
Judges 15

Judges 15:1–20

Animosity Between Samson and the Philistines Continues

Outline of Chapter 15:

- vv. 1–8 **Samson does not get his wife back so he takes it out on the Philistines**
- vv. 9–13 **The Judæans hand Samson over to the Philistines**
- vv. 14–17 **Samson kills 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass**
- vv. 18–20 **Samson establishes a relationship with God**

Charts:

Introduction: Samson was chosen by God to begin to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the Philistines. Judges 15 is a continuation of that struggle between Samson and the Philistines. Samson acted like a one-man army, causing both consternation to Judah and to Philistia. It began as a simple tit for tat and escalated from there. Samson simply did not like the way things were going and he took it out on the Philistines. This is one of the strangest examples of *all things work together for good to those who love God*. God takes Samson and his petulant fits and actually uses this against the Philistines. Apart from what we know of history, it would appear that Samson was the villain and the Philistines were the good guys.

In more detail: Samson thinks about this woman situation and decides, apparently, that he forgives his fiancée. So, he slaughters a goat and hauls it down to her father's house to make amends. Unfortunately, she has been given away (although his father-in-law-to-be offers him the younger daughter. We don't hear anything of a response. Samson decides to take his anger out on the Philistines, so he sets fire to some of their vineyards and groves. The Philistines are understandably upset, but, rather than deal with Samson directly, they burn down the home of his ex-fiancée and her father (with them in it). This gives us a clue as to how cold-blooded the Philistines are. Samson goes on a one-man killing spree, although we do not know how many Philistines that he kills. Then he hides out in the cleft of a rock.

The Philistines move into position into Judah, causing the Judæans to become agitated at Samson. Israel does not have the guts at this time to fight for independence; Israel was willing to allow the Philistines to rule over them and they were also willing to give up Samson in order to preserve whatever peace they could. They deliver Samson over to the Philistines and suddenly, the Spirit of God takes over Samson, giving him great strength, and he kills, in a rather short period of time, 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

You will note that Samson acts alone against the Philistines. Throughout the book of Judges, we have a variety of men who deliver Israel, but what stands behind them is an Israelite army. Not so with Samson. The only Israelites army that he comes in contact with are 3000 Judæans who tie him up in order to deliver him over to the Philistines. In other words, despite his immaturity and self-centeredness (which God will not let go unpunished), Samson stands alone against the Philistines, which is a testimony to his great strength in God the Holy Spirit.

I hesitate to say the following, because there is always that psycho looking for light at the end of the tunnel, but there are times when we will feel as though we are the only ones, as though we are the only ones to acts in accordance with God's will. All of the Christians that you know will have no interest in God's Word, they will lead lives of immorality, they will do things which are in direct opposition to God's Word. This will not mean that you are the only one who is faithful, but it will just appear to be that way in your immediate periphery. If you have to take a stand, then take a stand in God the Holy Spirit guided by His Word. Don't be like Samson, who, although he does take a position against evil, he takes it from a position of self-centeredness.

What happens at the end of the chapter is the most significant and the most overlooked. Samson, up until this point, does not seem to have a direct dependence upon God—at least in his own mind. Finally, for the first time in the three chapters that we have studied, Samson calls upon God to save him from dying of thirst. God does and Samson acknowledges it. This is one of Samson’s shining moments.

In fact, I ought to point this out here: there are several things in this chapter that no expositor, to the best of my knowledge, has ever correctly explained or understood. Some of it is hidden barely under the surface in the Hebrew; other aspects of this chapter could be understood, even in the English, but no one, to the best of my knowledge, has ever taken the time to properly unearth them before. Now, I am not going to reveal any earth-shaking new doctrines here; but I will properly explain some passages which you have never heard correctly explained before.

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Samson Does Not Get His Wife Back So He Takes it out on the Philistines

Slavishly literal:

And so he was from days in days of a harvest of wheat [stalks]: and so visited Samson his woman with a kid of the goats. And so, he said, "I will go in unto my woman [in] the chamber." And would not grant him her father to go in.

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Moderately literal:

And it was after some time, in the time of the wheat harvest that Samson visited his bride [-to-be] with a kid of the goats. And so he said, "I will go in unto my wife to her private room." And her father would not permit him to go in.

