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Judges 14

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Judges 14.

In this chapter Samson:

- Sees a Philistine woman who was right in his eyes.
- Tells his father to get the woman for him to wife.
- Killed a lion and scrapes honey out of its carcass.
- Takes the woman for his wife and prepares a seven-day feast.
- Challenges thirty companions to solve a riddle.
- Discovers his wife told the thirty men the riddle.
- Goes to Ashkelon, slays thirty men and takes their garments.
- Discovers his wife had been given to his best friend.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Israelites forgot the LORD, and worshipped false gods, so the LORD removed His protection and blessings from them, which resulted in them being oppressed by their enemies and crying to the LORD for deliverance. In answer to their prayer the LORD raised up twelve Judges to deliver them, but not Judges as we think of Judges today or preachers of righteousness, but rather military leaders and fighters, that led Israel to triumph over their enemies and delivered them from their wicked behaviour. Most suppose that Samuel (considered by some to be the last Judge) wrote some parts of the book, while other parts were written at a later time by someone of his generation or a later generation. The primary purpose of the Judges is best articulated in the following words, "The LORD raised up Judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. (Judges 2:16). For an overview of the entire book see the title:

- Overview of the Book of Judges (at the beginning of the index).

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

Israel again sinned before the LORD. The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and told her that she will give birth to a son. Manoah's wife told her husband that a man of God visited her. Sometime later the Angel of the LORD appears to Manoah and his wife, after which, the angel ascends in a flame. Manoah and his wife return home and she gave birth to Samson.

SAMSON DESIRES A PHILISTINE WIFE

JUDGES 14:1-3

- **Judges 14:1-3:** Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." ³ But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes

(she pleaseth me well in KJV).”⁴ His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines (that he sought an occasion against the Philistines in KJV). At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.

The space of time between Samson going to Timnah and returning home is unknown.

Timnath: a city that by lot fell to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:20, 57), but was later given to the tribe of Dan, and is now at this time in the hands of the Philistines. The site is called Tibneh today, it is about three miles from Zorah (Samson’s birthplace) and not far from the Mediterranean Sea.

The Philistines: at this time the Philistines had invaded Israel’s country, settled in their cities, and had dominion over many of their territories. Marriages between the Philistines and Israel seem to have been generally accepted. However, though the Philistines were not one of the seven Canaanite nations with who the law forbids Israel to marry, the law still applied, because the Philistines religion was totally contrary to the religion of Israel. The following verses show that to take a foreign woman for a wife was against the law:

- You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God,¹⁵ lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice,¹⁶ and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods. (Exodus 34:16).
- You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons,⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. (Deut. 7:3-4).
- Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14).

2

For an Israelite, especially a Nazirite, devoted to the LORD, to take a woman who was a worshipper of Dagon was forbidden and extreme foolishness. Though Samson's parents failed in their attempt to persuade their son not to unequally yoke himself to a woman that worships a false god, they did what was right according to the law, but because Samson was bent upon taking this woman for his wife, they eventually accepted the situation.

Told his father and his mother: (v2), in the East parents did, and still do in many cases, negotiate marriage alliances for their sons. Ponder for a moment, how distasteful this marriage would be in the eyes of Manoah and his wife, especially after the Angel of the LORD had visited them in such a spectacular and majestic manner. (Chapter 13).

Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes (she pleases me well in KJV): (v3), amongst commentators these words are interpreted in the following two ways:

1. She was right in his eyes because of her physical outward beauty.
2. She was right in his eyes for his purpose, which was to get close to the Philistines. Supporting this idea is the fact that in chapter fifteen we read that the woman’s father was willing to give the woman who Samson intended to take for a wife, her younger sister, who the verse states, “was more beautiful” (Judges 15:1-2), so those supporting this idea reason, if Samson’s attraction was solely based upon her beauty, he would have requested the younger sister. Because of the Philistines oppression, it is reasoned that, Samson was seeking an opportunity to destroy the Philistines and deliver Israel from their bondage, and for this purpose the woman was right in his eyes,” meaning, fit for his purpose. Though this action of Samson’s was against the law of God, He permitted it and used it to bring about His purposes.

