Samson And The Christian (Part 3)

Judges 14: Themes and Foreshadowing

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Early eleventh century BC was a tumultuous period in history, especially in the lands along the eastern Mediterranean Sea. During this time, Egypt was under the last Pharaoh of the 20th dynasty, and his name was Rameses 11th. Egypt was still a powerful player in the region, but it was gradually disintegrating. At about 1080 BC, which is about the time that Judges 14 opens up, Egypt fell into civil war. And, when Rameses 11th died about 10 years later (1070 BC) Egypt split up into two nations—Upper and Middle Egypt under one ruler, and Lower Egypt was ruled by the first ruler of the 21st Dynasty.

So, in Egypt it was a transitional period of decline.

If you will remember, the Sea Peoples had fled, moved, or migrated from the Aegean Sea region in the twelfth century BC. And, some historians say that it was because of the coming of the Dorian Greeks down into the area of Corinth, Athens, and the Aegean Sea. Others say that it was some natural disaster.

But, whatever the case may be, the Sea Peoples took their frustrations out on several once powerful nations and empires in Asia Minor, and then down the coast toward Syria, and Canaan. So, having come through this area, many of them decided to stay and settle in these newly conquered lands. And obviously, when you have new conquerors and native peoples who want to fight back against the new conquerors, you are going to have some instability. And, this lasted for about one hundred years, right down to the time we are talking about right now.

In Lower Mesopotamia, the area of Babylon, this period was also one of turmoil. In fact, historians call this period a dark age in Babylon. In stark contrast, Upper Mesopotamia, the area of Assyria, had one of their greatest kings on the throne, Tiglath Pileser I. His rule would end in 1076 BC. He had become quite strong, and had conquered westward until he reached Phoenicia, just north of Israel, and west of Syria. He had, then, returned back home, and the last half of his reign was spent in relative peace and quiet. He left a fairly strong nation to his son upon his death, but there were some problems beginning to show. The Arameans of Syria were harrying his borders. It was not as strong as they would have liked.

So, the picture is one of turmoil and turbulence for the entire region.

In Israel, we are now nearing the end of the Period of the Judges, probably some of the most turbulent times in their history also.

> **Judges 2:8** Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died *when he was* one hundred and ten years old.
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> **Judges 2:16-3:6** Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, "I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, "so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not." Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.
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> Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan (*this was* only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), *namely*, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. And they were *left, that He might* test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

So, we are going to see in Samson some of those same things and traits. But, this was what the time of the Judges was like. It was a time of unfaithfulness, and then a Judge would come, and God would deliver them, and they would do well while the Judge lived, and then when the Judge died, they would become unfaithful again, they would go into oppression and slavery to whoever it was the next time, and God would raise up another Judge. It was a roller coaster—up and down, up and down through this nearly 400 year period.

So, not only were the nations around Israel in turmoil, but the nation of Israel itself was in turmoil. We know that if we go through the other chapters of Judges, that Gideon had been able to drive out the Midianites, and the Amalekites; and by this time, they were still recovering from the disastrous loss that they took at the hand of Gideon. And then, not long before Samson was born, Jephthah had done what he had done to the Ammonites, and it is possible that Moab and Edom, and some of the other desert peoples were also involved, and they were still recovering.

So, they were weak and had no way of reestablishing themselves as primary nations in the region. And, it says that the Canaanites, because they dwelt among the Israelites, were in the same "boat" as the Israelites were.

So, nobody was strong. If anybody was strong, it was the Philistines. The Middle East was chaotic. (What else is new?) There was no dominant nation on hand to bring order to the many squabbling minor powers that were all vying for supremacy.

But, there was one power that wanted to do that. And they had the means to do it. And, that was the Philistines. The total time of their oppression of Israel would end up being forty years.

So, they were stronger than Israel, as we saw last time—definitely. But, they were not as strong as some of the powers had been in the past, and would be in the future.

So, Israel was able to live peaceably, although they were under the Philistines. But, they did not want to be under them, necessarily.

Now, what is most significant, here, is that we have looked at very quickly all these nations round about Israel, and who is the strongest? The Philistines who were living cheek by jowl next to the Danites. And, God chose to call a Danite to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

So, this is the overall situation that we reached last time, when it said in Judges 13:25

> **Judges 13:25** And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

We saw that God was beginning and preparing, and motivating a trouble maker—a rabble-rouser—a rebel, some might say, to begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. And, that beginning is very important.

