

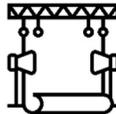
III- Samson's Revenge

A Bible Study About Samson's Defeat of the Philistines – Judges 15:1-20



How to use this Bible Study

Welcome to this Bible study. It will be a blessing to you. The focus of this Bible study is Samson's revenge on the Philistines. It consists of background thoughts, scripture references and questions. There are no wrong or right answers to the questions and the scripture references are given as a help. This Bible Study can be completed individually, or you may wish to invite some friends or family members to do it with you. All quotations are from the New Kings James Bibles.



Backdrop

In Chapter 13 we learned more about the circumstances surrounding Samson's birth. It was miraculous in many ways. In Chapter 14 Samson took us on a wild journey through the Philistine "infested" territory where he met his wife, killed 30 men in Ashkelon and upon his return to Timnah, found that his wife had traded husbands! Samson's anger knew no bounds. What happened next is the topic of this Bible Study. The adventure continues like a good film strip.



1. Samson Gets a Nasty Surprise - Judges 15: 1-3

It must have been quite an exhausting trip, carrying the garments of 30 men, 30 miles back all the way to Timnah! Samson did not immediately return to his wife. Most probably he used a bit of time to reflect and to process his "wedding gone wrong". It must have been disturbing to several people, including his parents. Samson was getting less popular by the day. News about what happened in Ashkelon would have reached the ears of the uncircumcised Philistines in Timnah by now.

15 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into her room." But her father would not permit him to go in. 2 Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead." 3 And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!"

Questions for Reflection

- What do you think caused Samson's father-in-law to think that Samson hated his daughter?
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- What do you think Samson was saying silently to his wife?
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- Why did Samson say that if he harmed the Philistines this time, he will be blameless? Did he then take the blame for what happened in Ashkelon upon himself?
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Scripture for Further Reading

Deuteronomy 8: 7-9

Afterthought

As it was wheat harvesting season, it gave Samson an ideal opportunity to use it to his benefit. His plot of revenge began to take shape.



2. Samson Takes Revenge - Judges 15: 4-7

The territory which the Philistines occupied was a "food basket" and produced a range of food products for their use and pleasure. This is still the scenario today for local inhabitants. Lions were not the only wild animals roaming around at that time and there were foxes aplenty.

⁴Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. ⁵When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.⁶Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Questions for Reflection

- How do you think Samson managed to catch so many foxes? How did he manage to prevent them from running away? How did he manage to tie their tails together?

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- Why did the Philistines refer to Samson as the son-in-law of the Timnite?
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Scripture for Further Reading

Song of Solomon 2:15; Nehemiah 4:3; Matthew 8:20

Afterthought

Samson devised a clever plan to be able to catch so many foxes, prevented them from running away, and then managed to tie them two by two together. The foxes were most probably the forerunners of what is known today as the Golden Jackal. They are endemic to the region, small, lightweight, agile and with long fluffy tails. They suited Samson's plan well. His plan was so successful that it led to the destruction of the Philistines grain-, grape- and olive crops. Prices of their remaining wine and olive oil went through the roof, as one can imagine. However, the revenge of the Philistines was even more devastating! They killed Samson's wife and father-in-law by setting them on fire, most probably while they were still alive! What a gruesome ending to his first marriage!



3. Samson Betrayed – Judges 15:11-13

After the death of Samson's wife and father-in-law it was Samson's turn for revenge and once again, he did so viciously. No numbers are mentioned, but it can be assumed that Samson killed many Philistines, then his revenge ceased, and he went to Etam to stay in a cave. But the story was far from over as the Philistines were on their way to Etam where they suspected Samson could be. Etam was in a rocky territory to the south where the tribe of Judah was living. Seeing the Philistines coming, the men from Judah promptly organised a large search party. They would rather hand Samson over to the Philistines, than having to face them themselves.

¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." ¹² But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves." ¹³ So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Questions for Reflection

- Why did the men from the tribe of Judah send 3000 men to arrest Samson? Was it because of the fear of Samson or the Philistines?

- What was the relationship between the tribe of Judah and the Philistines?

- Why did Samson ask the men from Judah not to be killed by them?

- Was it part of God's plan for the men of Judah to arrest and hand Samson over to the Philistines? If so, what was the reason?

Scripture for Further Reading

Joshua 15:1-12

Afterthought

The men from Judah were not up to facing the Philistines and left Samson to fight for himself. Making sure that his arms were tied to his body and his hands tightly together with enough rope, they were confident that Samson would meet his worst fate. But God had other plans, and it quickly unfolds!



4. Samson Kills a 1000 Men – Judges 15: 14-17

Brought by the men of Judah at Lehi to the Philistines they came shouting against Samson. It was at that moment, for a third time, that the Spirit of the Lord again mightily came upon Samson. The ropes around his arms and hands became like burnt linen and suddenly he was free! He quickly jumped into action.

¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. ¹⁶ Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men!"

¹⁷ And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

Questions for Reflection

- What prompted Samson to kill the Philistines, as revenge was not the issue here?
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- Was Samson boastful? Do you think that he acknowledged God's hand in his life?
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- Reading between the lines do you think that Samson took a tea break somewhere during this encounter? If not, why not?
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Scripture for Further Reading

Exodus 13:17; Joshua 13:3; Judges 3:3; Judges 3:31

Afterthought

If Samson was not famous before this event, afterwards he certainly was! It must have done his self-esteem a lot of good. So much so that he renamed Lehi to Ramath Lehi. The new name reflected his accomplishment achieved by means of a donkey's jawbone. There was yet to be an indication that Samson acknowledged God's hand in his life. But that was soon to change.



5. Samson Cries Out to God - Judges 15:18-20

The fight with the Philistines left Samson utterly exhausted. In the absence of any tea breaks and being so thirsty, he cried out to God. This was the first time that we read that he did so.

¹⁸ Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹ So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. ²⁰ And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Questions for Reflection

- Why was it so important for Samson not to fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?
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- How would you describe Samson's attitude towards God?

- How did Samson acknowledge God's hand in his life?

- How did God achieve His purposes with Samson up to this point in Samson's life?

Scripture for Further Reading

Afterthought

With his spirit refreshed, Samson could think clearly, and he again put his creative mind to work. He named the place, "Spring of the Caller" finally acknowledging God's hand in his life. Samson continued his role as Judge of Israel for another 20 years. We do not read much about it, apart from one last major event in his life which also involved a Philistine woman. This is the topic of our next and last Bible study on Samson's life.



Lessons Learned

What new historic facts have you discovered in this study?

What spiritual life lessons have you learned from this study?

A Prayer to Pray

Father in Heaven. I thank You for Your word and the way in which these inspiring events were used by You to accomplish Your purposes. Thank You that we can learn from these extraordinary characters in the Bible. I thank You for the fact that, despite the disobedience and failures of Biblical leaders, You still showed them grace and mercy, enabling us to learn from their stories. Help me to discern Your plans and purposes for my life today. Amen



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