Is there not a woman among your relatives, or our people: (v3), meaning of you own tribe or from the people of Israel. Samsons father and mother rightly opposed their son's marriage to a pagan woman, especially since she was the daughter of the race that was oppressing Israel, but they perceived that he was determined to take this path and could not change his mind, therefore submitted to it.

His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD: (v4), though Samsons mother and father clearly understood their sons marriage to a Philistine woman was totally against God's law, because of God's sovereignty over all things and eternal foreknowledge He was able to use Samsons misguided desire to marry this woman to bring about His plans and purposes, which was to bring about the destruction of the Philistines.

Though this is all true, it should be noted, that even though Samson's name is listed in, "The Great Hall of Faith," with other great men of faith as the following verses show:

- What more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. (Heb. 11:32-33).

He suffered an enormous price, because of his determined desire to take a wife from a people of a faith opposed to the faith of Israel.

The lesson we can all learn from the story of Samson is that though we or our children may take a path that is contrary to the law of God, because of the weakness of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and a lack of biblical knowledge (remember Samson lived in a time when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), it will not prevent God from bringing about His plans and purposes, for being the Alpha and Omega (i.e., knowing the beginning to the end) He is able, with His eternal foreknowledge to bring about His plans and purposes despite any sinful path we may take (not deliberately to offend God or act against His law), but because of the weakness of our flesh and the passions of our heart, however, we will suffer the consequences of such choices.

Now here is the beauty of the Christian Gospel and the grace of God: like the earthly father of the prodigal son, never gave up on his wayward son, God will never give up on those who by faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ belong to his family, even though they, like the Parodical son may take a wayward path, but all should know that though God does not give up on us, we like the wayward son, may suffer tremendous loss and hardship because of the wayward path we have taken in this world as Samson and many others like Him did, even though listed in, "The Hall of Faith." (Heb 11).

His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD: (v4), meaning that Samson intended to use this marriage to get closer to the Philistines, and that the LORD intended to use it for His purposes, and bring good out of his sinful inclinations. Keep in mind, the very last verse of this book tells us, "In the days of the Judges there was no king in Israel, everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes." (Judges 21:25). The LORD, was about to use Samson to begin events that would lead to the destruction of Philistine power and dominion over Israel. God was not going to use military might, as has been the case of the preceding judges, to inspire the nation of Israel to rise up against such a powerful enemy, but the miraculous strength and courage of Samson, the heroic champion of Israel. (Judges 16:26-30).

Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives: (v3), meaning from his Dan his own tribe or from amongst his own people Israel, that he must take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? For even though the Philistines were not one of the seven nations of the Canaanites, with who marriage was strictly forbidden, they did dwell in the land the Israelites were to possess, and were worshippers of idolaters

and pagan gods, and as such, the people of Israel were to be separated from them, because of the dangerous consequence, such as the temptation to worship their idols and gods etc.

Snapshot: Here in this chapter and at this time in Israel's history, the LORD, is about to use Samson as a vessel in His hand to begin a series of Israelite campaigns, to bring about the destruction of the Philistines power and dominion over Israel. In this story we see the wonder of God's hand working through a single man. At this time Israel did not have the forces of a numerous army to conquer the powerful might of the Philistines, so He uses the faith, courage and extraordinary supernatural strength of one man, who Israel and their enemies, counted as a champion of Israel. Israel's history shows that Samson's faith toward God, his disdain for the Philistines, his patriotic spirit for Israel and willingness to lay his life down, to destroy over three thousand Philistines (Judges 16:26-30), inspired the people of Israel to unite together, and rise up against their Philistine overlords.

A PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE: Though Samson's marriages were unlawful, God was able to use them and use the weakness of his flesh, to bring about His long-term goal, which was Israel's freedom from Philistine dominion and oppression, but it should be noted, though God was able to bring about His plans and purposes despite the weakness of Samson's flesh, Samson suffered enormous consequences. We can all learn the following lesson from this:

- Even though God, does not approve of transgressions and sin, because of His sovereign eternal foreknowledge He is able to accomplish and bring to pass His plans and purposes despite them. Ultimately, God used the sin of Samson to put him in a position where he could slay thousands of Israel's Philistine enemies. However, though Samson is counted as a champion of Israel and achieved God's purposes, he suffered the consequences of his sin.

This same principle applies to faithful Christians today, our sin and our choices that are contrary to God's word do not prevent Him, from loving us or His ability to work out His sovereign plans and purposes, but it is far better for us, if He works out His plan through our obedience, rather than our sin, because though God will not forsake those devoted to Christ, our sin and choices that are contrary to His word, will at some time in the future very likely bring about serious consequences, sorrow and pain. For these reasons, it is far better for us, if God works through our obedience to accomplish His purposes, rather than our sin and choices that are contrary to His word, so that we don't have to deal with the suffering and pain such choices may bring in the future.

SAMSON KILLS A LION

JUDGES 14:4-6

- **Judges 14:5-6:** Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring.
⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him (came mightily upon him in KJV): (v6), means the Spirit of the LORD infused and encompassed him with supernatural strength as in the following verses:

- The Spirit of the LORD rushed (came in KJV) upon him, and he (Samson) went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town (Judges 14:19).
- When he (Samson) came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him (came mightily upon him in KJV), and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. (Judges 15:14).

- When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed (came in KJV) upon him, and he (Saul) prophesied among them. (1 Sam. 10:10).

Killing the lion without any weapon in his hand, took extraordinary superhuman strength which at particular times in Samson's life the influence of the Spirit enabled him to manifest.

He did not tell his father or his mother: (v6) perhaps for one of the following two reasons, or maybe both:

1. He was not prideful, and therefore was not driven to boast of his amazing strength, such silence manifests his modesty and shows that he was free from all types of conceited self-importance and self-aggrandizement, especially since most would want to tell of such an amazing feat to everyone they knew.
2. In wisdom he did not want his superhuman strength to be publicly known, at this time, especially to the Philistines, for concern it could arouse fears amongst them and cause them to take greater defences and safeguards against him.

SNAPSHOT: As Samson empowered by the Spirit of God, was able to kill the lion with his bare hands, it's interesting to note, the Scriptures picture the devil as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Had Samson attempted to conquer the lion in his own strength, there is no doubt who would have won the battle, for it is certain the lion would have enjoyed his meal. Likewise, if we as sinners attempt to be united to God and destined for eternal life, by our own strength and self-effort, we will become an enjoyable meal for the prowling devil, for it is only by faith in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that any of us are counted righteous and worthy of being accepted into His eternal family.

SAMSON SCRAPES SOME HONEY FROM THE LION

5

JUDGES 14:7-9

- **Judges 14:7-9:** Then he (Samson) went down and talked with the woman, and she was right in Samson's eyes. ⁸ After some days he returned to take her. And he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. ⁹ He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.

After tearing the lion apart, Samson went and spoke with the woman, it is very likely that his father and mother had spoken with her concerning her becoming the wife of their son, and betrothal arrangements, for this was the custom in Eastern countries. The words, "After some days he returned to take her," (v8) show that the conversation he had with her here would have been about marriage and proposing it to her, for after this conversation we read in verse ten that Samson father went down to the woman and Samson prepared a seven-day feast, no doubt for the marriage celebration, which was the custom for young men to do. There is nothing to show how much time would have lapsed before he returned to take her, all we know is that before he got to her home to take her for marriage, he took honey out of the carcass of the lion and ate it with his parents, which means a considerable amount of time would have elapsed, prior to Samson returning to the woman's house.

There was a swarm of bees: (v8), many have questioned the idea of bees swarming in the body of a lion, because bees hate all putrescence and decomposition, which means that they would never be found in rotting bodies. However, this is easily explained, for the word, "carcase" in this context means "skeleton." The fierce heat of the sun in the East quickly dries up a dead body, and the myriads of insects and the ravages of birds and animals of prey would soon clean a carcass so that nothing

was left but a bony skeleton, which bees have no distain for, in fact they have at times been found in sepulchres, and human skulls that had been laying on a battle field for days.

He scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion: (v9) Samson could not do this without breaking the Nazirite vow for it involved never touching a dead body, and even staying away from a dead body as the following verse shows:

- All the days that he separates himself (by the vow of a Nazirite), to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. (Num. 6:6).

It is possible that Samson did not regard a skeleton of bones as a dead body, or since he was living in a time when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), he did not even consider it, but simply saw it and thought, "that's beautiful fresh honey," and took it.

He did not tell his mother and farther: perhaps he did not tell his mother and father that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion, was for one of the following three reasons:

1. His general character was one of discretion, in that he was not a boastful man and therefore felt no need to mention it.
2. He was concerned that his parents might have been greatly troubled by the fact he had broken a law of the Nazirite vow by going near to a dead body and touching it, that they would feel that by eating the honey they would also become ceremonially defiled.
3. He may have already prepared and created the riddle he is about to tell (in the following verses) in his head, and did not wish to give any clue to its solution.

SAMSON CHALLENGES THE PEOPLE TO SOLVE A RIDDLE

6

JUDGES 14:10-13

- **Judges 14:10-13:** His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. ¹¹ As soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. ¹² And Samson said to them, "Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, ¹³ but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Put your riddle, that we may hear it."

His father went down to the woman at Timnath, it is certain all three went, the father, the mother, and the son, as appears from the following verse. Only the father is mentioned here, because he is the head and representative of Samson's family, and is the one that will formally claim the woman, that Samson had previously asked him to do (v2-3) as the wife for his son.

His father went down to the woman (v10), in verse two Samson told his father to get the Philistine woman for his wife, and now we read of the father going down to Timnath to visit the woman and her father. From this time onward the woman is referred to as Samson's wife and he as her husband, which means that the two fathers during this time together would have agreed that Samson and the man's daughter were to be husband and wife and would have exchanged marriage gifts according to the custom and culture of this era.

Samson prepared a seven-day feast: while Samsons father and mother talked with the woman's parents, Samson made preparations for the wedding feast, which was at this time a common custom for young men to do prior to the marriage. The following verses show that a feast was an essential part of the marriage ceremony:

- Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife (Rachel) that I may go in to her, for my time is completed (seven years labour).”²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast –NOW GO TO VERSE TWENTY-SIX --²⁶ Laban said, “It is not so done in our country, to give the younger (Rachel) before the firstborn (Leah).²⁷ Complete the week of this one (Leah), and we will give you the other (Rachel) also in return for serving me another seven years.”²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her (Leah’s) week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. (Gen. 29:21-28).
- The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.¹⁸ Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther’s feast. (Esther 2:17-18).
- The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ (Matthew 22:2-4).
- Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7).
- And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” (Rev. 19:9).

Thirty companions: (v11) the people of Timnath, brought thirty companions to accompany Samson, these were probably friends of the bride's family. Following are three reasons various commentators suppose these thirty companions were given to Samson:

1. To help him with the preparations for the feast.
2. To spy and keep guard on him.
3. Some suppose that when the Philistine citizens of Timnath, saw that Samson was a man of great strength and extraordinary stature, they were afraid of him but we cannot be certain that there was anything different with his stature that made him appear exceptionally gigantic in stature, and to have such a body would necessarily be needed, since it was only when the Spirit of the LORD came upon him that he had such extraordinary supernatural strength. Added to this as yet he had done nothing to their knowledge which showed him to be such a man, and they knew nothing of his encounter with the lion.

Riddles: a riddle is an obscure sentence with a secret, hidden, puzzling meaning, that is not easy to be understood or explained, because it is wrapped up in figurative language. They were a favourite Oriental amusement at festive entertainments of this nature, and a pleasing amusement for guests with a reward for those who solved the riddle.