From the very beginning, from chapter 13:5, it is clear that God had never intended Samson to overthrow the Philistines altogether. He was just to start it. He was the spark. He was the firebrand in the woodpile. He was to get things going—the beginner or starter of something that would eventually reach its height in David.

We will see in chapter 14 how Samson's career as a judge began. This chapter is also significant because it lays out all of the major themes and foreshadowings that we need in order to understand the other two chapters. In a way it is a prelude to the real story of Samson.

So, in this chapter we are going lay all the ground work for his future career.

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

It is always important to know what is first said about a person or subject. And, this is the first thing that is said about Samson. Now, I am going to let you think about this for a few moments because first, I need to give you a geography lesson. We have the town of Timnah here. You need to understand just where everything is that is happening here. As a matter of fact, the area in which Samson lived, and did all his work was a "buffer" zone between Israel northeastward in the hills, and the Philistines westward down on the coastal plain.

There was about a ten mile strip known as the Shephela. This was an area of foothills between the mountains and the sea. And, this Shephela ran from about an elevation of 300 to 1200 feet high. There were some high ridges. They are cut by several valleys. If you look on a map of the region, they are often marked because a lot of important things happened in these valleys of the Shephela, especially Old Testament history.

Samson's story takes place mainly in the valley called Sorek—the Sorek valley. There

was a waddi there—the Sorek—a small river that ran through there, especially during the rainy season.

Now, the Sorek valley runs south-southeast from Timnah toward Beth Shemesh—remember I mentioned this place in the last sermon—some people think that maybe Samson got his name from here—The house of the sun—and his name means sunny boy, or some such thing. Anyway, Zorah, where Samson lived—and we have to assume that Mahanah Dan was also in this area near Zorah—was situated about 5 miles east of Timnah. It really was not that far away. Timnah would be considered right at the edge of Philistine territory; and Beth Shemesh and Zorah would be right in the middle of the border zone. So, it was 5 miles east of Timnah, and about 2 miles northeast of Beth Shemesh. So, the valley angled southeast from Timnah to Beth Shemesh, and Zorah was up on a ridge over across the valley, a little bit northeast of Beth Shemesh. So, it was closer to Beth Shemesh than it was to Timnah.

But, what I said about where Zorah was is important. It was up on the ridge. It was up in the hills. And so when the Bible tells you that Samson went down to Timnah, it means that he actually went down to Timnah, descending as he went along. And the road would follow the sides of the hills because the bottom-lands in the valley were all farmed.

Those valleys were prime farming land. Up on the ridge, and in the hills, the soil was crusty. It was too thin to support much more than the trees. But, they did have tree crops. They had sycamore fruit, which is something like figs. They grew olives, and figs, and other semi-arid growing fruits. They also tended much sheep because there was pasturage for them.

The valleys had the fertile alluvial soils where they grew the vegetables, melons, small grains; and grapes on the lower hillsides. This was a prime area for grape growing.

Also, you should know, because this is the chapter in which kills a lion, that the hills themselves were covered with these scrub forests, so there were lots of wild animal about. It made good habitat for lions, and bears alike. They had quite a few wild animals in the area, even though there were quite a few people living up there.

Remember, Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman.

What does that tell you about Samson? This tells you his character in a nutshell. What it gives us is the major theme of Samson's life. The first thing that we see about Samson is that he went down, and that he saw. This gives us the direction of his life, and the

cause of his decline. The direction of his life was down, and the reason was that he saw—this is a major theme in Samson's life, especially the "saw" portion of it. Maybe, I should give you an assignment for next time—not only read chapter 15 for next time, but read all four chapters, and circle or underline every form of the word "see," and its synonyms. It pops up all the time. It is very interesting. That is his story. It is all about what he sees, and what de does not see; what he regards, and what he does not regard; what he knows, and what he does not know.

So, immediately we are told that he regards pretty women; not only his country's pretty women, but also the pretty women of his enemies. Every woman, except his mother, that he is linked to in his story is a Philistine. That says something about him. He was attracted to the enemy.

Now, this is in total disregard for God's work for him.

