
Judges 14

Judges 14:1–20

Samson Almost Marries a Philistine Woman

Outline of Chapter 14:

- Vv. 1–4 **Samson falls for a Philistine woman**
- Vv. 5–9 **Samson and the lion**
- Vv. 10–14 **The marriage feast/Samson's riddle**
- Vv. 15–18 **Samson's fiancée is threatened/Samson reveals the riddle to her**
- Vv. 19–20 **The epilogue to the riddle and to Samson's marriage**

Introduction: Judges 14 is going to seem to be a whole change of pace. The vocabulary is different, the sentence structure, in general, is different—particularly when a person is quoted. Finally, the subject matter, quite frankly, quite unusual, and, at times, disturbing. For that reason, it is easy to understand why some would think that this portion of Scripture dealing with Samson is apocryphal. In fact, quite frankly, one of the first things that I did was check to see if Samson was mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (he is—in Heb. 11:32). I also looked to see if this particular chapter could be removed without doing damage to the rest; however, it could not. What I personally didn't like was his goofy riddle and the Spirit of Jehovah coming upon him resulting in the killing of thirty (presumably) Philistine men in Ashkelon. Obviously, there was more to the latter incident than is given in Scripture.

In this chapter, Samson will find a woman that he thinks he loves from the Philistines, which would indicate that Samson did not have ill relations with the Philistines at first. He then talks his parents into making the wedding arrangements for him. Now, it is not that he is too afraid to speak to her—he does that mid-chapter; there were just certain marriage formalities which had to take place which involved his parents. However, there were two problems: (1) the Israelites were not supposed to intermarry; and, (2) Samson was, from the womb, chosen to deliver Israel from the Philistines. *Samson was the one figure who could break the power of the Philistines; yet he was too concerned with his personal interests and pleasures to assume that task in a responsible fashion. He enormous physical strength and courage were hardly match by his dedication to God's call.*¹

At first, his parents oppose the marriage, but Samson is adamant. They go along with it, not realizing that is of Jehovah. Now, this does not mean that this woman was Samson's right woman. The key is that God would use this attempted-marriage to stir Samson against the Philistines. The explanation of *When Critics Ask: It must be realized that, although Samson had been dedicated by his parents from birth to serve the Lord as a Nazarite, he...became willful and self-centered...He was not of a mind to go to battle against the Philistines...Consequently, to arouse him to do battle with the Philistines, God used Samson's own self-interests to incite his anger against the Philistines and to bring about the deliverance of Israel from oppression. God sometimes uses evil men to accomplish His good purposes.*² Archer: *Samson was too wrapped up in himself to be attentive of god's call. Therefore he needed some strong incentive to turn against the Philistines in retaliation for a wrong he had received from them.*³

On his trip down to Timnah, Samson is surprised by a young lion, which he kills with his bare hands, having been given strength through the Holy Spirit. When he returned to Timnah for the actual marriage ceremony, he checked out the spot where he had killed the lion and bees had made a nest inside the carcass of the lion. He reached inside and took out some of the honey which they produced. His parents were unaware of any of this.

¹ *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 165.

² *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 150.

³ *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 165.

For the seven-day wedding feast, the family of the bride brought along thirty young Philistines (presumably), to round out the wedding party. Samson proposed a riddle, which, quite frankly, is not much of a riddle—which centered around the killing of this lion; he said to them, “**Out of the eater came something to eat; and out from the strong came something sweet.**” (I assume that he would have taken the young men to see the sight of the lion, had they lost the bet). Obviously, there was no way for these men to know the meaning of the riddle and what was at stake were thirty undergarments and thirty changes of clothes (Samson was to provide one each for the thirty men or they were to provide him with all sixty sets of clothes). The men threaten Samson’s wife, who puts the pressure to him. On the last day of the wedding feast, Samson caves. You might be wondering how Samson could be so wimpy as to cave to a woman’s whining—such a question simply means that you obviously don’t know any persuasive women.

When these men tell Samson the solution to his riddle, he knows that they got it from his wife. If what has happened so far does not seem unusual to you, the last couple verses are—Samson, empowered by the Holy Spirit, then goes to Ashkelon, a Philistine city, and kills thirty men for their clothes and gives these clothes as the payment for his bet. At the end of this chapter, Samson is completely disgusted with his bride-to-be, and simply returns to his father’s house. His fiancée marries his best man, who obviously must have comforted her throughout this ordeal.

I have a confession to make. I have no problem believing the miracles and works of God which brought Israel through the desert-wilderness to the Land of Promise. However, I do have problems with Samson. The stories about him and his adventures seem messy, sometimes pointless, and he seems quite immature at times. However, this is the Word of God, and it is either inspired or it is not; we can either trust all of it, or none of it. Therefore, despite my personal misgivings, we will proceed.

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Samson Falls for a Philistine Woman

Slavishly literal:

And so went down Samson Timnah-ward and so he saw a woman in Timnah-ward from daughters of the Philistines.

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Moderately literal:

And so Samson went down to Timnah and he saw a woman in Timnath from the daughters of the Philistines.

Then Samson went down to Timnah and he saw a Philistine woman in Timnath.

Timnah is the Hebrew word *tim^onâthâh* (תִּמְנָתָהּ) [pronounced *tim-naw-THAW*], which is how this word is found here. This spelling probably includes the suffixal directional *hê*, which alludes to direction. Elsewhere, it is *tim^onâh* (תִּמְנָה) [pronounced *tim-NAW*]. It probably means *portion, territory* {there is a noun cognate *m^onâth* (מְנָת) [pronounced *me-NAWTH*], which means *portion*. Strong’s #4521 BDB #584}. There is a Timnah (without the *hê* directional) mentioned in Joshua 15:10 as being on the northern border of Judah, between Judah and Dan. A city Timnah is also assigned to Dan in Joshua 19:43 (with the directional *hê*). Since Samson is from the tribe of Dan and since much of this appears to take place near the border of Judah and Dan, there is no reason to assume that these are all different places, despite the slight difference in spelling. The NIV Study Bible identifies this Timnah as *Tell Batash in the Sorek Valley, west of Beth Shemesh*⁴ (which would be just on the other side of the Dan-Judah border). According to the NIV, archeologists have uncovered the Philistine layer of this city.

This Timnah is not the same as the hyphenated Timnah-serah (Joshua 19:50 24:30) or Timnah-heres⁵ (Judges 2:9); and there is another Timnah in the hill country of Judah (Gen. 38:12–14 Joshua 15:57). Strong’s #8553 BDB #584.

⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 348.

⁵ These are actually two names for the same place.

Samson is like a lot of men—he is somewhat of a romantic and he seeks an exotic woman from another land and another people. Traveling being as limited as it was back then, traveling to adjacent territories was pretty much the best a man could do to locate foreign, exotic women.

And so he came up and so he made known to his father and his mother and so he said, “A woman I saw in Timnah from daughters of Philistines; now get her for me to wife.”

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And so he came up and made known to his father and mother, saying, “I saw a woman in Timnah from the daughters of the Philistines; now take her for me to wife.”

When he returned, to spoke to his mother and father, saying, “I have just seen a Philistine woman in Timnah. Now, get her and make the arrangements that we might marry.”

What he does when he returned is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to declare, to inform, to make it pitifully obvious that*. Strong's #5046 BDB #616. It is interesting that Samson does not look to his own but finds the foreign women beautiful and exciting.