Samson tells the thirty companions if they can tell him the meaning of a riddle within the seven days of the feast, he will give them thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, but if they could not, they were to give him thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes. This was a fair offer, for if the thirty companions could not solve the riddle, they only had to give Samson one garment each, whereas if they solved the riddle Samson had to give thirty garments.

SAMSONS RIDDLE

JUDGES 14:14-15

- **Judges 14:14-15:** And he said to them, “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.” And in three days they could not solve the riddle.¹⁵ On the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?”

Verse thirteen ended with the thirty companions asking Samson to tell them the riddle, which he does, saying, "Out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong came something sweet," some say this riddle covertly implies:

- Out of a devouring eater, (i.e., the lion) came forth honey (something sweet), which Samson, his father and mother, ate and that was the common food of John the Baptist. The implication here, is that though the Philistines have been like a devouring lion to Israel, Israel empowered with the Spirit and strength of God will soon destroy them and take out of their nation (i.e., the carcass) spoil, plunder treasures and riches (i.e., sweet honey).
- The Philistine nation appeared as a strong lion, but will soon appear as a bony skeleton without life, and out of its stench and unpleasantness will come pleasant food (i.e., plunder, spoil, riches and treasures), that Israel will take possession of (i.e., eat sweet honey out of the carcass).

Three days: (v14), for the first three days the thirty men attempted to solve the riddle on their own, but with no luck.

The fourth day: (v15), they became desperate and threatened to burn the house of Samsons wife and her father down if she did not get Samson to tell her the meaning of the riddle, and then tell them.

Have you invited us here to impoverish us (take what we have in KJV)? (v15), the idea here is not that Samson would make the thirty men paupers, but that he would strip them of their garments, and even take their shirts off of their backs, which they would have had to part with, if they could not explain the riddle, or send for other garments from their own houses. Added to this embracement, they were Philistines and Samson was an Israelite, so to lose to Samson would be a great shame.

They are basically accusing Samsons wife, that they were only invited to the wedding to be plundered by means of the riddle, and if she was a party to plundering her own countrymen, she should suffer for it. This is why they terrify her with the threat of burning her fathers house down, if she cannot persuade Samson to explain the riddle to her so she could declare it to them.

SAMSON WIFE ASKS HIM TO TELL HER THE RIDDLE

JUDGES 14:16-17

- **Judges 14:16-17:** And Samson's wife wept over him and said, "You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?"¹⁷ She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people.

There is no doubt this riddle made the whole wedding-feast one of the least joyous feasts that a bridegroom would have ever had to prepare, it could be said that this was just punishment for Samsons lawless whims, though the end of Samsons story shows that God overruled them and by them achieved His own plans and purposes. (Judges 16:260-30).

On the seventh day he told her: (v17) from the first time the thirty men approached Samsons wife and threatened her, was from the fourth day through to the very end of the seventh day (v18), she with tearful weeping, teasing and fretting attempted to seduce him into telling her the riddle. This was going to be no easy task since he had not even told his father and his mother who he had the highest reverence and esteem for. Added to this it was hardly likely Samson would trust her with such a secret, since she was a Philistine and he had only known her for a very short time. However, after days of enticing and seduction she eventually persuaded him to tell her the riddle on the final day of the feast.

She told the riddle to her people: (v17) though it is likely she had promised Samson she would not tell the thirty companions and knew it would be to his loss and that he would have to give each of them thirty garments, she was compelled to tell them because of their threat to burn her father's house. Sadly, for her and her father the following chapter shows that the Philistines did sometime after this event burn her and father with fire. (Judges 15:6).

THE MEN TELL THE RIDDLE TO SAMSON

JUDGES 14:18

- **Judges 14:18:** And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle."

Just before sunset on the final day she told them the riddle, which was just enough time to free each of the thirty men from the obligation of giving Samson thirty garments, but more than this it saved them from the shame of thirty Philistines losing to an Israelite.

What is sweeter than honey? During this ancient era nothing was sweeter than honey for sugar had not been invented.

What is stronger than a lion? no creature is, it is the strongest among beasts as the following verse shows.

- The lion, which is mightiest among beasts and does not turn back before any. (Proverbs 30:30).