What did God say that he was supposed to do? He was to be a Nazirite, and he was supposed to deliver Israel. So, He gave him 1) a religious duty, to be a Nazirite, and 2) He gave him a national responsibility. It was not just to deliver his tribe, but he was to deliver the entire nation of Israel—all his people. And so, the first thing we see him doing is looking at his enemy's daughters (which he should not be doing), and then he is disregarding everything that he should be doing—both his vow, and his responsibility. He is going almost exactly opposite to the way that God wanted him to go.

Now, this is not an unusual theme in the Bible. As a matter of fact, in the third chapter of the book, we see this sort of thing coming out. It is a common sin among men, (and women).

Remember, that chapter 3 of Genesis is the temptation of Adam and Eve:

> **Genesis 3:4-7** Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." [Notice this next thing] So when the woman ***saw*** that the tree *was* good for food, that it ***was pleasant to the eyes***, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. [And remember this,] She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked...

Keep this in mind because it will replay itself in Judges chapter 14.

Now, also in Genesis 13, we have Lot and Abraham.

> **Genesis 13:8-11** So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren. *Is* not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then I will go to the right; or, if *you go* to the right, then I will go to the left." And Lot ***lifted his eyes and saw*** all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the LOORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LOORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Now what did his seeing and choosing result in? We understand the answer in verse 10—God eventually destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; basically destroying Lot's family; yet, Lot was saved out of it.

This all comes from seeing and choosing the wrong things because it looks good to you.

This is exactly what happens with Samson.

We could go to John 20:24-29 where the Apostle Thomas says that he will not believe unless he sees with his own eyes. And finally he does, and he does the right thing. But, Jesus says, "More blessed are those who do not see, yet believe."

Seeing with our eyes—being able to look at something and regard it with our eyes, is not always good—because, our eyes, backed by our carnal mind lead us astray. And Samson is an A#1 example of this sort of thing.

Now Job said—he came at this a bit differently—he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You!" Job had the advantage of actually seeing God, and God explaining to him just how powerful and great He really was. And Job said, "*Wow! I repent in dust and ashes! I realize that my understanding of You is so wrong*."

You see, he was seeing also. Before he saw God, he saw things through his own eyes very wrongly. God had to open his eyes to the truth of what God really was—how much power He had. And what did it do to Job? It shook him out of his self-righteousness.

The same thing has got to happen to Samson. We will get to that a bit later.

Samson, because he sees things that are pleasurable to him, and he acts upon it, disregards God and God's tasks for him to do.

I want to show you a different attitude from Psalm 101. Now, this is from a man—David the king—who also had his problems with women. But, the difference between Samson and David is in the attitude. Also, I should throw in this as well: All of David's problems with women (giving him the benefit of the doubt) were Israelite women.

> **Psalm 101:1-8** I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O LORD, I will sing praises. I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness. Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure. My eyes *shall be* on the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me. He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence. Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

David's approach was that God, and His ways, and the faithful in his duty that God had given him, were always before his eyes.

Well, with Samson, it was always that pretty young Philistine thing. That is what he kept before his eyes.

So, right away, first verse of chapter 14, where we are introduced to Samson in any big way, we are told his whole character from a spiritual standpoint. He went down, and saw....

The whole trajectory of his life was going down, and taking what he saw to be pleasurable and right for him.

> **Judges 14:2** 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."

It was good in that he asked his folks to arrange the marriage for him, but it was for the wrong reason, to the wrong people. And, of course, his attitude appears atrocious. "*Look! I have found this woman down the hill from here. Get her for me*!" This is basically how it comes out in the English. He is thoughtless and impetuous in this regard. He is simply spoiled and insistent. That is the way that it comes across. His commanding attitude that he exhibits with his parents reveals that he is used to dealing with them in this manner. "*Mom! Dad! Do this*!" And, they would do it.

So, he adds the breaking of the fifth commandment, here in this second verse about him, through his lust for this Philistine girl. So, already he has knocked off commandment Numbers 7, and 5, and 1 at the very least.

> **Judges 14:3** 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."

Now, in their wisdom, his parents put up some resistance. And, they make, basically, two arguments. It is good that they were together on this. And it seems as if, by the way that it is written here, that the father is the one doing the speaking, when he says, "among all my people." So, it was probably Manoah who was getting a bit of backbone with regard to his son.