Now, at first glance, one would think that Samson is unable to approach this woman and get the ball rolling himself. In fact, it is almost endearing.⁶ However, what we are dealing with here is more a system of customs and mores. The parents of the bride and groom were integral to the marriage and marriages generally required close family involvement. In fact, very often the father even chose the bride or groom for his child (see Gen. 24:3–9 Judges 12:9 Neh. 10:30). In this case, we have a marriage between people of two different nations and ethnic backgrounds, which required even more finesse. If Samson just showed up on his own to take this woman, he would be risking his life. One of the most important considerations was that the groom's family paid the bride's family a dowry for the bride. I assume it accomplished three purposes—the bride's family knew they had an expensive and needed commodity; this dowry indicated that the woman's new family was well-to-do and would be able to provide well for her; and thirdly, and most importantly, the dowry was set aside for the wife by her father, just in case anything ever occurred to the husband. According to Gower, the father could spend the interest that he might get from the dowry, but not the dowry itself.⁷

Our first problem is that intermarriage between Israel and other nations was generally unacceptable. Moses said to the Israelites: **“Furthermore, you will not intermarry with them [i.e., the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, et al]; you will not give your daughters to their sons nor will you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of Jehovah will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.”** (Deut. 7:3–4; see also Gen. 24:3–4 Ex. 34:11, 16 Judges 3:5–6). Therefore, such a request is not going to be met with much enthusiasm on the part of Samson's parents. Furthermore, recall that Samson is a Nazirite—so he is not just an ordinary Israelite, but he has his life dedicated to God. And now, he wants to marry a Philistine woman! Obviously, this is going to pose a problem with his parents.

This concept of forbidden intermarriage has been distorted over the years. Paul gives the valid interpretation of it in II Cor.6:14–16a: **Do not be bound together with unbelievers for what partnership has the unrighteous and the lawless, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?** This issue is not that these are people of different races—that is not the issue. They are people of other gods—that is the true issue. That people marry a person from a different country or a different race certainly poses some problems, as marriage to anyone poses some problems (sometimes, I am a master of the understatement). However, the big problem is a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. For the believer to want to marry an unbeliever in the first place

⁶ McGee had quite the opposite opinion—that Samson was just a sissy who was unable to talk to this woman and her father directly. He may have brought his parents along for some support, but it is obvious that they would be needed in the negotiations of this mixed marriage. See J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 190 for a different opinion..

⁷ *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; Ralph Gower; ©1987 by Moody International; © by Moody Press; p. 64; see also Gen. 31:15.

is a sign of weakness and lack of doctrine. Once such a marriage is consummated, the weak believer is certainly not going to become stronger or more Christ-centered. You must be realistic about these things. The influence of evil is more alluring than the influence of good and a believer who traps himself in a marriage with an unbeliever has set himself (or, herself) up for a life of misery.⁸

And so he said to him, his father and his mother, “[Is there] not in [the] daughters of your brothers and in all of my people a woman that you are going to take a wife from Philistines—the foreskinned ones?” And so said Samson unto his father, “Her you get for me for she is right in my eyes.”

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So his father and his mother said to him, “Is there not in the daughters of your relatives or in all of my people a woman that you are going to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines [or, from the Philistines—the uncircumcised ones]?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me because she is pleasing in my eyes.”

Then his mother and father tried to reason with him. “Is there not a woman for you among the daughters of your relatives or in all of our people that you must take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson answered his father, “Get this woman for me because she is drop-dead gorgeous.”

This verse begins with the 3rd person masculine singular Qal imperfect of *ʿamar* (אָמַר) [pronounced *aw-MARH*], which means *to say, to utter*. Strong’s #559 BDB #55. Although the implication is that it is just his father speaking, his mother is there also adding in a comment and a question or two. What we have here is probably not a direct quote, but the essence of what they both said.

To describe the Philistines, we have the masculine plural adjective *ʿârêl* (עָרֵל) [pronounced *gaw-RAYL*], and, although it is consistently rendered *uncircumcised* in the KJV and elsewhere, it actually means *having foreskins, foreskinned ones*. It is a term of derision. Strong’s #6189 BDB #790. One of the overt marks of a believer in Israel was being circumcised. Every time an Israelite urinated, he was reminded of his covenant to God, that he was set apart from the heathen. In fact, the sign of circumcision even predates the Law of Moses (Gen. 17:10–14, 23–27 21:4 34:14–17). Now, other nations around Israel were circumcised; however, the Philistines, in particular, were not and they were often referred to as uncircumcised, a term of scorn.

What his father says begins with an interrogative. Since we do not have a direct rendering of that, we often use the verb *to be* and whatever else is needed to smooth out the translation. Then his father and mother ask if there is anyone from his *ʿâch* (אָח) [pronounced *awhk*], which simply means *brother* or *close relative*. Strong’s #251 BDB #26.

Samson’s reason for wanting that woman is given in the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *yâshar* (יָשַׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAHR*], which means *to be smooth, straight, right*; figuratively, it means *to be pleasing, agreeable, right* (particularly when followed by *in my eyes*). It can also be used in an ethical sense, meaning *straightforward, upright*. The Piel and Hiphil have slightly different meanings. Strong’s #3474 BDB #448. This is followed by the phrase *in my eyes*. Recall that I pointed out that Samson at once represents the incarnation of our Lord yet he also represents Israel in her weakness. A key phrase of the book of Judges (particularly the last few chapters) is that *every man did what was right in his own eyes* (see Judges 17:6 21:25). Some casual readers do not even recognize that this is completely against God. God had given Israel clear standards, and laws and rules—the people of Israel had no reason to choose actions based upon what they felt was right or wrong—God had spelled it out for them already.

As has been mentioned, Samson is a Nazirite whose life has been dedicated to God. Scripture clearly teaches the Israelites not to intermarry, giving the simple reason that intermarriage would lead to idolatry. The arguments given by his parents are valid and reasonable. Samson doesn’t want to hear about it. He is strongly attracted to

⁸ This is not the case for the unbeliever who become a believer while married—that is a completely different story; see I Cor. 7:20–28.

this woman. The time frame here is difficult to determine. Superficially, it appears as though Samson went on a little vacation, saw this woman, and totally desired her. It does not appear as though they even met.

(And his father and his mother did not know that from Y^ehowah she [was] for a meeting He was seeking from [the] Philistines and in the time the that, Philistines ruling in Israel).

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(And his father and his mother did not realize that this [was] from Y^ehowah—an occasion He was seeking from the Philistines—and at that time, the Philistines dominated in Israel).

(However, his father and mother did not realize that this was from Jehovah—it was an opportunity that He was seeking from the Philistines because the Philistines were ruling over Israel at that time).

In this verse, we may need to look at a couple other translations to get started:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Now his father and his mother knew not that from Yahweh it was, that an occasion he was seeking of the Philistines,—at that time the Philistines having dominion over Israel.
NASB	However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.
NIV	(His parents did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And his father and his mother have not known that from Jehovah it is, that a meeting he is seeking of the Philistines; and at that time the Philistines are ruling over Israel.

After from Y^ehowah, we have the feminine singular, personal pronoun *hîy'* (הִיא) [pronounced *hee*], which means *she* or *it*. Often, the verb *to be* can be implied by its use. It is used as a demonstrative pronoun in this verse. 2Strong's #1931 BDB #214. What follows this is the *kîy* conjunction and the feminine singular noun is the feminine singular noun *tôănâh* (תֹּאנָה) [pronounced *toh-uh-DAW*], which means *opportunity, a meeting, an occasion, or ground of quarrel*. This word occurs only here; however, its verb cognate (Strong's #579 BDB #58) means *to be opportune, to meet, to encounter opportunely, to approach*. Strong's #8385 BDB #58. This gives us: **And his father and his mother did not know that from Y^ehowah she [was] a opportunity...**

The verb which follows is masculine singular, Piel participle of *bâqash* (בָּקַשׁ) [pronounced *baw-KAHSH*], which means *to seek, to search, to desire, to strive after, to attempt to get, to require, to demand, to ask, to seek with desire and diligence*. Strong's #1245 BDB #134. With the verb is the 3rd person, masculine pronoun.

What Israel was supposed to do was to rid the land of the heathen tribes which occupied it. They were to be merciless in this endeavor. **For it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he [Joshua] might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as Jehovah had commanded Moses** (Joshua 11:20). The result of all of this was to be a strong animosity between Israel and Philistia, that war would break out and that Israel would eventually destroy Philistia (by I and II Kings, Israel will have reduced the Philistines to a fairly insignificant group of people). Apart from these events, Israel might be content to remain under the thumb of Philistia, and eventually succumb to their gods and goddesses. As the NIV Study Bible points out: *The Lord uses even the sinful weaknesses of men to accomplish his purposes and bring praise to his name (see Ge 45:6; 50:20; 2Ch 25:20; Ac 2:23; 4:28; Ro 8:28–29).*⁹ Some of you may think that peaceful co-existence would have been the better answer; however, this is not what God had in mind for the Israelites and the Philistines. The Jews had, essentially, a peaceful co-existence in 1930's with Germany, which resulted in the Holocaust. We will see from an incident in Judges 15, that Israel desired peace with Philistia of greater importance than their independence from the Philistines and their subservience to their God (Judges 15:10–13).

⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 348. Add to these passages I Kings 12:15 II Kings 6:33 II Chron. 10:15.

The final verb is the Qal active participle of *mâshal* (לִּשְׁלַח) [pronounced *maw-SHAHL*], which means, in the Qal and Hiphil, *to rule, to have dominion, to reign*. Strong's #4910 (see #4911) BDB #605. This dominion of the Philistines over Israel takes us back to Judges 10:7, after which our story diverges to two concurrent sets of events. From the end of Judges 10 through the end of chapter 12, we have dealt with the oppression of Ammon over Israel and God's deliverance of that portion of Israel. Simultaneously, in the southwestern portion of Israel, the Philistines have control over Israel, and that is the background for Judges 13–16.

A casual reader might mistakenly think that Samson was supposed to be with this particular woman because she was his right woman. That is not what the passage is saying—the passage is saying that God is looking to place Samson in close contact with the Philistines; you don't get much closer than marriage. That Samson's parents originally opposed this marriage—that is reasonable, since mixed marriages were forbidden (Deut. 7:3). The final result of all of this will be bad blood between Samson personally and the Philistines. In fact, what will follow are several incidents of questionable morality; however, God will take all of it and make it good. God will allow Samson to exercise his own free will, mistaken as it is at times, and still turn those decisions into good. As we cover the next couple of chapters, keep this thought in the back of your mind, as God will have to do a lot of mixing. Edersheim writes: *Strictly speaking, the text only implies that this "seeking occasion on account of the Philistines" was directly from the Lord; his proposed marriage would be so only indirectly, as affording the desired occasion here then we again come upon man's individuality—his personal choice, as the motive power of which the Lord makes use for higher purposes...Thus we perceive throughout, side by side, two elements at work: the Divine and the human; Jehovah and Samson; the supernatural and the natural—intertwining, acting together, influencing each other, as we have so often noticed them throughout the course of Scripture history.*¹⁰

Samson himself had no higher purpose intended when he chose to marry this Philistine woman. He was attracted to her and that was all there was to it. Marriage outside of the Israelite camp was clearly forbidden. However, God would use the lust of Samson and his poor choices to accomplish His own divine purpose. God required Israel to stand up against the Philistines and to break their bonds—and Samson was the first offensive move of God against the Philistines. What we don't find in this chapter is Samson looking reverently toward heaven and asking God for direction. He operates differently insofar as God uses Samson despite his predilections. From *Hard sayings of the Bible: Samson was neither director nor tempted by God to do what God had specifically prohibited in his Word...Samson was plain bullheaded about this decision, and he refused to listen to his parents or to God. But neither Samson's foolishness nor his stubbornness would prevent the design of God from being fulfilled.*¹¹ You must understand that God was not pleased that Samson had chosen to marry a Philistine woman; however, He knew this would happen from eternity past and God chose to work with these conditions. **And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His pre-determined plan** (Rom. 8:28). Samson was called and Samson made a great many mistakes. Just like any other believer who makes a handful of mistakes, God will punish Samson. However, just because Samson makes a few mistakes, this does not mean that God will not use him. God will take the mess that Samson makes of his life; God will take all of the bad decisions that Samson makes; and God will work all of these things toward the good, which, in this case, is the beginning of the deliverance of Israel from the domination of the Philistines.

At this time, we ought to take a short break from exegesis and examine the **Doctrine of the Philistines**.

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¹⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 384.

¹¹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 197.

Samson and the Lion

And so went down Samson and his father and his mother Timnah-ward. And so they came as far as vineyards of Timnah-ward; and, behold, a young lion of the lions was roaring to meet him.

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And so Samson went down with his father and his mother toward Timnah. Then they came to [some] vineyards of Timnah and, observe, a young lion of the lions was roaring to come out against him.

And so Samson and his parents went down to Timnah. When they got to the vineyards outside of Timnah, a young lion, just old enough to hunt, suddenly attacked, roaring.

Apparently, although Samson was traveling with his parents, during a time that they were separated (see the next verse), this particular incident took place. The Revised English Bible suggests that this was simply Samson and that *his father and his mother* were inserted by mistake by a copyist.¹² In the Greek, it reads *when he came to vineyards in Timnah*. This is not necessarily the case. What is important is that we are dealing with a portion of time when Samson was separate from his parents. They could have been traveling together and Samson just got up in the morning to urinate.

One of the phrases we often encounter in Scripture is involves the primary noun construct, and the noun which follows acts pretty much like an adjective. Here we have the masculine singular construct of *k^ophîyr* (כִּפְיָר) [pronounced *k^o-FEER*]. This means *young lion*; a lion which has been weaned from its mother and is just beginning to hunt. Strong's #3715 BDB #498. What follows is the modifier, the masculine plural of *'ar^oyêh* (אַרְיֵה) [pronounced *ahr-YAY*], which means *lion*. Strong's #744 BDB #71.

What the lion was doing was the Qal active participle of *sh^oâgâh* (שָׂאָה) [pronounced *sh^oaw-GAWH*], which is the roar of a lion as well as the *human cry of distress, a mournful cry*. Strong's #7581 BDB #980. The verb which follows is the Qal infinitive construct of *qâra'* (קָרָא) [pronounced *kah-RAW*], which means *to encounter, to befall, to come out against*. Strong's #7125 BDB #896.

You have to realize that there are portions of the Bible which function on two levels—first of all, there was a literal Samson and he had two parents who went with him to Timnah. This was a young lion possibly on its first hunt for food. However, this is all representative of what is to come. Samson, as we have seen, represents both Christ and Israel. As Christ, he will meet and defeat this lion, just as our Lord broke the back of Satan on the cross. As Israel, he will meet and defeat this lion, as Israel will meet the Philistines and destroy them.

And so came upon him a Spirit of Y^howah and so he tore him apart as a tearing of the kid and anything not in his hand (and he did not tell to his father and his mother that which he had done).

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So the Spirit of Y^howah came upon him and he tore it apart as the tearing apart of a kid; furthermore, there [was] nothing in his hand. He did not tell his father and mother what he had done.

So the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him and he tore the lion apart as if tearing apart a young goat; furthermore, he had nothing in his hand. He did not tell his parents about this incident.

As we move on in this chapter, the vocabulary becomes a tad bit more difficult, as does the sentence structure. So far, there have been several words which we have come upon which figure prominently in the book of Job, which could indicate that had been on the reading list of the author. This is what some translators do with this verse:

The Emphasized Bible

And the Spirit of Yahweh came suddenly over him and he tore it in pieces as if he had torn in pieces a kid, there being nothing at all in his hand, —but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

¹² *His father and his mother* is found in Septuagint beta.

NASB	And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a kid though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and the Spirit of Jehovah prospereth over him, and he rendeth it as the rending of a kid, and there is nothing in his hand, and he hath not declared to his father and to his mother that which he hath done.

Obviously there is some disagreement on the meaning of the first verb. It is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of tsâlach (נָלַחַ) [pronounced *tsaw-LAHCH*], which means *to penetrate then advance*. Strong's #6743 BDB #852. The subject of the verse is the feminine singular of rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced *ROO-ahkh*], which means *wind, breath, spirit, apparition*. Strong's #7307 BDB #924. Since this noun is in the construct and followed by the proper name for God, this refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit penetrated his soul and then advanced in Samson against the lion.

