. He began to realize that she was more interested in pleasing these men than in being loyal to her husband. This should never happen in a marriage.

Samson said to the cheaters, "Though you have undoubtedly cheated, I will keep my word and give you what was promised." Then, with God's Spirit motivating and empowering him, Samson went to Ashkelon, one of the five major Philistine strongholds. There he killed 30 Philistine men, taking with him their fine clothing, and giving them to the 30 wedding companions.

But Samson's anger would not go away. He went back to his father's home, leaving his wife behind in Timnah. Neither she nor her father knew whether or not he would come back for her (Judges 14:5- 20) (How long after Samson left her Bride to go home is not known, but long enough for his anger to subside and for his affection for his wife to return (15:1)).

REVENGE SPAWNS MORE REVENGE

After some time had passed, Samson's anger left him, and he desired to be reconciled with his Philistine wife. He journeyed down to Timnah during the wheat harvest (which took place every year during late May/early June). He was certain that he could visit his wife in safety because most of the Philistine men would be busy doing farm work. Samson brought with him a young goat, a gift showing that he was no longer angry with the woman he loved. Arriving at her home, he said to his father-in-law, "I'm here to claim my wife. Let me see here." (It was the custom always to take some gift to the one visited. Now over his anger at her betraying him, Samson took a kid of the goats as a present when he wished to become reconciled to his wife. A kid was considered a great delicacy (Gen. 38: 16-17; Lk.15: 29).)

But the woman's father said, "When you abandoned her, I thought that you had despised my daughter, Samson. Therefore I gave her to the one who was the best man at your wedding. I'm sorry, my son. However, what about her younger sister do you not find her even more attractive? If so, please take her instead." In a rage, Samson shouted, "You Philistines have betrayed me for the last time! Now I shall be blameless of any Philistine I may harm!" And then he stormed away.

Samson immediately went to work to avenge himself: He caught 300 foxes and tied them together into pairs. Next, he tied a slow-burning torch to each pair, and then sent the foxes down the hills to run through the

fields of the Philistines. Since it was harvest season, the standing grain was very dry; they were easily consumed by fire. So too were the vineyards and olive groves.

The 4fold destruction of crops (15:5)

- Shocks of wheat
- Standing wheat
- Vineyards
- Oliver yards

This was a tremendous loss for the Philistines. The Philistines soon discovered who had been the author of this disaster: "Samson did it! He was enraged because his father-in-law took away his wife and gave her to the best man of the bridegroom. And our people ended up suffering for someone else's foolishness!"

The crowd of people quickly turned into an angry mob bent on revenge. Since Samson was nowhere to be found, they went after his wife and father-in-law instead. They were burned alive (Judges 15:1- 6)! Upon learning what had happened, Samson let it be publicly known that he would seek revenge for the lives of his wife and father-in-law. He went on to execute a great slaughter upon the Philistines, causing them to fear and tremble at the mere mention of his name. Throughout the cities and territories of the Philistines, Samson was considered a notorious criminal who was wanted dead or alive. For his protection, Samson lived in the cleft of a rock at Etam, which served as a type of fort.

The Philistines launched a massive manhunt for Samson. They sent troops into the territory of Judah and surrounded a place called Lehi. This did not sit well with the Israelites. The leaders of Judah confronted the officers of the Philistine army, and said, "What are you doing here? Why do you harass us this day? The officers said, "We're here to find Samson and to tie him up. Then we shall do to him as he has done to us."

"Samson is not of Judah. He is not our concern." "He is now. We're not leaving here until he is in our hands." Later, there was much discussion and debate among Judah's leaders: "Who is this Samson why should we care about him?" "He's a brother Israelite, that's who. We shouldn't give in to these Philistines." "Easier said than done. I say we bring Samson in ourselves. After all, no one told him attack the Philistines and then hideout in our territory. His presence is putting all our families