He gives two arguments: 1) There are plenty of good Danite, or Israelite girls to marry. And then, 2) This Philistine girl was born outside the covenant.

Now, turn back to Deuteronomy 7 to refresh this. Remember we saw in Judges 3 that the Philistines were the first ones listed of those left in the land. And, even though this passage says Canaanites, it applies equally well to the Philistines.

> **Deuteronomy 7:3-4** Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

So, here we have as a very explicit command from God in the retelling of the law that they were not to marry into the native Canaanite peoples. As said above, the Philistines, because they were also foreigners, fit under this law.

So, Manoah appeals to his tribal and national loyalties, as well as his religious duty. And, I am sure that they thought that these would sway him. If it was not the national thing, then maybe the religious thing, because they had told Samson all about his personal beginning—of the angel coming, and the sacrifice, and his duty: to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

It did not touch Samson at all. "Get her for me! She pleases me well!" He only cares about pleasing himself. Even though they had reminded him of his task, and of his religion, he ignored them completely. "*I want this girl! Get her for me*."

Now, what he says, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well...," especially that last part, is badly translated in the New King James Version. It should be translated, literally, "She is right in my eyes!" That is the better, more correct translation.

Now, why is that better? Because, this is the theme of the book of Judges. The things that are written in the book of Judges eventually all come back to this theme, because the people were going against the things of God, pursuing what was right in their own eyes. And God would send them Judges to bring them back to see things God's way, and then after that Judge died, they would go right back to seeing things their own way.

And Samson's motto was: "*Get her for me for she is right in my own eyes! I am going to do what is right to me*." So, like Job, Samson was self-righteous. He would determine for himself what was right and wrong just as happened throughout the whole book of Judges. We see this in the latter part of the book of Judges starting in chapter 17:

> **Judges 17:6** In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.
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> **Judges 18:1** In those days *there was* no king in Israel...

Now, he had just said that everyone did what was right in his own eyes. So, he does not repeat it. You are supposed to take the last part of it, and add it in yourself.

> **Judges 19:1** And it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel,...

We are supposed to understand, again, that every man was doing what was right in his

own eyes.

> **Judges 21:25** In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

To sum up the book, he repeats the theme at the end of the book.

And here we have our "wonderful" translators just taking all the power out of the theme of Samson's life by mistranslating the verse (Judges 14:3, last part). "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." That is the theme!

So, now that we know that, then things are a bit easier to understand.

> **Judges 14:4** 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.

The writer, knowing that the reader is right with him, would know that the reader is probably saying as verse 3 ended, "Look! I cannot believe it! Look at Samson! He's going totally against God's law, and commission! This story is going downhill rapidly, and it is only the first three verses! And, things are already going by way of the hand-basket!" But, the writer has to reassure us that this is not the end of the story. He tells them, "*Look! God has allowed this to take place because He is using His sovereignty. He is going to do something with this, so hang on! God has a reason*." God allowed this to happen. This is not to say that God approved of it. He is just using it. He wants to make something of it. He has been given an opportunity by Samson. He is going to turn this opportunity for good. Not complete good because we have Samson going down all the time, but God is going to make good use of this. So, He was utilizing His sovereignty in this situation.

> **Judges 14:5-6** So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though *he had* nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

Sounds like a guilty conscience!

From what we saw in verse 3, his parents gave in. So, they decided to go there, walking probably down to Timnah to make the necessary engagement and wedding arrangements.

Now at that time, wedding arrangements and all the details of the engagement was quite an involved process. As a matter of fact, the whole engagement period might take about a whole year in order to get all the customs and all the traditions done properly with all the details worked out. So, there was quite a lot to be done. So, they walked down to Timnah to get the ball rolling.

Now, here we have (in verse 5) the first two occasions in which Samson involves his parents in his sin. The first was he gets them intimately involved in his illegitimate marriage with this Philistine girl. They have to do all the front work for him. He ram-rods them into bringing his sin to pass. This does not look good upon either one of them. The other time he does this is in verse 9, which we will get to later.

Now, being much younger, probably in his early twenties, and curious, and just full of juice, Samson can walk a lot faster than his parents. And so, as they were trudging down the road to Timnah, he would go off exploring, seeing what was here and there.