What Samson does is the Piel imperfect of shâçâ' (שָׁחַץ) [pronounced *shaw-SAHÇ*], which means *to divide, to cleave, to tear apart, to tear in pieces*. *To tear in pieces, to tear apart* is the Piel connotation. Strong's #8156 BDB #1042. With this is the masculine singular suffix, so it should be rendered *and so he tore him apart* or *and so he tore him in pieces*. This is repeated as Piel infinitive construct (it's preceded by the kaph preposition); and it is followed by the masculine singular noun g^edîy (גִּדִּי) [pronounced *ge-DEE*], which means *kid* (as in a young goat). Strong's #1423 BDB #152. Since a construct does not take a definite article, the definite article is found with g^edîy. However, it is grammatically equivalent to place the definite article in front of *tearing* in the English.

After a wâw construction, we have the indefinite pronoun m^eûwmâh (מֵאוּמָה) [pronounced *m^e-oo-MAW*], which means, *anything*, and it is usually found in negative sentences; therefore, with the negative, it is often rendered *nothing*. Strong's #3972 BDB #548.

Since the male lion was young, it would have weighed about 300–350 lbs. A full-grown male can weigh up to 500 lbs. and be nine foot long. During ancient times, lions lived throughout the Middle East and Europe, but man has hunted and killed them so that they no longer populate those areas¹³ (see I Kings 13:24 20:36). To get an idea of the strength of a lion, a full-grown lion can drag a 600 lb. zebra. Obviously, even with a young lion, Samson would have had to have had superhuman strength. This will not be the only time that one of God's people would kill a lion—David will do this as well as a young man guarding his sheep in II Sam. 17:34–35 (Benaiah did as well in II Sam. 23:20).

In this passage, since his parents were not told, it would indicate that his killing of the animal was quick and his injuries minimal, if any. God gave him the strength and speed to literally rip the lion apart. As you can see, because of the unusual nature of Samson's abilities, this portion of Scripture would be doubted by anyone who doubts miracles, the supernatural or God's power.

One possible scenario is that this was the middle of the night, when lions often hunt, and he and his parents were camped out. When Samson got up to urinate in the middle of the night, he was attacked by the lion. Samson's speed and strength and presence of mind in those moments were far beyond that of any person.

A reasonable question would be, *why didn't Samson tell his parents what he had done?* I had a very unusual thing happen to me back in the very early 1980's, so unusual, that have told fewer than a half-dozen people, because I think that they would think that I was lying. On the one hand, you want to tell everyone you see what happened; on the other, you realize that they will never believe another thing that you say. So, you keep it to yourself.

¹³ *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 12, p. 298. On p. 301, World Book mentions that Amenhotep III killed 102 lions himself with a bow and arrow hunting by chariot.

And so he went down and so he talked to the woman and so she was right in eyes of Samson.

Judges
14:7

Then he went down and talked to the woman, and she was right in the eyes of Samson.

Then he went down and spoke to the woman, and she seemed to be the one to him.

So that you don't get the wrong impression—Samson did not gather his parents up to do his work for him. That is, they were not going to approach the woman and her family and put this marriage thing together while Samson stood on the sidelines. There was a certain protocol, and that had to be even more carefully observed when dealing with people from a different cultural background. The parents were as much involved in the preparations and the negotiations of a marriage as Samson. This verse seems to indicate that Samson has possibly not even previously spoken to her (in any case, his previous contact with her had been minimal). This is somewhat of a problem, as Samson has made his judgment of her almost entirely on her physical beauty. He obviously could have observed other things about her; but his attraction to her was primarily physical.

And so he returned from days to take her and so he turned aside to see a carcass of the lion and, behold, a swarm of bees in a carcass of the lion, and honey.

Judges
14:8

And he returned after some time to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees in the carcass of the lion, as well as honey.

After a week or so, he returned in order to take her, but he first turned aside to see the carcass of the lion which he had killed, and he saw there was a swarm of bees in the carcass, as well as honey.

In this verse we have the *mîn* preposition followed by the masculine plural of the noun *yôwd* (יֹוֹד) [pronounced *yohd*]. Together, this combination means *after awhile, after some time*. *Mîn* = Strong's #4480 BDB #577. *Yâmîym* = Strong's #3117 BDB #398. The indication is that time has passed, but not a great deal of time. We're probably talking a couple of weeks. Barnes: *The formal dowry and gifts having been given by Samson's father, an interval, varying according to the Oriental custom, from a few days to a full year, elapsed between the betrothal and the wedding, during which the bride lived with her friends. Then came the essential part of the marriage ceremony, viz. The removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father.*¹⁴

What happened in v. 6 appears to be quite unusual. Many of us have had unusual things happen to us—some things which we have not told anyone about or have told very few people about. This was Samson as well. In fact, the incident was so unusual, that he himself went to see the carcass of the lion just to see if what happened really happened. This is typical human nature. More than likely, he was traveling with his parents, and he told them to wait wherever and wandered off on his own. Or, they may have been camped out near where he killed the lion, and he went to the place of the carcass first thing that morning. Barnes indicates that such a thing was not unusual: *The lion, slain by him a year or some months before, had now become a mere skeleton, fit for bees to swarm into. It was a universal notion among the ancients that bees were generated from the carcass of an ox.*¹⁵ If this was a semi-common occurrence, then Samson's riddle (v. 14) becomes a little less goofy.

Now, you might be concerned right now about the condition of the lion, having lain dead for several days or weeks. Keil and Delitzsch comment: *"In the desert of Arabia the heat of a sultry season will often dry up all the moisture of men or camels that have fallen dead, within twenty-four hours of their decease, without their passing into a state of decomposition and putrefaction, so that they remain for a long time like mummies, without change and without stench"* (Rosenmüller, *Bibl. Althk. Iv. 2*, p. 424). *In a carcass dried up in this way, a swarm of bees might form their hive, just as well as in the hollow trunks of trees, or clefts in the rock, or where wild bees are accustomed to form them, notwithstanding the fact that bees avoid both dead bodies and carrion (see Bochart, Hieroz, ed. Ros. iii. P. 355).*¹⁶

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 452.

¹⁵ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 452.

¹⁶ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 296.

And so he scraped him [i.e., the honey] into his hands and so he went, going and eating, and so he came unto his father and unto his mother and so he gave to them and so they ate and he did not tell to them that from a carcass of the lion he had scraped the honey.

Judges
14:9

Then he scraped it into his hands and then went, walking and eating, and then he came to his father and mother, and he gave [some] to them and they ate [it]. He did not tell them that [it was] from a carcass of a lion [that] he had scraped the honey.

Then he scraped the honey into his hands, and left, walking and eating, until he came to his father and mother. He gave some of they honey to them, and they ate it as well. He did not tell them that it had been scraped out of the carcass of a lion.

This verse begins with the Qal imperfect of *râdâh* (רָדָה) [pronounced *raw-DAW*], which is found only in Judges 14:9, which means *to scrap out, to draw off, to take out*. Strong's #7287 BDB #922. It does have an homonym found else where, which means *to rule over* (Strong's #7287 BDB #921).

Although the verse sounds as though he and his family were traveling separately, what more than likely is the case is that they stopped a distance from the carcass of the lion and Samson went out to find it, and then caught up with them. When Samson put his hand into the carcass of the lion, he made himself unclean (Lev. 11:27). Samson would not tell his parents where the honey came from, as he was not to have any contact with a dead body of any sort.

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The Marriage Feast/Samson's Riddle

And so went down his father unto the woman and so made there Samson a feast for so was did the young men.

Judges
14:10

So his father went down to the woman and Samson there prepared a feast, as young men [customarily] did.

Then his father went down to the woman and Samson prepared a feast there, as was the custom of the young men in those days.

A verb found twice in this verse is the very common *ʿâsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. It is first found in the Qal imperfect with Samson as the subject, and again as a Qal imperfect, with the subject, the masculine plural of *bâchûr* (בָּחֻרִים) [pronounced *baw-KHOOR*] and it means *young men, choicest young men, men in the prime of their lives, the flower of youth, the quintessence of adult life*. Strong's #970 BDB #104. The adverb which goes with all of this is *kên* (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*], which means *so*. Strong's #3651 BDB #485. What is being described is that which is customarily done.