If you had not ploughed with my heifer: some suppose this expression implies Samson suspected his wife of adultery, but its far more likely Samson refers to his wife as a heifer because a heifer is used to plough up the ground for other people's advantage and gain. For it is almost certain he would have been aware that had they not threatened her in some way, she would not have been so determined to get the secret out of him.

SYMBOLISMS: Samson not only killed the beast that had the strength, power and fury to devour him, but had also taken sweet honey for himself and his family for food and pleasure from it. The riddle may allude to:

- The victory Samson got over the devouring power of the Philistines, by his humiliation and agonies and the glory he brought to God, and blessings he bought, by his death, to the people of Israel. (Judges 16:26-30).
- The victory Christ got over the power of sin and devouring horror of death, being robbed of its sting, by his humiliation, agonies, and death, and the glory he brought to the Father, and the spiritual blessings to his people.

SAMSON KILLS THIRTY MEN

JUDGES 14:19-20

- **Judges 14:19-20:** And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house.
²⁰ And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man (he had used as his friend in KJV).

At some level Samson may have had outstanding strength for he could tear a lion apart as easily as one tears a young goat apart (Judges 14:6), and he carried a city gate upon his shoulders (Judges 16:3), however, his

bodily strength was dramatically increased by the extraordinary influences of God's Spirit.

Ashkelon: was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines; it lay near the Mediterranean Sea, and, was about thirty kilometres from Timnath.

It is not easy to know why Samson travelled so far, following are two possible reasons that commentators have suggested:

- He was aware, that at this time some grand Philistine religious festival was being observed at Ashkelon (perhaps to honour Dagon), where multitudes of people would be wearing their best clothing and garments of linen.
- A marriage feast or celebration of some man of great renown, during which linen robes and rich garments would be worn, that were not worn every day was being held at Ashkelon.

Samson slew thirty men: some may feel this act was totally unjustified, but consider, God had raised Samson up to be a judge of Israel, and the Philistines were fierce enemies of Israel, which means in this act he was destroying enemies of God, especially if they were observing a festival in honour of their gods.

He took their spoil: (v19), referring to the garments Samson needed to fulfil his oath that he would give each of the thirty men garments and apparel of linen.

In hot anger he went back to his father's house: (v17), still being affected by his wife's betrayal, the and deceitfulness of the thirty men, and possibly anger against the citizens of Timnath, who may have mocked and laughed at him, because the thirty Philistines were able to trick and deceive an Israelite he returns in anger to his father's house.

Samson's wife was given to his companion: (v20), though there were thirty companions, there was one that he was more intimate with than the others, such a friend is called the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29), while the others are referred to as the children of the bridechamber (Matt. 9:15).

Samson returned home intending to take his wife, but when he arrives, he discovers her father had given his wife to his, best man (friend in KJV), which manifests the loose attitudes the Philistines had concerning the sanctity of marriage. Being his best man (one he had used as his friend in KJV), means he was the chief person who communicated during the festivities between him and his bride during the acceptance of her hand.

It is possible Samson's friend had an attraction to his wife and a certain level of intimacy prior to his marriage, and after seeing Samson's anger because of his wife's betrayal took advantage of the situation while Samson was gone. Whatever the case, taking Samson wife was an act of treachery and blatant betrayal of a friend, which would naturally provoke deep resentment in Samson and a passion to inflict harm upon the Philistines.

In the following chapter we read, Samson's father gave his wife to his companion because he thought that he utterly hated her. (Judges 16:2). Following are three reasons why Samson's father would have been thinking this way:

1. He thought Samson had deserted her, because of her betrayal of him concerning the riddle.
2. Ashkelon was about thirty kilometres from Timnath which means he would have been gone for some time, so his father, his wife and his friend may not have known if he had been killed or was even intending to return:

3. They felt she was free to marry another and all agreed to the marriage.

Regardless of the reasons, Samson anger and his desire to seek an opportunity to bring destruction upon the Philistines would have been greatly intensified when he discovered his best friend had married his wife (as the following chapter shows).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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