Sometime later, during the time of the wheat harvest, Samson visited his fiancée carrying a young goat for a barbeque. He thought to himself, "I'll go right into her private room." Her father would not let him enter into her room.

After the words *and he was*, we have a phrase which shows up several times in the book of the Judges: *mîyyâmîym* (מִיָּמִים) [pronounced *mee-yaw-MEEM*], which is the combination of the *mîn* preposition (*from, out from*) and the plural of the word for *days*. Together, they mean *some while after, some time later*. This phrase occurs in Judges 11:4 14:8 15:1 and possibly nowhere else. There is no indication that this means more or less than a year. *Mîn* = Strong's #4480 BDB #577. *Yâmîym* = Strong's #3117 BDB #398. This is followed by the construct phrase *in days*; which is properly rendered *in the days of, during the time of, at the time of*. The concept here refers to a *particular* time. *Bêyth* has no Strong's # BDB #88. What follows is the plural of *chîṭṭâh* (חִטָּה) [pronounced *kheet-TAW*], which means *wheat*. Since it is in the plural, we might want to render it *wheat stalks*. Strong's #2406 BDB #334. What we have in this first phrase is simply a period setting or a time frame during which to place these incidents. It is not connected grammatically to the rest of the sentence. This puts us at the end of May or the beginning of June. We then have the *wâw* consecutive, which, when it follows a setting of the time, can be rendered *that*, where the time of the action has been established.

What Samson did was the Qal imperfect of *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*], which means, in the Qal, *to go to a person, to visit a person, to commit, to charge to the care of, to fall upon, to attack*. The key is personal contact and the context determines whether this should be taken in a positive or a negative sense. Strong's #6485 BDB #823.

Samson obviously does not realize that his betrothed has been given to another man under the *you snooze, you loose rule* (please understand that Samson had no understanding at all of *right man-right woman*). Therefore, in thinking it over, he decides that he ought to go back to her and he brings along a kid in order to have a barbeque and win her heart back, seeing that he did so well with the barbeque scene in the previous chapter.

Sometimes you have to read the commentaries that you have with a smile. The NIV Study Bible reads: *such a gift was customary, as with Judah and Tamar (Ge. 38:17).*¹ In case you didn't follow the story in Gen. 38, Judah thinks he is sleeping with a whore and the *kid* is the price that he has agreed to.²

Where he intends to go is to the masculine singular of *cheder* (חֵדֶר) [pronounced *KHEH-dehr*], which means *chamber, room, private room*. Recall that we saw this word before in Judges 3:24 when we were speaking of the *rec-room* or *private office* of fat king Eglon. Here, it refers to the private bedroom of his betrothed. Strong's #2315 (and #2316) BDB #293. Affixed to this word is the *hê locale*, which answers the question *where?* We can also indicate the existence of the *hê directional* by supplying the prepositions *to* or *toward*.

She apparently is still living at her father's home, and she does have a private room with her new husband or their marriage just has not been consummated yet, which is more likely the scenario. In any case, her father meets Samson first. It reads: *And did not grant him her father to go in.*

It is rather simple. Her father really never expected to see Samson again, nor did his fiancée. Furthermore, Samson's fiancée must have felt badly, or at least had mixed emotions; however, she does turn around and marry (or, become engaged to) one of the men who threatened her. We don't know any of the specifics here; we don't know if there was some quick improvisation on the part of her father at the end of the wedding feast after Samson left in a huff. Nor do we know how much the threats were smoothed over. And, considering that there were thirty men, not all of them would have had to verbally make the threat, thus making it easier for her to forgive a man who did not actually speak. In fact, the woman may not have had a say in whom she married at all. Obviously, the father never received wind of these threats so he had no problem with his daughter marrying one of the best men. In fact, that was probably his preference.³

And so said her father, "A saying I said that hating you hated her and so I gave her to your companion. [Is] not her sister—the younger—beautiful from her? She is, please, to you instead of her."

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Then her father said, "I definitely said you definitely hated her, so I gave her to your bridegroom. Isn't her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please, she [the younger sister] is yours instead of her [the former fiancée]."

Then her father said, "I most assuredly thought that you absolutely hated her, so I gave her to one of your best men. Besides, isn't her younger sister more attractive? You may marry her younger sister instead, if you would."