Like weddings of today, both sets of parents were involved; different from today, the male being married played some part in the ceremony, actually preparing the wedding banquet himself. When Jacob was to marry Rachel (actually, Leah), Laban, the father-in-law, prepared the banquet (Gen. 29:22). This wedding banquet was an essential part of the wedding in ancient times (see also Esther 2:17–18 Matt. 22:2–4 Rev. 19:7–9).

Such a feast as this one would certainly have involved the drinking of wine. From what we have seen of Samson so far, it would not be out of character for him to imbibe in a little wine, despite the fact that it goes against his Nazirite vows (Judges 13:7).

And so he was as their seeing of him [or, as they feared him] and so they [i.e., the family of the bride] brought thirty companions and so they were with him.

Judges
14:11

And it was when their seeing him [or, because they feared him] that they brought thirty companions so they were with him.

And, because the family of the bride feared Samson, they brought along thirty companions to celebrate with them.

Others rendered this verse thus:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And it came to pass because they feared him that they took thirty companions, who remained with him.
NASB	And it came about when they saw him that they brought thirty companions to be with him.
NJB	And when the Philistine saw him, they chose thirty companions to stay with him.
NRSV	When the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and it cometh to pass when they see him, that they take thirty companions, and they are with him.

This verse begins, as do many, with the indefinite *and it came to pass...* or *and it was...* This is followed by the kaph preposition (*as, like*) and the Qal infinitive construct, 3rd person masculine plural suffix, of *to see*. The kaph preposition, or *k^e* (כ) [pronounced *k^e*], when this is combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning *as, often, when, as soon as*. This gives us: **And it came about when their seeing him...** Now, in the alpha Septuagint, the verb is not *to see* but *to fear*.¹⁷ McGee suggests that Samson was not a large man, but rather someone who did not appear strong. The Hollywood version is that he was pumped. The Hollywood version appears to be more accurate; we have a group of young men, Philistines, and one of their own is marrying a Jew. When they saw Samson, they decided that thirty of them should attend the wedding banquet.

The three *wâw* consecutives in this verse do not act exactly like *and's*, but they do carry along the action. Here, the infinitive construct acts as a temporal clause, and the continuing of the *wâw* consecutives act as result clauses. They, referring to the family of the bride, took a look at Samson and they decided that he is a big guy and it might be a good idea to have about thirty young Philistine men at the wedding banquet, just in case. These are perhaps the *guests* of the bridegroom (see Matt. 9:15), even though they were Philistines. The NIV Study Bible suggests that they functioned also as protectors against marauders.¹⁸

The other option is that Samson's family is the *they* found in this verse—i.e., they brought in thirty men to oversee this affair and to be the guests of the bridegroom.¹⁹ The only reason for making that assumption, is the indefinite 3rd person masculine plural in this verse. The most recent occurrence of the 3rd person masculine plural goes back to v. 9. However, the whole tenor of the next few verses appears to be more of that between men who are on the verge of being adversarial. Furthermore, in this verse, the first few words of this verse seem to indicate that the seeing of Samson was what caused whoever *they* was to get thirty guys over to the wedding banquet pronto. This obviously would not have been Samson's parents, as they traveled with Samson and something would have been said about thirty of Samson's companions traveling with them or at their request. For these reasons, the *they* referred to in this verse would have been the family of the bride.²⁰ Keil and Delitzsch: *The parents or relations of*

¹⁷ Since I do not have a copy of the alpha Septuagint, I am taking this on the word of Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 276.

¹⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 348.

¹⁹ Barnes makes that assumption in *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 452.

²⁰ Unless you write and record events, you may not grasp this: however, when I reread some things which I have written, I notice that there are pronouns all over the place who refer to specific persons and places in my head, but it is not quite as clear in the context of the writing. In working with high school-aged children, I have noticed that they will often use pronouns when the subject of the action is not completely clear to them.

the bride are the subject of the first clause. They invited thirty of their friends in Timnath to the marriage feast, as “children of the bride-chamber” (Matt. 9:15), since Samson had not brought any with him.²¹

And so said to them Samson, “Let me propose, please, to you a riddle: If an expounding you [all] can expound her to me seven days of the feast and you discover [it], and I will give to you thirty linen undergarments and thirty changes of garments.

Judges
14:12

Then Samson said to them, “Let me propose, please, a riddle to you. If you can clearly explain it to me [during the] seven days of the feast and you discover [it], then I will give you thirty linen undergarments and thirty changes of clothes.

Then Samson said to them, “Please allow me to propose a riddle to you all. If you can clearly explain it to me by the end of these seven feast days, having discovered its meaning, then I will give you thirty linen undergarments and thirty changes of clothes.

Let’s look at what others have done, and then let’s delve into the Hebrew here:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And Samson said unto them, I pray you let me put you forth a riddle,—if ye tell it me within the seven days of the banquet and find it out then will I give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of rainment;...
NASB	Then Samson said to them, “Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes,...
<i>Young’s Lit. Translation</i>	And Samson saith to them, ‘Let me, I pray you, put forth to you a riddle; if ye certainly declare it to me <i>in</i> the seven days of the banquet, and have found <i>it</i> out, then ye have given to me thirty linen shirts, and thirty changes of garments;...

The first thing that Samson says is the 1st person, Qal imperfect of *chûwd* (חָוַד) [pronounced *khood*], which means *to propound a riddle, to put forth a riddle, to offer up a riddle, to propose an enigma, to set forth a parable*. Strong’s #2330 BDB #295. With this verb is the voluntative *hê*; that is, it ends with *âh*, not to indicate a feminine ending (although the meaning is similar), but this indicates that with the verb, we should have the additional words *let me, allow me to*. Surprisingly enough, I have found nothing concerning the voluntative *hê* in any of my reference books (Gibson, Mansoor, Zodhiates or Kelley), but Owen points it out again and again, and the many translators of Scripture go along with this. With this is the term of entreaty. What Samson will put forth to the thirty young men is the feminine singular noun *chîydâh* (חֵידָה) [pronounced *khee-DAWH*], which means *dark sayings, riddle, enigmatic or perplexing question or saying*. Strong’s #2420 (2330) BDB #295. Here we have the verb and its noun cognate together.

Then we have the Hiphil infinitive absolute of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to declare*. Strong’s #5046 BDB #616. This is followed by the Hiphil imperfect of the same verb. This is followed by the untranslated indication of a direct object and the feminine singular suffix, which refers back to *riddle*.

We have soon thereafter the Qal perfect of *mâtsâ`* (מָצָא) [pronounced *maw-TSAW*], which means *to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover*. Strong’s #4672 BDB #592. This also allows us to determine how the Hebrew mind thinks. We think in a time-linear fashion, and we would have stated that they first have to uncover or discover the riddle, and then explain it within the seven days of the feast. Samson first names what they have to do—explain the riddle, and then adds, as almost an afterthought, that they would first have to discover what it meant in the first place. What is important is that they verbally explain what the riddle is about; obviously this requires them to figure it out first. These riddles were apparently great sport at these protracted feasts.

²¹ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 296.

The bet would involve thirty *çâdîyn* (יִצְדִּי) [pronounced *saw-DEEN*], which means *linen undergarments*. These were the ancient world's equivalent of *underwear*. These are clothes which are worn next to the skin. Strong's #5466 BDB #690. The second item which would be a part of the betting scheme was thirty, and then we have the feminine plural construct of *chălîyphâh* (חַלְיָפָה) [pronounced *khă-lee-FAW*], which means *changes* [of clothes]. Strong's #2487 BDB #322. It is followed by the masculine plural noun *beged* (בְּגָדִים) [pronounced *BEH-ged*], which is a homonym; it means *treachery* on the one hand (Isa. 24:16) and *garment, clothing* on the other (Lev. 6:4 Judges 8:26). Strong's #899 BDB #93. Often silver and changes of clothing were provided as gifts in the ancient world (see Gen. 45:22 II Kings 5:22 Zech. 14:14).

“And if you [all] are not able to make [it] known to me and you [all] will give [even] you [all] to me thirty undergarments and thirty changes of clothes.” And so they said to him, “Propose your riddle and we will hear her.”

