



Lesson 85

Samson's Wedding

Story Elements

- **Text:** Judges 14:1-20
- **Setting:** approx. 1100 B.C. in Timnath, a city of Philistia
- **Main Characters:** God, Samson, Samson's parents, Samson's wife, and wedding guests
- **Plot:** Samson's marriage to a Philistine girl begins a cycle of violent retaliation.

- **Key word(s):** “ _____ ” (vv 12-19)
- **Climax:** **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.*

Finding a Girl

1. (14:1-4) Samson saw a Philistine girl in Timnath that he wanted to marry, and so he told his parents to “get her for me to wife.”¹
 - a. Samson's parents wisely advised him not to marry a Philistine girl but to seek a wife from among his own people.

APPLICATION → Of course, there were plenty of suitable Hebrew women for Samson, but in this story we begin see one of Samson's many flaws: a lack of _____. He was raised a Nazarite, but though he conformed (for a while) to the outward rules, Samson had little desire to be separated unto God through a holy life.

- b. Samson would not relent but insisted, *Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well*. His parents were surely dismayed by their son's behavior and must've wondered how this promised child, who was destined by God to *begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines* (cf 13:5), could defeat Israel's enemies if he was joined in marriage to them. What they did not know was that *it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines*. (v 4)

APPLICATION → The sovereign working of God is often outside of our expectations. But we must always remember that God keeps his promises even when it seems he is not, and that those things which seem to be frustrating God's plans are being used by God to _____ them.

Philippians 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Fighting a Lion

2. (14:5-7) 2. On the way to Timnath, to make wedding arrangements, Samson was attacked by a young lion. Through the miraculous strength bestowed by the Spirit of God, Samson killed the lion with his _____.
3. (14:8-9) After about a year, Samson and his parents returned to Timnath for the wedding feast/ceremony. Samson turned aside to view the lion's carcass and saw that honeybees had made a home in its remains. Samson ate some of the honey and shared it with his parents, but he did not tell them from where the honey came.

¹ The customs of the time required that parents were to take care of securing their children's spouses by negotiating with the other family. The parents of hopeful grooms would decide upon the dowry. After such negotiations were settled, the ceremony would take place about a year later.

APPLICATION → It is a curious thing that Samson did not tell his parents about killing the lion. Perhaps this was the first time he had experienced such supernatural strength, and, unsure of what to think, he kept it a secret. Whatever were Samson’s motivations in keeping his amazing victory to himself, his defeating the lion and later eating honey from the carcass gives us an amazing picture of Christ’s victory over Satan. John Gill notes, “This may be an emblem of those sweet blessings of grace, which come to the people of Christ through his having destroyed Satan the roaring _____.”

Feasting with Philistines

4. (14:10) After they arrived in Timnath, the seven-day wedding feast began.
 - a. (14:11) Samson was given thirty _____ (what we would call groomsmen) from among the local Philistines men.
 - b. (14:12-14) It was customary at a feast to challenge guests with a _____ and to offer a prize to the winners. Samson was inspired by his experience with the lion to give this riddle (along with a wager):

*Out of the eater came forth meat,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness*

- c. (14:15) The thirty groomsmen turned out to be more like criminals than companions – they threatened to kill Samson’s bride and her family if she did not reveal the answer.
 - d. (14:16-17) Samson’s betrothed pleaded with him to reveal the answer to her. He initially refused, but eventually gave in. She shared the riddle’s solution with those that threatened her.
 - e. (14:18) On the last day of the wedding feast, the men gave the answer to Samson’s riddle, and he responded, *If ye had not plowed with my _____, Ye had not found out my riddle.*

APPLICATION → Just as the Philistines found an advantage against Samson through his bride, so “Satan, in his temptations, could not do us the mischief he does if he did not plough with the heifer of our own _____ nature.”²

5. (14:19) In retaliation, Samson went to nearby Ashkelon, killed _____ Philistine men, and with their plunder he awarded the wedding “companions” their prize. Samson left Timnath in anger and returned home.
6. (14:20) With Samson’s angry departure, the bride’s father gave her to the “_____.” This would injustice cause greater violence in the near future.

Answer Key: Key word(s): riddle • 1. → self-control; → fulfill • 2. bare hands → lion • 4. a. companions; b. riddle • e. heifer; → corrupt • 5. thirty • 6. best man

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 359.