Well, what do you know! He ***just happens*** to find himself in a vineyard. Now how much do you believe that? He just happened to find himself there? I doubt it. I would say, with Samson being who Samson was, with all his energy, and roaming about, he probably knew exactly where this vineyard was. As a matter of fact, he knew he was in vineyard country. It says very plainly that they came to the vineyards of Timnah. There were vineyards all over the area here. But, why did he go sneaking off into a vineyard? Hmmm. "*There is a lion in there! I think I will go in*!" Obviously, that is not the reason.

My guess was that he wanted a snack. Maybe I am being hard on the guy. But, from his character that has been revealed thus far I do not think so. Now, we do not know what time of year this was, maybe the grapes were ripe, or maybe not. But, what was Samson doing in a vineyard? Strolling? I will leave it to your imagination.

What was it he was not supposed to eat or drink? Anything which came from the grape. And yet, here he was in a vineyard.

As matter of fact, his vow should have been so important to him that he would have stayed clear of vineyards all together. He should not have gone near them. Had his

parents wanted to go down through the vineyards, he should have said, "*No, I will take the road because I do not want to tempt myself*."

But instead, Samson decides to take a little pleasure walk through the vineyards where he was not supposed to go.

Anyway, just being there shows us that he did not have much regard for his Nazirite vow. If he did, I think that he would have steered clear.

Well, what do you know? As verse 5 ends,

> **Judges 14:5** ... Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him.

Remember what we read in Deuteronomy 7, verse 4, (I think) where it said that he Lord would take vengeance on them suddenly?

"Roar!"

How do you think Samson felt when that lion came out against him? Let me suggest a scenario.

Could this have been a warning from God? Remember what the God of the Old Testament became? He was the lion of the tribe of Judah. And, Samson had been completely disregarding his vow, his responsibility, and his religion up to this time. If you go back to Amos 3, this will give you the idea that I am coming from.

> **Amos 3:7-8** Surely the Lord GOOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

Now, this was the literal roaring of a lion. Was this roaring lion (in Judges 14) coming out to attack Samson God's way of saying, "Watch it Samson! Remember what you are supposed to be doing?" Perhaps.

I think it has a great deal to do with things if we consider that he did not tell his parents. They had been telling him all along about his responsibilities, and God suddenly gave him the strength to rend that lion with his bare hands.

This is the sort of thing that the storytellers said of the great heroes of antiquities such as Gilgamesh, and Hercules. They were the sons of the gods who were able to rend things with their bare hands. They did not use any implement. They just did it with their hands.

So, we have these two things going against one another. Perhaps God was telling Samson, "*Look, you had better shape up! This is a warning from Me! And, this is how I am going to use you, on the other hand. I am going to give you this great strength so that you can tear up your enemies*." He is trying to get both of the things across in one symbolic action.

Samson was no dummy. I do not want you to get the idea that he was some brutish person who did not have any brains, just big biceps. He was a very smart man as you will see as we go along here. What happened here startled and troubled him so much that he did not take his parents into his confidence. Perhaps they had told him of God's plan for him—I am sure that they had—and he had not believed them, really, up to this point. And when God filled him with this strength and he saw what God could do through him, perhaps it embarrassed him, that he had not listened. It did not change much, as we will see shortly, but perhaps it made him think. Or perhaps, as it says in chapter 13:25, the spirit had begun to move on him. Perhaps he had misunderstood what was going on through these movings upon him. And finally, when the lion came, and he got all this strength, he finally understood, and it scared him. I do not know. It is something to think about it. I think very fondly of the idea that God was trying to warn him.

"*A lion has roared. You are about ready to start your job. Get with it Samson*!"

> **Judges 14:7** Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

There it is again! She was right in his eyes! Notice, also, that before he had only seen her. "Wow*! Does she not fill out her little garment there*!" Here it was, who knows how long later, that he finally talked to her. Evidently, she had an engaging and convivial personality, and he decided that he had made the right decision. So, on they go.

> **Judges 14:8-9** 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. 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.

Just like Adam and Eve—"*Here Adam! Take! Eat*!"

"*Hmm! This is good! Where did you get it*?"

"*Oh, I do not know*..."