Judges
14:13

“And if you are unable to make [it] known to me, then you will give to me thirty undergarments and thirty changes of clothes.” So they said to him, “Propose your riddle so that we can hear it.”

“And if you are unable to explain the riddle to me, then you will give me thirty undergarments and thirty changes of clothes.” So they said, “Let’s hear your riddle so that we can solve it.”

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *yâkôl* (יָכַל) [pronounced *yaw-COAL*], which means *to be able, to have the ability, to have the power to*. Strong's #3201 BDB #407. It is preceded with a negative, and therefore means *unable to*. The second conjunction completes the *if...then...* statement. What they would be *unable* to do is the Hiphil infinitive construct of *nâgad* again; (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare*. Strong's #5046 BDB #616.

And so he said to them, “Out from the eater came food; and out from a strong one came sweet.” And they were not able to explain the riddle [for] three days.

Judges
14:14

Then he said to them, “Out from the eater came something to eat; and out from the strong one came [something] sweet.” And they were unable to explain the riddle [for] three days.

So he said to them, “Out from the eater came something to eat; and out from the strong one came something sweet.” And they were unable to explain this riddle for three days.

We have the *mîn* preposition (*out of, out from, away from*) used twice in this verse. After the first one, we have a definite article and the Qal active participle of *ʾâkal* (אָכַל) [pronounced *aw-KAHL*], which means *to eat*. However, it is often found used figuratively for *devour, consume, destroy*. Strong's #398 BDB #37. What came out is the masculine singular noun *maʾâkâl* (מַאֲכָל) [pronounced *maw-uh-KAWL*], which means *food*. You will notice that these two words are cognates of one another. Therefore, in order to carry on the poetic nature of this riddle, some have rendered this *out from the eater came something to eat*.

The next half of the riddle has the masculine singular adjective *ʿaz* (עָז) [pronounced *gahz*], and it means *strong, mighty, fierce*. When used alone, it behaves like a noun. Strong's #5794 BDB #738. What came out of the *strong one* is the masculine singular adjective *mâthôwq* (מֵתוֹק) [pronounced *maw-THOHK*], which means *sweetness, sweet, sweet* [thing]. Strong's #4966 BDB #608.

My only problem with this passage is the riddle itself. One would expect a riddle which others would actually know, given the time and the intelligence to think of it. These men here would have no way of knowing. The only thing that makes some sense is that the lion would have to be nearby (within a few miles) in order for Samson to support the explanation to the riddle. This would also, presumably, give some possible chance to the thirty men that one of them might have stumbled across this very unusual sight. In any case, this is obviously not the kind of riddle that we think of that any intelligent person can, apart from seeing the lion, come up with a solution for. However, Barnes

did tell us that folklore of that day ascribed the generation of bees to the carcass of an ox; this would indicate that this sort of thing did happen occasionally.

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Samson's Fiancee Is Threatened/Samson Reveals the Riddle to Her

And so he was in the day the fourth [seventh] and so they said to a wife of Samson, "Entice your man and he will make known to us the riddle lest we burn you and a house of your father in the fire. To our dispossession you called to us? Not?"

Judges
14:15

And so it was on the fourth day that they said to the wife of Samson, "Entice your husband and he will make the riddle known to us or else we will burn you and the house of your father in the fire. To impoverish us you invited us? Not? [or, "To impoverish us, you invited us here?"]"

On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband so that we will know the riddle, or else we will burn both you and your father's house with fire. Did you invite us here to dispossess us?"

What they are asking is actually easy to understand. The way it is phrased in the Hebrew is rather difficult, however. Therefore, let's see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And it came to pass on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may tell us the riddle, lest we burn thee and the house of thy father with fire. Was it not to impoverish us that ye invited us—was it not?
NAB	[After three days' failure to answer the riddle,] they said on the fourth day to Samson's wife, "Coax your husband to answer the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your family. Did you invite us here to reduce us to poverty?"
NASB	Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may tell us the riddle, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so?"
NKJV	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, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? <i>Is that not so?</i> "
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And it cometh to pass, on the seventh day, that they say to Samson's wife, 'Entice thy husband, that he declare to us the riddle, lest we burn thee and the house of they father with fire; to possess us have ye called for us? is it not?'

We begin with the wâw consecutive and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of the verb *to be*. We would be tempted to make *the fourth day* the subject, except that it is preceded by the bêyth preposition, which eliminates it from being the subject. Next we have *the day the seventh* in the Hebrew; it is *the fourth day* in the Syriac and Greek codices. What likely happened is a very tired scribe copied *the day the seventh* from either v. 12 or v. 17 and he never put two and two together. It doesn't make sense to say that these men were unable to answer the riddle for three days and then, on the seventh day, the very last day of the feast, their last day to give the answer, to approach Samson's bride on the matter. Therefore, *the fourth day* is the correct rendering. Barnes, on the other hand, suggests that there need not be a change here. In this verse, on the seventh day, these companions of the groom made a final threat against the family of the bride. In vv. 16–17, we have what happened prior to this final threat, indicating that they began to threaten her on the fourth day, culminating the this threat against her family on the final day of the wedding feast.

The first thing that they say to Samson's wife is the 2nd person feminine singular, Piel imperative of pâthâh (פָּתֵה) [pronounced *paw-THAW*], which means *to entice, to beguile, to deceive*. Strong's #6601 BDB #834. We find this verb used also in Ex. 22:16 Judges 16:5 I Kings 22:20 Psalm 78:36. *Who* she is to entice is the masculine singular noun ʾîysh (יִישׁ) [pronounced *eesh*], which means *man*. When found with a feminine singular suffix, it can

mean *husband*. Strong's #376 BDB #35. What follows is, literally: *...and so he will make know to us the riddle*. Obviously, she will not entice her husband and he will wander off to these men in a daze and give them the explanation of the riddle. He will explain it to her and she to them. In his making the riddle known to her, he will be making it known to them.

Now, in the English, we would give the *or else* using our conjunction *or*. They use the conjunction *pen* (פֶּן) [pronounced *pen*], which means *lest, peradventure, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that* [plus a negative]. Strong's #6435 BDB #814. This is followed by: *...we burn you and a house of your father in the fire*; which gives us: *And so he was in the day the fourth [seventh] and so they said to a wife of Samson, "Entice your man and he will make known to us the riddle lest we burn you and a house of your father in the fire..."* We only get hints here and there as to the great degeneracy of the Philistines—rather than give up one each a set of clothes, they threaten to burn this woman and her father's house alive. That is quite a price to exact in order to save themselves a little cash.

This was the easy part. The more difficult portion of this verse is the last sentence or two. The next phrase begins with the interrogative particle, the *lâmed* preposition, and the *Qal* infinitive construct with a 1st person plural suffix, of *yârash* (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*], which means *to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants, to inherit, to dispossess*. Strong's #3423 BDB #439. This is followed by the 2nd person masculine plural, *Qal* perfect of *qârâ'* (קָרָא) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*], which means *to call to, to summon, to assemble*. It was often used to assemble in order to hear God's Word. The connection is that they were called to in order to assemble. Strong's #7122 & 7125 BDB #896. This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition and the 1st person plural suffix. This gives us: "To our dispossession, you called to us? We have the interrogative particle again followed by a negative. BDB suggests that this is a disjunctive question which demands the answer *no*, but points out that this is a very rare use of the doubled interrogative particle.²² Let me suggest that the meaning is: "You didn't invite us to dispossess us, did you?" The answer demanded here is a *no*. I am thinking that the idea here is not an additional question but to indicate that surely the answer should be *no*. Let me add that the Hebrew text varies here—some of them end with the word *here* and others with *[was it] not?* With the word *here*, this would read: "To dispossess us have you invited us here?" This certainly makes the most sense and does not require us to deal with unusual Hebrew sentence constructions.

When someone desires to get you to do something which is wrong, they do not ask you to do that which is wrong outright. Sometimes they entice you or try to clothe it in such a way as to make it seem right. If convinced to steal by someone else, they may justify the stealing—i.e., they may claim that they are not stealing, but picking something up; they may justify it by claiming this person has too much or insurance will cover it; or claim that whatever company they are stealing from is immoral for some reason. Here, these men threaten her, but quickly add "You certainly didn't invite us here to impoverish us, did you?"