The father of Samson's fiancée appears to be thrown into a tizzy. Seeing Samson got him rather nervous and what he says seems to indicate that. We find the verb *to say* twice in what he says, first in the Qal infinitive absolute and then in the 1st person singular, Qal perfect. Then he uses the Qal infinitive absolute of *to hate* followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect. I picture this as being rehearsed and nervous on the part of the father. He always knew that Samson might return; he may or may not have known that Samson went down and killed 30 Philistines in order to make good on his bet; but in seeing Samson, he is intimidated. Probably for sometime, he had rehearsed what he would say if Samson ever showed up at his door. The use of the Qal infinitive absolutes

¹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 349.

² I don't mean to chide the NIV Study Bible; Barnes said essentially the same thing.

³ On the other hand, we don't know if he felt bullied at this point either. What went on there, although we have the facts, is a rather incomplete picture of the human drama which took place. There is a reason for this. When a person writes an historical document based upon his own experiences, he does not record that which he does not see. Samson would have been in no position to observe what happened after he left. He would have found out at the door that his betrothed married another, and that is the information which he includes. He may have been given some song and dance by the father as to *why* his fiancée so quickly married someone else, but God the Holy Spirit did not see fit to record that, as the full story given Samson by the father was probably so much crap anyway. Therefore, what is recorded is a direct quote, rather than a representation of what happened exactly.

tends to emphasize the action of the verbs as more definite and final. Also, it sounded better to the father to say that he gave his daughter to *Samson's* companion, even though these men were not his buds. Let me show you how others rendered what the father said to Samson:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	I thought that thou didst hate her, so I gave her to thy companion, —Is not her younger sister fairer than she? Pray let her be thine in her stead.
NASB	“I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful [lit., better] than she? Please let her be yours instead [lit., instead of her].”
REB	‘I was sure that you were really hostile to her, so I gave her in marriage to your groomsman. Her young sister is better than she is—take her instead.’
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	I certainly said, that thou didst certainly hate her, and I give her to thy companion; is not her sister—the young one—better than she? Let her be, I pray thee, to thee, instead of her.’

In comparing the women, the father first refers to her sister as the feminine singular adjective *qâṭân* (קָטָן) [pronounced *kaw-TAWN*], which means *small, young, unimportant*. Strong's #6996 BDB #881. We often render this as a comparative, but it just indicates that there is a younger sister who remains unmarried.

Then we have the adjective *ṭôw^bv* (טוֹב) [pronounced *toe^bv*], which means *pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good*. Strong's #2896 BDB #373. It is followed by the *mîn* preposition and 3rd person feminine singular, which sets up a comparative. In English, we see the comparative adverb first, and then the adjective; here, we have the adjective first, and then the preposition which indicates we are looking at a comparative.

We have an interesting use of the particle of entreaty here. The woman's father is not begging Samson to *please, please, please* take his other daughter; he is offering her to Samson, and the particle of entreaty recognizes Samson's volition in this matter. The essence of his remark is more *“Take her younger sister, if you would so choose.”* Strong's #4994 BDB #609.

This man obviously does not want trouble. Very likely, Samson made him feel rather uneasy, if they were adversaries. The father would feel much safer if he and Samson were linked through marriage. He apparently does not dislike Samson (or, he is intimidated by him) and has no problem with a mixed marriage (this was apparently less of an issue to the Canaanites and Philistines than it was to the Israelites). The father had already negotiated a dowry price and had probably already received it and it was in his possession. In any case, Samson appears to ignore this question, and puts his energy into doing something else.

And so said to them Samson, “I am acquitted the time from a Philistines when doing I with them hurt.”

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Then Samson said to them, “I am more blameless than Philistines this time when I do them harm.”

Then Samson said to them, “I will be less guilty than the Philistines this time with the harm that I will bring upon them.”

Samson was obviously met at the door by more than just the father. When he speaks, Samson doesn't speak to *him* but to *them*, which is the rest of the household, who stood with the father. He is obviously a little pissed off and he throws in a lot of words quickly.

First, here is what Samson said, according to other translators:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	I shall be more blameless this time than the Philistines, —though I should do them a mischief.
NASB	“This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	‘I am more innocent this time than the Philistines, though I am doing with them evil.’