Several months pass; it had to be, because it takes several months for bees to make a hive. And, perhaps as much as a year has gone by. We do not know. It also took a while to fulfill the engagement period, so it might have been that long. As they are going back down toward Timnah, he got curious about this lion, and his great victory over this lion, so he revisited the place, and saw that the bees had made a hive in this desiccated corpse of the lion.

Now, we would think, normally, that if a lion (or some other animal) had died, it would begin to smell, and putrefy, and eventually disintegrate, and all that should be left would be bones. However, in this arid climate, oftentimes during the hot season, a carcass would dry up and become mummified. It would not putrefy. If it had started to rot, the bees would not have come there. They would have made their hive elsewhere. But, since this was a dry cavity, they made their hive in the carcass of the lion.

So, Samson comes and sees the bees coming and going, and says, "*Hmm! I wonder what this is all about? Wow! What do you know? There is some honey in here. I need to try some! Wow! This is really good*! <smack> *I think I will take some of this and give it to mom and dad. Will they not be surprised*?"

What has Samson just done? He has just disregarded his vow again!—the portion that specifically says that you are not supposed to touch a corpse, a dead body. And here, he touched—he had to have touched—the carcass of the lion to get the honey out. Evidently, he took a big handful, because he was able to eat as he was walking back to his parents, and then gave some for them to eat also.

What had he done? He had involved his parents in his uncleanness.

Now, just to add something to this. What does honey symbolize? Sweetness, obviously. But, one of the things that it symbolizes in the phrase, "land of milk and honey," is prosperity, and pleasure.

Now think of this symbol coming from the carcass of a dead animal. A dead animal carcass is a sign of uncleaness. What does the Bible say about taking pleasure out of uncleaness? Taking honey from a carcass, then, is the same as stolen, illegitimate pleasure. What was Samson going to do? He was going down to marry a woman he was forbidden to marry. And he repeated this twice more. Not marrying, necessarily, but getting involved with these women. It is a foreshadowing like I said. God is reiterating here in verses 8 and 9 that Samson's actions were against His Will. He was doing an unclean thing, and was taking pleasure from it, and he was involving others in it.

So, we do not get far away from the fact that Samson was doing something wrong. We have seen this verse, after verse, after verse—in fact it is like, "<slap, bang, slap...> *You are going to get this idea even if I have to beat it into you*!" Samson was not doing anything good. In no wise was he doing anything good. Every action that he has taken up to this time is down. But, we have the one verse, verse 4, that says that God was doing this, that He was allowing it and letting it go for His own purposes.

Think of God telling the bees to go to the lion, and put their hive in there as a warning to Samson. Another one. He had sent the lion, and Samson had rended it. And then he had gone on his way. It says that he went down. And so He sends Samson back there to see the results, and gets another warning. And Samson should have gotten the warning, if he had understood God's mind. You cannot take something sweet out of something which is corrupt. It is eventually going to kill you. But, he did not. He did not get the warning at all (If this was a warning from God. Perhaps it was.)

> **Proverbs 9:13-18** A foolish woman is clamorous; *She is* simple, and knows nothing. For she sits at the door of her house, On a seat *by* the highest places of the city, To call to those who pass by, Who go straight on their way [just like to Samson]: Whoever *is* simple, let him turn in here"; And *as for* him who lacks understanding, she says to him, Stolen water is sweet, And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead *are* there, *That* her guests *are* in the depths of hell [the grave].

That is what I am talking about, that perhaps this was a warning from God to Samson. "If you keep this up, trying to take pleasure in uncleanness, you will end up dead." Perhaps. It is just a thought.

> **Judges 14:10-11** So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

So, Manoah now goes down, being involved in this, and he makes final arrangements in Timnah for the wedding feast, which was not exactly what we would consider a wedding reception (nowadays). This was a wedding feast, and it lasted seven days, and the wine, beer, strong drink flowed freely. The Philistines were known to be a drinking people. As a matter of fact, what they keep finding when they excavate a Philistine city are not drinking mugs, but drinking craters—big bowls. Remember in Amos where it talks about drinking wine from bowls? That might be something that they took from Philistine culture—drinking huge amounts of alcoholic beverages—mostly wine, I am sure.

They have dug up places where they found an ancient bar on the coast including the advertising sign—beer, wine, strong drink—and they found where they would have stored the wine. They liked their wine, you might say.