The motivation of the woman is easily explained. These thirty thugs have threatened to burn her and her father's house (which includes their family) with fire and the men justified this by indicating that this would cause them financial hardship in order to go along with this program and to give Samson these clothes. The thugs are also easy to explain—they feel as though they have been invited to this wedding feast simply to be plundered for clothes for Samson. Furthermore, they feel as one of their own countrymen, this woman and her family, set them up here. Therefore, what they threaten is not quite as heathenistic as it sounds at first.

And so wept a woman of Samson against him and so she said, "Only you hate me and you do not love me. The riddle you put forth to sons of my people and to me you have not made known." And so he said to her, "Behold, to my father and to my mother I have not made known and to you I should make known."

Judges
14:16

And so the wife of Samson wept before him and said, "Surely, you hate me and you do not love me. The riddle you put forth to my countrymen—to me, you have not explained [it]." Then he said to her, "Listen, to my [own] father and mother, I have not explained [it]; and I will make it known to you."

²² *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 210.

So then Samson’s wife began to weep in front of him, crying, “You do not love me, you hate me! You have riddled my countrymen and you have not even told me the meaning of the riddle.” Samson explained to her, “Listen, doll, I haven’t even told this to my parents; that’s why I haven’t told you.”

The first thing that Samson’s wife says is the adverb *raq* (רַק) [pronounced *rahk*] means *only, provided, altogether, surely*—it carries with it restrictive force. Strong’s #7534 & #7535 BDB #956. This helps to explain Samson’s answer. She feels as though she has been left out in the cold over this. Delilah will accuse him of the same thing in Judges 16:15.

The last line of this verse is a pisser; therefore, let’s just see what others have done with the last phrase of Samson’s:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Lo! to my own father and mother have I not told it, and to thee shall I tell it?
NASB	“Behold, I have not told <i>ti</i> to my father or mother; so should I tell you?”
<i>Young’s Lit. Translation</i>	‘Lo, to my father and to my mother I have not declared <i>it</i> —and to thee I declare <i>it!</i> ”

This verse obviously seems simple enough. The problem is that in the final phrase, Samson does not use an interrogative particle. We phrase a question by our vocal inflection; the Hebrews phrased the question via syntax and vocabulary. Therefore, I do not think that what we have here is a question (although we would probably phrase the same sentiment with a question). I think what we have instead is something of a sarcastic remark. We would use a question to express our sarcasm; Samson, however, was not asking a question—not even a rhetorical one—he was making a sarcastic remark. “I haven’t even told my parents, but I am going to tell you. Right; that’s going to happen.”

And so she wept against him seven of the days that were to them the feast and so he was in the day the seventh and so he made [it] known [to] her because she distressed him and so she made known the riddle to sons of her people.

Judges
14:17

So she wept before him [for] the [remaining] seven days that remained to them [of] the feast and it was on the seventh day that he explained [it] to her because she distressed him. Then she explained the riddle to her countrymen.

So she continued weeping in front of him for the remaining days of the feast and finally, on the seventh day, he explained the riddle to her, because she so distressed him. Then she explained the riddle to her countrymen.

We need to be clear that she did not distress him for seven days of the feast because that was the entirety of the feast time and the men came to her on the fourth day. She put operation distress into action on that fourth day and kept it up for the remaining 3–4 days of the feast. It was so difficult that it felt like all seven days of the feast. Although one could make a case for her crying all seven days, I think this makes more sense with her crying the last several days of the feast. When a woman turns on the tears for over 15 minutes, it seems like an eternity. Keil and Delitzsch explain that Samson’s fiancée would be pressuring him from the beginning to know the meaning of the riddle, just out of curiosity. Then, in the last few days, she turned up her persuasiveness a few notches, as now her life and the life of her family depended upon it. Delilah will do the exact same thing to Samson in Judges 16:16.

After the explanatory preposition, we have the 3rd person feminine singular, Hiphil perfect with a 3rd person masculine singular suffix of *tsûq* (צַוֶּק) [pronounced *tzook*], which, in the Hiphil, it means *to cause distress, to cause to be oppressed*. We found this verb back in Deut. 28:53, 55 and 57 when Moses was giving the blessings and the cursings. This verb was a part of the cursing when Israel’s enemies *oppressed* her. Strong’s #6693 BDB #847. As any man who has lived with a woman know, a woman can cast a pall of gloom over the entire proceedings of anything.

And so said to him men of the village in the day the seventh prior to going in the sun, “What [is] a sweet thing—from honey; and what [is] strong—from a lion.” And so he said to them, “Except that you plowed with my heifer you would not discover my riddle.”

Judges
14:18

And the men of the village said to him on the seventh day prior to the sun going down, “What [is] sweeter more than honey? Furthermore, what [is] stronger more than a lion?” And he said to them, “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have discovered my riddle.”

Right before the sun went down on the seventh day, the men of the village said to Samson, “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?”

He answered them, “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have figured out the riddle.”

Let’s first see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And the men of the city said to him, on the seventh day—ere yet the sun went in [or, ere yet he entered the (bridal) chamber] What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion? And he said to them: If ye had not ploughed with my heifer Ye had not found out my riddle!
NASB	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?” And he said to them, “If you had now plowed with my heifer, You would not have found out my riddle.”
REB	So on the seventh day the men of the city said to Samson just before he entered the bridal chamber: ‘What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?’ He replied, ‘If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle.’
<i>Young’s Lit. Translation</i>	And the men of the city say to him on the seventh day, before the sun goeth in:— ‘What is sweeter than honey? And what stronger than a lion?’ And he saith to them: ‘Unless ye had ploughed with my heifer, Ye had not found out my riddle.’

After *in the day the seventh*, we have the bēyth preposition and the adverb of time, ṭerem (טָרֵם) [pronounced *TEH-rem*], which means *not yet, before that*. Strong’s #2962 (and #2958) BDB #382. With the bēyth preposition, it means *before that, previously, prior to*. Then we have the very common verb, the Qal imperfect of bōw’ (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. Strong’s #935 BDB #97. This verb is used often with the sun; we say that the sun *goes down*; the people of the ancient world said the sun *goes in*. Obviously, neither saying is precise from a scientific standpoint.

You will note that the REB has a completely different phrase. There is no *sun* and it is not going anywhere. They speak to Samson immediately prior to his going into the bridal chambers to consummate his marriage. It was Gesenius who suggested that this could also be read: *ere yet he entered the (bridal) chamber*.²³ In either case, whether the sun was going down or whether he was about to enter into the bridal chamber, this was at the last minute—the bet was almost up. Samson is about to enter into the bridal chambers with great anticipation. His bride-to-be has stopped bitching about the riddle thing and he is about to spend the first night with his love, and suddenly, his world comes crashing down when these men explain his riddle.

What the men say begins with an interrogative particle and then the masculine singular adjective māthōwq (מָתוֹךְ) [pronounced *maw-THOHK*], which means *sweetness, sweet, sweet [thing]*. Strong’s #4966 BDB #608. Then we have the mīn preposition, which generally means *out, out from, away from*; here, it is used in its comparative sense, so it means *more than, above, beyond*. Strong’s #4480 BDB #577. They give their answer as if they had stumbled upon it. However, Samson knew immediately that they got the answer through his fiancée and that she had betrayed him.

²³ Joseph Bryant Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 276. I don’t know that there is any reason to have a different translation here.

Samson first uses the conjunction *lûlêy* (לִּלְיִ) [pronounced *loo-LAY*], which means *otherwise, except that, if not, unless*. Strong's #3884 BDB #530. The first verb he uses is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal perfect of *chârash* (חָרַשׁ) [pronounced *chaw-RAHSH*], which means, in prose, *to cut in, to engrave, to plough*. Strong's #2790 BDB #361. Samson speaks almost poetically, as they spoke to him. "Had you not plowed with my heifer, you would have not found out my riddle." *Heifer* refers here to Samson's wife; and this is an interesting play on words; as heifers are not used for plowing.