Samson first uses the Piel perfect of *nâqâh* (נָקַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*], which means *to be cleansed, to be acquitted, to be declared innocent* in the Piel stem. Strong #5352 BDB #667. Then we have the definite article and the feminine singular noun *pâ'am* (פַּאֵם) [pronounced *PAW-gahm*], which means *beat, foot, anvil, occurrence, time*. Then connection here is that you have a succession of events which indicates that time is passing. For us and the movies for many years, it was the ticking of a clock. For the ancients, it might be the sound of footsteps or horse clomps or the banging of an anvil. Strong's #6471 BDB #821. The definite article acts like our demonstrative adjective in this case.

Mîn is used as a comparative here again, after which follows the plural adjective gentilic *Philistines*. This is followed by the very common conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. This is followed by the Qal active participle of *to do*, then the 1st person pronoun, the phrase *with them*. What Samson planned to do to them was the feminine singular of *râ'a'* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-GAHG*], which does not mean *mischief*; it means *to be evil, bad, displeasing, morally reprehensible*. The masculine noun appears to refer to something which is morally wrong, whereas the feminine here refers to something which is a physical evil—a *calamity, a distress, or hurt*. Strong's #7489 BDB #949. I don't find a lot about Samson very noble so far. He is going to behave like a petulant child who did not get his way and people are going to pay. A few weeks ago, he wanted to marry this woman, despite the wishes of his parents. Then he didn't want to marry her, and did not appear to be interested in the least as to her explanation as to what happened. Now, he has thought things over and decided, "What the hell, she's a babe; I'll marry her." Now, when he finds out that this is no longer an option, he is really pissed off. The Philistines apparently pressured her for the information (we don't know what Samson knew at this time); they beat him at his stupid riddle, so now he is going to make them feel a little hurt. On the one hand, you would think that God could have found someone—anyone else—in Israel, who would have been more noble and dedicated. However, God uses all kinds of people, which we personally should find very reassuring.

Now, Samson is speaking to Philistines right here—this is perhaps not the smartest thing in the world. Certainly the fiancée and possibly her husband (or, fiancée) are there, and we do not know how many others. However, Samson here makes some vague threats (at this point in time, he probably doesn't know what he plans on doing).

Now, I want you to understand Samson's reasoning here (you don't have to agree with it). Previously, he was united in marriage (or, about to be united in marriage) to this family. Therefore, he could get away with fleecing the thirty men, but that was pushing it. He could not very well kill the thirty men at the wedding supper—it just would have been bad protocol. However, Samson did not have a problem with heading over to Ashkelon and killing thirty other Philistines, and taking their clothing to fulfill his obligation to these thirty men. However, he now feels as though he has been betrayed by the Philistines in general, and feels as though taking a little vengeance is in order. In fact, when it comes to vengeance, he is probably thinking specifically of these thirty men.

Also notice—Samson does not appear to be directly angry at the father of his former fiancée (contrary to what Keil and Delitzsch claim). He is pissed off with the Philistines in general and with thirty of them in particular. All of the thirty put pressure on his fiancée to solve the riddle, and then one of them marries his fiancée. In other words, Samson has animosity toward a few Philistines which he, because of this incident and probably others unknown to us, attributes to the Philistines in general. Therefore, his anger will be toward the Philistines in his immediate periphery. Vowing revenge in front of these Philistines is how they figured out who burned down their fields (which is coming in the next few verses).

And so went Samson and so he captured three hundred jackals and so he took torches and so turned tail unto tail and so placed a torch one between two the tails in the middle.

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So Samson went and captured three hundred jackals and he took torches and turned [the jackals] tail to tail and placed a torch—one in the middle between the two tails.

Then Samson went out and captured 300 jackals. Then turned the jackals back to back and attached a torch between each pair of jackals to the two tails.

You have got to hand it to Samson; he is, if nothing else, imaginative. The verb before *tail* is the Qal imperfect of pânâh (פָּנָה) [pronounced paw-NAWH], which means *to turn, to turn away from, to turn toward*. Strong's #6437 BDB #815.

The torches here were unlit and exactly how they were attached to the tails is not given. Apparently, the tails were not tied together, but somehow the tail was attached to a torch and that was attached to another torch. Why one torch per animal was not done is not explained. My guess is that when the torch was lit, the foxes ran in opposite directions from the flame, which kept the torch up. They did eventually move, and more or less in unison, but this probably kept the torch off the ground. This gives a whole new meaning to *here come the foxes*.