We have a New Testament example of this, which Jesus was involved in—the wedding at Cana. How much wine did He prepare for this wedding feast? It was something like 150 or 160 gallons—5 or 6 firkins—huge amounts of wine. Now, there is nothing wrong with drinking wine as long as it is done in moderation.

But, if you are a Nazirite, you are not to have even a drop. And, here Manoah was arranging this feast. It was the bridegroom's responsibility to provide the feast. And who was the host? Samson, the bridegroom himself. And, here he was arranging a drinking feast for all who might attend.

So, if you want to look at it in terms of today's way of looking at things, this was a weeklong bachelor party. And since Samson did not bring down any of his friends (Maybe the family was a little embarrassed—either they could not or they would not because they were embarrassed.), the Philistines decided to bring in 30 friends for him so he would not feel all alone. They did not want Samson drinking all alone. So, they brought in 30 companions to be with him.

Now, these 30 young men, perhaps distant relatives and friends of the bride, had a specific function. Not only were they groomsmen for the groom, they were also a guarantee of the bride's support should the groom reject her. This is also all part of the story. If the groom decided after the seven days feast, or whatever the period was, that he did not want her anymore, that she did not please him for some reason—some have said that the period was for several months to see if she would actually conceive or not—he could then give her back. But, he did not necessarily give her back to the father, rather in most cases, she would go to the best man. And this is what happens in this

story a bit later. It was just part of the custom of the day. By becoming one of the 30 men, and the #1 of that 30 men, the best man says that if the groom somehow does not work out, then he would provide for her.

Now, going on with this:

> **Judges 14:12** 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.

Let me explain these very quickly. Thirty linen garments were not underclothes. What Samson offered to do was to give each of them the equivalent of a three-piece suit in today's vernacular. He said, "I will give you each a shirt, and I will give you each an embroidered cloak to wear with it." So, he was going to outfit all 30 of them, should they be able to solve the riddle.

> **Judges 14:13** 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."

It was as if he wanted his entire wardrobe outfitted for the rest of his life.

This is another proof that the Philistines were Greek. This was a Greek festive banquet entertainment. It has been shown in other places that this happened frequently that either the host or honored guest would get up and pose a riddle, and usually it was not a contest like it was here, but usually if you got the correct answer, you would get a prize which was desired by the men of the party, so they would want to figure it out. It seemed worth their while.

There is a place I found in the I. V. P. Bible Background Commentary, "In Greek legends of this period, Maxus engaged Caucus, a leader of the Achaeans leading the Sack of Troy, in a riddle contest. The intriguing connection here is that Maxus is later credited with the founding of Ashkelon." Is that not interesting? We will see in just a bit where Ashkelon comes into this story.

Probably Maxus did not actually found Ashkelon, but took it over from the Canaanites, and founded it as a Philistine city, if that is true. I just wanted to bring out the fact that this was a common Greek practice.

> **Judges 14:14** 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.

This was a really ingenious riddle. And that is why I say that Samson was no dummy. He could work in riddles. And of course, we already know what the answer is. They tried to figure out this poser all on their own, and they could get nowhere.

> **Judges 14:15** But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us [now, listen to this...], or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? *Is that* not *so*?"

So, what they do is say, "*Okay, woman. You had better somehow get Samson to cough this up, or we are going to kill you and your dad, and your whole family, and burn your house around you. And we will just say that you invited us here to impoverish us, and it was our right to do this to you. Is not that so? Right? Will you not play along, now*?"

This tells you something about the Philistine mindset and brutal nature. They were doing this to one of their own.

> **Judges 14:16** 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?"

"Who are you?"

> **Judges 14:17** Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted [you begin to feel for the guy]. 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.

So, she used her feminine wiles, if want to call it that, to drag the answer of him, and he would not budge at first, but once that nagging and weeping, and controlling happened for seven days, he just collapsed and gave in.

By the way, notice it says "on the seventh day." This feast lasted for a whole week; just think about what they did on the Sabbath. So, you can add commandment number 4 to the list of commandments that he broke.

Now, Sampson giving in to the woman is another foreshadowing of what he would later do with Delilah; it is like a neon sign, saying, "Look for this! Look for this! It is going to happen again."

What we see is that Samson never overcame his weaknesses, so God tested him on them repeatedly. He keeps failing.