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The Epilogue to the Riddle and to Samson's Marriage

And so came upon him a Spirit of Y^howah and he went down to Ashkelon and so he killed from them thirty men and so he took their spoil and so he gave the changes to solvers of the riddle and so he went up in his anger to a house of his father.

Judges
14:19

Then the Spirit of Y^howah came upon him and he went down to Ashkelon and killed from them thirty men. Then he took their spoil and gave the changes [of clothing] to the ones who solved the riddle. Then he went up in anger to his father's house.

Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty men. He then took their clothing and gave it to the ones who solved the riddle. Then he went up in anger to his father's house.

I must admit that as I read this, this is becoming more and more my least favorite Bible story. The translation of this verse by others:

The Emphasized Bible And the Spirit of Yahweh came suddenly over him and he went down to Ashkelon and smote of them thirty men and took their garments, and gave the changes [of rainment] to them who had told the riddle, —and his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

NASB Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil, and gave the changes of *clothes* to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

Young's Lit. Translation And the Spirit of Jehovah prospereth over him, and he goeth down to Ashkelon, and smiteth of them thirty men, and taketh their armour, and giveth the changes to those declaring the riddle; and his anger burneth, and he goeth up to the house of his father;...

What we have here is unusual, but we have to keep in mind that Samson did this being led by the Spirit of God. Therefore, the randomness of the thirty men which he killed was not as random as it appears. This is obviously not the passage that you want to teach to a nut job who thinks God is leading him to do bizarre things. Samson was chosen from the womb to begin to lead Israel to independence from Philistia. This was not a responsibility that Samson really paid much attention to. In fact, here is he is, trying to marry a daughter of the enemy. God had a purpose for Samson and much of that purpose involved a serious confrontation between him and the Philistines. God made certain that the Philistines could not peacefully coexist with the Israelites. The wedding and the riddle, which resulted in Samson going to Ashkelon, was the first step in a mutual animosity which would eventually result in the death of Samson and hundreds of Philistines. Although, what leads Samson originally to Ashkelon was pretty much lacking in nobility; the eventual result—an incurable enmity between Samson and the Philistines—was what God had planned. The Philistines who died in this raid were not randomly chosen—God the Holy Spirit led Samson.

One of the oddest things in Scripture is the association between Samson and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned seven times in the book of Judges (3:10 6:34 11:29 13:25 14:6, 19 15:14), and four of these times the Holy Spirit compels or comes upon Samson, who is the last judge that you would ever expect to find associated with the Holy Spirit. God used Samson primarily as an answer to the prayer of Samson's father, Manoah. Samson was immoral, crafty, self-centered, petty, vindictive and lacking in personal character. What you should understand

is that, if God can use Samson, He certainly can use you. Samson is one of the last people on earth that you would ever associate with God's power and God's plan, yet God used him. There is a possible difference, and an extremely important one. It is not clear whether Samson's volition played a part in the empowering of the Holy Spirit, apart from Judges 15:14. However, it is important for us to understand that our volition is crucial in our spiritual lives. At whatever point we screw up, that is when we name our sins to God and then move on. Once we name our sins to God, God the Holy Spirit fills us and we are functioning in the spiritual life again. You may doubt that and either distort or question the power of God's Holy Spirit. However, even Samson is named in the great chapter, Heb. 11—that is grace.

Ashkelon is one of the five famous cities of the Philistines, and it is on the shore of the Mediterranean in the southern portion of Judah, just north of Gaza (the southernmost city of Philistia). Ashkelon is mentioned in two of the Amarna letters as well as *in certain execration texts from the 12th dynasty of Egyptian Middle Kingdom; the name is written in hieratic characters and scratch on a small figurine, probably representing the local ruler who was thus to be rendered hapless before Egyptian might through the ritual smashing of his figurine.*²⁴ The city seemed to be under the control of the Egyptians at times; however, by the time of Joshua, this city was clearly under the control of the Indo-European Philistines, who were a Greek people. They remained in control up until the time of the monarchy in Israel. You will recall from our study of Judges 1, the Massoretic text claims that Israel captured the five cities of the Philistines (including Ashkelon); however, the Septuagint says just the exact opposite. Then v. 19 appears to confirm the negative, despite the fact that most translations follow the MT at this point (NASB, Young, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NJB). Several prophets spoke against Ashkelon (Jer. 25:20 47:5–6 Amos 1:8 Zeph. 2:4, 7 Zech. 9:5). Ashkelon would eventually be conquered by Sennacherib of the Assyrians in 701 B.C. At that time, he would haul off into slavery the king of Ashkelon, Sidka, Puppet rulers would then be put on the throne of Ashkelon, who would send tribute to Sennacherib and his successors, Esarhaddon (677 B.C.) and then Ashurbanipal (677 B.C.). Ashkelon still had a history after this, and we will cover that at a later time.

Samson, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, marched into Ashkelon and killed thirty men and took their changes of clothing and gave them to the thirty men who declared the riddle to him. Then, rather than return to his wife, whom he felt betrayed him, he returned to his father's house. His anger was not toward the Philistines, necessarily, but toward his fiancée.

There is a key to understanding these few chapters of Judges and to understanding God's choice of Samson. First of all, you must understand that with any judge, they are men who have free will. Even when controlled by the Spirit of God, a man is not a pre-programmed robot. So, as goofy as Samson may seem at times, that is his character and God allows for him to be who he is. So, you may ask, *why didn't God simply choose someone else who is an actual military leader?* And this is a fair question. However, bear in mind that God uses all kinds of men, and even though we are used to a man assuming a position of commander of the army of Israel, that does not mean that is the only approach that God can take. God is not a one-trick pony. Secondly, it is possible that Samson was all that God had to work with in his generation. There may not have been a general for God to raise up. Recall that God works with who is available. He doesn't manufacture a great general out of a rock to deliver Israel. He shapes these men according to what He can without violating their free will. However, here is the key to the use of Samson. The Philistines are thorns in the side of Israel. They are always there and they continually are an irritant. Samson behaves the same way. He becomes a thorn in the side of Philistia. What God gives the Philistines is a taste of their own medicine. They are thorns in the side of Israel; therefore, God raises up a Jew to be a thorn in their side.

This is the key to understanding God's choice of Samson as the deliverer of Israel: The Philistines...are thorns in the side of Israel; therefore, God raises up a Jew to be a thorn in their side.

²⁴ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 356. The figurine would be circa 1800 B.C. and the Amarna letters circa 1400–1350 B.C.

And so was a woman of Samson to his companion who [was] a companion to him.

Judges
14:20

So Samson's fiancée was to his companion, who [was] his best man.

Also, Samson's fiancée became the wife of his close friend, the best man.

So that we grasp that Samson does not go through with his marriage, we have this final verse of this chapter. The person that his woman weds is the masculine singular of *mêrêa* (מֵרֵעָא) [pronounced *may-RAY-ahg*], which means *companion, confidential friend*. Strong's #4828 BDB #946. We find the same noun used in v. 11. Then we have the relative pronoun and the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect of *râ'âh* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-ÇAW*], which means *to be a friend, to be a companion, to be a best man*. We find this used only here in Scripture in the Piel. Elsewhere, in the Qal, it means *to feed, to shepherd*. In fact, BDB, treats it as three separate verbs. Strong's #7462 BDB #946. This is probably the same *friend of the bridegroom* as we find in John 3:29 (John 3:28–29 is John the Baptist speaking: “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah’, but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom [i.e., the best man], who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And as this joy of mine has been made full.”).

Since there is no mention of Samson bringing along a mate, more than likely, one of the thirty men took his wife in marriage. Barnes sums things up by saying, *It should be noted carefully that the practical lesson against ungodly marriages comes out most strongly in this case and that the providential purpose which out of this evil brought discomfiture to the Philistines, has nothing to do with the right or wrong of Samson's conduct.*²⁵

The next chapter will give us the result of all of this—there will be continued animosity between Samson and the Philistines and several people will end up as casualties. Samson will rethink his marriage and go back to claim this woman; however, he will find out then that she has been given away.

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²⁵ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 453.