

Judges 14:1 ¶ And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

Judges 14:2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

Judges 14:3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

Judges 14:4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

As is often the case, what turns out to be “God’s will” often does not match up with what we think it should be. This chapter is a good example.

Samson was in a neighboring town one day and saw a Philistine girl that caught his eye. She was so attractive to him that he told his father and mother that (according to the culture of that day) they must arrange for her to become his wife. His parents did their best to persuade him to choose a Jewish girl instead of a daughter of “an uncircumcised Philistine.” Samson was determined and declared that she was the only woman for him.

Little did his parents know that Samson’s attraction to this girl was part of God’s plan. He intended to use this relationship to begin acting in judgment against the Philistines who were at that time ruling over Israel.

Judges 14:5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

Judges 14:6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

As Samson and his parents journeyed to Timnath, they came to the vineyards of Timnath—on the outskirts of town, I presume. It seems that they were traveling separately; maybe the parents were traveling ahead of him to talk to the parents before he got there.

Samson was attacked by a young lion. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power so that he was easily able to tear the lion apart with his bare hands. You would think that would be big news to share with his parents, but he did not tell them what had happened.

Judges 14:7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

Judges 14:8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

Judges 14:9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

He went on to Timnath and spent some time talking to the woman, and she pleased him very much.

Evidently, they were successful in arranging for the marriage. As Samson was on the way to his wedding, he decided to check out the carcase of the lion. Lo and behold, a swarm of bees had used the carcase of the lion to build a hive and make honey. He decided to eat some of the honey and even take some to his parents. He did not tell them, however, that he had taken the honeycomb out of the carcase of a dead lion.

As we learned in the previous chapter, this was in direct violation of his Nazarite vow.

Judges 14:10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

Judges 14:11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

Judges 14:12 And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

Judges 14:13 But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

While his father went down to see the bride-to-be prior to the wedding, Samson, in keeping with tradition, prepared a feast for the young men of Timnath. When they saw him coming, they gathered together a group of 30 young men to celebrate with him.

Samson proposed a riddle and challenged them to solve it within the seven days allotted for the feast. If they solved it, he would give them 30 fine linen shirts (from the Hebrew) and 30 changes of clothing. If they did not solve it, they each had to give him a fine linen shirt and a change of clothes. The young men agreed to the deal and asked him to tell them the riddle.

Judges 14:14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

Judges 14:15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it not so?*

The riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

By the third day, the young men still couldn't figure out the riddle. On the 7th day they went to Samson's wife and urged her to use her feminine wiles to persuade her husband into revealing the answer to the riddle. If she did not, they promised to destroy both her and her father's house with fire. They accused her of setting them up to be robbed.

Some of the translations note that it was the 4th day of the feast because of the reference to not being able to solve the riddle in the first three days. The Hebrew characters for 4 and 7 are very similar.

Judges 14:16 *And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?*

Judges 14:17 *And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.*

Samson's wife went to him in tears declaring that he must not love her since he had not told her the answer to his riddle. He declared that he had not even told his parents the answer. Evidently, in that culture the parents were held in higher esteem than the wife—or at least a new bride.

We are told that she wept for the entire 7 days of the feast or the remaining days of the feast--whichever. The timing isn't really important. What is important is that he finally yielded and told her the answer to the riddle on the last day of the feast because she had been so persistent. She then gave the answer to the young men "of her people," Philistine men. She betrayed her husband out of fear.

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

Judges 14:19 *And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.*

The young men went to Samson before the sun had set and gave him the answer to the riddle—"What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"

Samson immediately realized that his wife had betrayed him. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him. He went down to Ashkelon (about 24 miles distant) and killed 30 men and took their garments to the men at the feast.

He was very angry and returned to his father's home without his bride.

This marked the beginning of God's judgment against the Philistines through

Samson.

I liked this comment from the New Bible Commentary: "The Samson story is a fascinating study in the relationship between human freedom and divine sovereignty. It shows the Lord working all things together for the good of his people, even when they were least aware of it, and despite the waywardness of the one he had chosen to use. He is still the same gracious, sovereign God today. He still works all things together for the good of his people, whether they are aware of it or not."

Judges 14:20 But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

Samson's wife was given to the man that he had used as the best man at the wedding. I guess they assumed that he had rejected her forever.