

Judgeship of Samson (c. 1104 – c. 1084 BC)**Judges 14–15****Seeking for an Opportunity Against the Philistines**

14:1 Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines.

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.”

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.”

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.

Samson’s Riddle

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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.”

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.

The Philistines Force Samson’s Wife to Reveal the Answer

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*?”

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?”

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.

18a 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?”

Samson Feels Justified in Attacking the Philistines

18b And he said to them,

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,
You would not have found out my riddle.”

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.

The Philistine Father Gives Samson’s Wife to Another Man

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

15:1 But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat, and said, “I will go in to my wife in *her room*.” But her father did not let him enter.

2 Her father said, “I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead.”

Samson Again Feels Justified in Taking Revenge

3 Samson then said to them, “This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.”

4 Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches, and turned *the foxes* tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails.

5 When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, thus burning up both the shocks and the standing grain, along with the vineyards *and* groves.

The Philistines Retaliate

6 Then the Philistines said, “Who did this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Samson Takes Revenge Once Again

7 Samson said to them, “Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I will quit.”

8 He struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

The Philistines Decide to Eliminate Samson Permanently

9 Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah, and spread out in Lehi.

10 The men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” And they said, “We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him as he did to us.”

11 Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?” And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

12 They said to him, “We have come down to bind you so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me.”

13 So they said to him, “No, but we will bind you fast and give you into their hands; yet surely we will not kill you.” Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Samson Kills an Entire Philistine Battalion

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands.

15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out 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 killed a thousand men.”

17 When he had finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi.

18 Then he became very thirsty, and he called 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 hands of the uncircumcised?”

19 But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived. Therefore he named it En-hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

20 So he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Judgeship of Ibzan (c. 1100 – c. 1093 BC)

Judges 12:8–10

8 Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him [Jephthah].

9 He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters *whom* he gave in marriage outside *the family*, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

Judgeship of Elon (c. 1093 – c. 1083 BC)

Judges 12:11–12

11 Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him [Ibzan]; and he judged Israel ten years.

12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.