> **Judges 14:18** 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?" [Ha Ha Samson! We got you! You owe us!] And he said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!"

How quick! He came up with another riddle on top of theirs! I told you this man was pretty smart. He had a literary way about him. And he was just a young man.

Now, it is very interesting, they come back to answer his riddle with a riddle. Do you know what the answer is to their riddle? If you want to put it into a succinct phrase—"*What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? An enticing woman*!" And it got Samson every time.

And of course, that is why he says, "If you had not plowed with my heifer..." He knew exactly what they were talking about. He solved it in a second. He knew, from what had gone on all that week, exactly what had happened.

Now the way he answered this is very interesting, "*If you had not messed with my wife, you would have never come up with the correct answer*." He not only accuses them of getting the answer out of her, he accuses them of taking sexual advantage of her. Whether this is true or not, I do not know. Samson thought it was so immediately. But, he accuses them and her of infidelity—"If you had not plowed with my heifer." This is a Semitic euphemism.

There is no way to know if he was correct in his suspicions or not. But, it adds another interesting twist to the story.

> **Judges 14:19** 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.

Well, at least he pays his debts. You got to give that to him, despite all the bad things I have said about him, at least he paid his debts.

Now, he was obviously angry that this had happened, that it had happened right under his nose after he had been so kind and generous, and in turn they figuratively put a knife in his back over this riddle contest.

So, it seems like he had reasons for doing this. But, to the Ashkelonians this seems like an unprovoked attack—that he would go down there, kill 30 of their men, take their clothing, and bring it back up to Timnah.

We think of this as, "Oh, he went to Ashkelon, and killed 30 of their men, and took their clothes." Ashkelon is 25 miles away, down the coast! Smart man! He did not go into Ekron which was only a mile away, and kill 30 men there.

Why? Way too close for comfort.

All the men of the city of Ekron would have got up, gathered their arms, and gone strait up the hill to Zorah. It was probably pretty evident who would have done such a thing because news travels fast. Bad news travels even faster.

So, what did he do? The spirit of the Lord took him 25 miles away, right into the heart of Philistia. And this city is the main city of Philistia. There are five cities, but this one seems to be the one which was the strongest at the time. He went strait into the heart of the Philistines and killed 30 men, took their clothes, brought them back to Timnah, and said, "*Here! Wear these* (dead men's) *clothes*."

He did not want retaliation on the Israelites. As a matter of fact, the Philistines do not retaliate on him for this. As a matter of fact, it seems like they did not know what had hit them, they did not know who it was, they did not know where to look; he went, killed the men, came back, and it was over.

They did not have CSI picking up all the forensic clues. They did not know who it was. And it did not come out until later who had actually done this. So, they had no way to

take revenge. Smart man, this Samson.

> **Judges 14:20** And Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, who had been his best man.

As I had mentioned before, this is the way it had to be according to custom of the time. If it looked like Samson had repudiated the woman, then she was, by tradition and custom, given to his best man.

So the father of the bride only did what was expected of him. I am sure that what he thought had transpired, at the end of the wedding feast, had been a great big repudiation of his daughter, and so he felt he had every right to go ahead and give her to the best man. If you pair the end of verse 19 with all of 20, "so his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house," followed by the mention of Samson's wife immediately afterward, it seems to me as if his anger, after it had been taken out on the poor 30 men from Ashkelon, was directed at her. He was angry at her.

And so the father thought, "*Oh, he must have repudiated her*..." and gave her to the best man.

Now, in conclusion this opening vignette provides the themes and foreshadowings of the life and downfall of Samson. We saw his weakness for pretty women; his meanderings and minglings with the produce of the vine; his getting others involved in his scrapes and sins; his touching dead bodies; his succumbing to a nagging wife; and other pleasures of the flesh. Yet, he also had a strategic captivating mind. And of course, we saw his great strength which came only as a result of God's Spirit upon him.

Now, what does this add up to? If you would like a theme for the life of Samson, I find that in II Corinthians 5:7

> **II Corinthians 5:7** For we [Christians] walk by faith, not by sight.

But with Samson, it was the other way around. He walked by sight, not by faith, for most of his life.

> **II Corinthians 5:9-10** Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the

body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

However, Samson had not learned this principle yet, and would not for 20 more years.

That is all for today. Please read chapter 15 for next time.