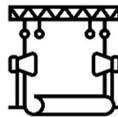


Samson's Riddle
A Bible Study About Samson's First Marriage
Judges 14



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 marriage to his first wife and the dramatic circumstances that unfolded from the wedding. 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 the previous Bible Study, we had a closer look at the events that led to the birth of Samson. Chapter 13 ended with the announcement that Samson was born. He grew up and the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him. He was growing up in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. That was the area allocated to the Tribe of Dan by Moses in Genesis 50. Zorah is the present day Tzora while Mahaneh does not exist as a community anymore. It is a pile of rocks and a tourist site. The area allocated to the tribe of Dan roughly covered the area between the Dead- and the Mediterranean Sea, north of present-day Gaza. It was a large and free roaming area for Samson in which to grow up which suited him well. In Chapter 14 the story leads us to another village called Timnah, 10 miles to the west of Tzora, where Samson met his "soon to be" wife. Apart from what we have discovered in Chapter 13 not much is known about Samson's years as a child, but from here onwards his life gets exciting and, more detailed.



1. Samson Meets a Philistine Woman - Judges 14: 1-4

¹ Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." ³ Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my

people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." ⁴ But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. ⁵ So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah.

Questions for Reflection

- Why do you think Samson told his mother first?

- How would you describe Samson's attitude towards his parents?

- Why did he asked his parents to "get her" for him? Why not himself?

- Why did Samson's parents responded the way they did?

Scripture for further Reading

2 Sameul 1:20; Ezekiel 16:27; Ezekiel 16:57

Afterthought

Like all caring and concerned parents, they joined Samson to go and meet the daughter of an uncircumcised Philistine who pleased Samson so well! They must have done so with very heavy hearts. One could almost sense their concern as they weighed up the credentials of this Philistine woman against the will of the Lord and their own heritage. So much so, that their concern overshadowed and prevented them from seeing the hand of the Lord in all of this. And one cannot blame them.



2. Samson Poses a Riddle – Judges 14: 5 - 14

As Samson was walking through the vineyards of Timnah, a lion suddenly appeared from nowhere. It caught him by surprise as his peaceful surroundings were suddenly interrupted by this fierce, roaring predator. It was at that moment that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson with so much power that he tore the lion apart. Samson was alone at that time, and it must have happened so quickly that no one noticed. He decided to keep what happened as a secret. After this encounter Samson's very sweet wedding plans quickly fell into place.

⁷ Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. ⁸ After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. ⁹ He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. ¹⁰ So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. ¹¹ And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. ¹² Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. ¹³ But if you cannot explain *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing." And they said to him, "Pose your 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." Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

Questions for Reflection

- Was Samson born with the supernatural strength, or did he become so strong only because the Spirit of the Lord gave him that strength?

- Why did Samson not tell his parents where he got the honey from? Do you think they had asked him about the source of it?

- What was the significance of Samson's father "going down to the women" in Timnah?

- What is a riddle and what is the purpose of a riddle?

- Are there any other riddles told in the Bible?

Scripture for Further Reading

1 King 10:1; Proverbs 1:6; Ezekiel 17:2; Daniel 5:12; Habakkuk 2:6

Afterthought

Samson had a clever mind and he put the riddle carefully together, making sure only he knew its origins. Not even his parents knew it. Killing a lion with pure strength and not telling anyone about it is indeed the secret of all secrets! He was so confident that no one would be able to solve the riddle that he made an exuberant promise to the 30 groomsmen at his wedding feast! In his imagination he saw his wardrobe already bulging with 30 sets of under – and outer garments. Something to look forward to as he embarks on his new marriage!



3. Samson's Riddle Solved - Judges 14: 15-18

Samson's joy was short lived as he soon discovered that he married a very persistent wife. Maybe she was not like that by nature, but Samson's groomsmen not wanting to stock Samson's wardrobe with 30 garments, kept them piling the pressure on Samson's wife for an answer. And she did not let go of Samson. Not the ideal pastime during a 7-day wedding feast! Maybe at this point Samson regretted the origins of the riddle.

¹⁶ Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained *it* to me." And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained *it* to my father or my mother; so should I explain *it* to you?" ¹⁷ Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. 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 ploughed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle.

Questions for Reflection

- Why did Samson's wife put so much emphasis on "the sons of my people"?

- What did Samson mean by "ploughed with my heifer"?

- How did the men explained the riddle by posing 2 questions to Samson? How would you have explained the riddle?

Afterthought

For Samson the end of the riddle turned out very badly. He just could not take the weeping of his wife anymore and in the end his patience gave in. His wife's persistence and her alliance with the "sons of her people" turned her into his worst nightmare as the weeklong wedding feast came to a crashing halt. But even her joy was short lived.



4. Samson Vent's His Anger - Judges 14:19-20

What started out as a fairy tale soon ended in a horror story. Samson was overcome with anger as he went to Ashkelon, some distance away, towards the coast.

19 Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. 20 And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

Questions for Reflection

- What could have been the reasons for Samson travelling almost 30 miles (50 Kms) to Ashkelon to find the 30 men?

- What do you think happened to Samson when the Spirit of the Lord mightily came upon him, keeping in mind that he was not yet in Ashkelon?

- What is the relevance between God's plan to deliver the Jews from their enemies, and with what happened in Ashkelon? Or was the event in Ashkelon only an answer to Samson's problem of having to find 30 garments?

Scripture for Further Reading

Joshua 13:3; Judges 1:18; Jeremiah 25:20; Amos 1:8

Final thought

Knowing Samson, a bit better by now he most probably did not use any weapons but brute force to kill those men to prevent their garments from being drenched in their own blood. He kept his promise and promptly delivered their garments to those who explained the riddle, only to find in his absence, that his wife was given by her father to his best man. What a way to end a marriage relationship, and in record time! But that is the beginning of the story for our next Bible Study.



Lessons Learned

What new historic facts have you discovered in this study?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What spiritual life lessons have you learned from this study?



A Prayer to Pray

Father God in heaven, thank You for Your Word bringing history to life. Thank You that You are a God who through the ages, strategically implemented Your plans on earth. Thank You that You chose Samson to bring forth Your plans and purposes for that time in Biblical history. We pray that you will open our eyes to discern Your will for our lives at times like this. Reveal Your plans and purposes for us in these times in which we live. Thank You Father. Amen.



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