

Judges 15:1 ¶ But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

Judges 15:2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.*

Later, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson's anger had abated; and he decided to go and reunite with his wife. He took a young goat as a gift for her; but when he got there, her father would not allow him to go to her. He told Samson that he thought that Samson hated her and was never coming back, so he gave her to the best man as his wife. He then tried to appease him by getting him to take her younger sister as his wife, a girl much prettier than her sister.

The New Bible Commentary offered an interesting insight: "Samson's marriage appears to have been according to Philistine custom, in which the bride remained with her own family and was visited there by her husband. Any children resulting from the marriage would belong to the bride's family."

Judges 15:3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

Judges 15:4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

Judges 15:5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

Samson declared that he had a right to seek his revenge on the Philistines. He went out and caught 300 jackals (from the Hebrew—a cross between a wolf and a fox). These animals traveled in packs. This would have been quite a miraculous feat for one man even if it took a few days. He tied pairs of jackals together by their tails and secured a torch within the knot of each pair of jackals. After setting the torches on fire, he released them in the cornfields or wheat fields (v1). They ended up destroying the grain (the sheaves that had been harvested and that yet to be harvested), the vineyards and the olive trees.

Judges 15:6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

Judges 15:7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

Judges 15:8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

The Philistines were furious and wanted to know who was responsible for the destruction. Someone identified Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, and explained that it was an act of revenge because his wife had been given to

another man. The Philistines responded by following through with their original threat to destroy her and her father with fire.

This only provoked Samson further, and he declared that he was not yet through getting vengeance. He went on a killing rampage and then sought refuge in a cave at the top of an area identified as “the rock of Etam.”

Clarke had an interesting take on this section: “This was probably done to appease Samson: as they saw he had been unjustly treated both by his wife and her father; therefore they destroyed them both, that they might cause his wrath to cease from them. And this indeed seems intimated in the following verse: And Samson said - Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you; that is, I am not yet satisfied: ye have done me great wrongs, I must have proportionate redress; then I shall rest satisfied.”

Judges 15:9 ¶ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

Judges 15:10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

Judges 15:11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

Judges 15:12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

Judges 15:13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

The Philistines made camp in Judah and took over the town of Lehi. When the men of Judah asked them why they had done this, they declared that they had come to arrest Samson and punish him for what he had done to them.

The men of Judah sent a delegation of 3,000 to meet with Samson at the cave. It seems that they had quite a healthy respect of his strength. They asked Samson if he didn't realize what he had done to them by making the Philistines so angry. He answered that he had only taken revenge for how they had treated him.

The men told Samson that they had come to bind him and deliver him to the Philistines—implied, so that they would go away and leave them alone. Samson didn't fight or argue; he just wanted them to promise that they wouldn't kill him. They promised not to kill him, but declared that they would bind him tightly and hand him over to the Philistines. So Samson allowed them to bind him with two new cords (very strong and not weakened by age) and take him away.

Judges 15:14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were*

upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

Judges 15:15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

Judges 15:16 And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

Judges 15:17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi.

When they got to Lehi, the Philistines began to celebrate. The Spirit of the LORD then came upon Samson with great power. The cords that bound him broke as easily as burnt flax and fell away from his wrists. He found the jawbone of an ass that was still fresh and not brittle with age and used it to kill 1000 men. Afterward, he declared what he had done, threw the jawbone away and called the place "Ramathlehi," or "the jawbone height" or "hill of the jawbone."

Guzik offers insight on the words of Samson: "Samson's bold declaration of victory has a poetic touch that is difficult to render in translation. One effort goes like this: "With the jawbone of an ass I have piled them in a mass!"

Judges 15:18 ¶ And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

Judges 15:19 But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

Judges 15:20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Samson became very thirsty and called out to the LORD. He questioned whether God had given him this victory only to let him die of thirst and fall prey to the Philistines. I think it is important to note that Samson realized that God was the source of his strength and his victory.

My first thought was that God put a hollow place in the jawbone and caused water to flow from it. Commentators note that the name Lehi means jawbone. It made more sense to understand that God created a new spring in the town because the last part of verse 19 declared that it was still in existence at the time this record was written.

After Samson's thirst was quenched, he was renewed in spirit and strength and called the place "Enhakkore," "spring of the one who called."

It is noted that Samson judged Israel for 20 years, a time in which the Philistines were their greatest threat. This sounds like the end of the story, but Samson still gets one more opportunity to bring judgment upon the Philistines.