Actually, the word is shûw'âl (שׁוּׁאֵל) [pronounced shoo-GAWL], which either means *foxes* or *jackals* or both. BDB seems to think this refers to *foxes* in Neh. 3:25 and SOS 2:15 and that it refers to *jackals* in Judges 15:4 Psalm 63:11 Ezek. 13:4 Lam. 5:18. Strong's #7776 BDB #1043. Both foxes and jackals exist in large numbers during that time even to recent times.⁴ This is attested to by the fact that we find this name used for the proper name of cities (see Joshua 15:28 19:4 I Sam. 13:17). According to Keil and Delitzsch, some Arab groups today still classify *jackals* and *foxes* together and says that these animals group together and are easily captured in large numbers.⁵ The cities mentioned are in the vicinity of the Philistines.

Barnes: *Ovid relates a very curious custom at Rome of letting loose foxes with lighted torches fastened to their tails in the circus at the Cerealia, in commemoration of the damage once done to the standing corn by a fox which a rustic had wrapped in hay and straw and set on fire, and which, running away, put the corn-fields in a blaze. This custom, which may have had a Phœnician origin, is a curious illustration of the narrative.*⁶

And so he burned a fire in the torches and so he sent [them] out into standing grain of Philistines and so he burned up from stacks [of grain] and as far as standing grain and as far as an orchard of olive.

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So he burned a fire in the torches and sent [them] out into the standing grain [fields] of the Philistines, and [as a result], he burned stacks [of harvested grain], grain [still to be harvested] and olive orchards.

Then Samson set fire to the torches, and released the foxes into the grain fields of the Philistines. As a result, he burnt up both harvested and unharvested grain as well as several olive orchards.

What he did was the Hiphil imperfect of bâ'ar (בָּעַר) [pronounced baw-YAHR], which, in the Qal, clearly means *to burn* (Ex. 3:5 Num. 11:1). The Hiphil is the causative stem—generally speaking, when a person is causing something to burn, the Hiphil is used; when the object itself is said to burn, the Qal is used (the Piel is a whole different story). Strong's #1197 BDB #128.

Where Samson directs the foxes is feminine plural construct of qâmâh (קָמָה) [pronounced kaw-MAW], which means *standing grain, standing corn, stalks of grain prior to maturity and prior to harvesting*. Strong's #7054 BDB #879. What he burned up was the masculine singular of gâdîysh (גַּדִּישׁ) [pronounced gaw-DEESH], which means *stacks, heaps* [of grain or corn]. This noun is only found in Ex. 22:6 Judges 15:5 Job 5:26 21:32. Strong's #1430 BDB #155. This fire of course took out the grain fields themselves and also burned the masculine singular construct of kerem (כֶּרֶם) [pronounced keh-REM], which means *vineyard, orchard*. Strong's #3754 BDB #501. This is an orchard of the masculine singular of zayith (זַיִת) [pronounced ZAH-yeeth], which means *olive, olive tree*. Strong's #2132 BDB #268. Just as this does not necessarily only refer to one olive tree, the

⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 454 and *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 349.

⁵ References for both of these assertions are found in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 298. Now, just how easy it is to capture 300 foxes (or, jackals), we don't really know. However, as other expositors have pointed out in the past—if Samson can kill a thousand men using the jawbone of an ass for a weapon, then surely he can capture 300 foxes.

⁶ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 454.

orchard is not necessarily only one orchard. Some translations render this as *vineyards and olive orchards*; however, there is no *wâw* conjunction here. There is a conjunction in the Greek Septuagint, however. These words are found together in Deut. 6:11, Joshua 24:13, I Sam. 8:14 and Neh. 9:25, both in the plural and with a *wâw* conjunction. This is the only passage where we have a *vineyard of the olive*, which is why many translators go with *vineyards and olive orchards*. However, we do not have an alternate Hebrew phrase for *olive orchard* or *orchard of the olive*; therefore, there is no problem with the Hebrew as it stands.

Connecting these nouns are the prepositions *mîn* (מִן) and *ʿad* (עַד). Our understanding of these together would be *from...to* or *both...and*; as in *from soup to nuts* or *both young and old*. *Min* (מִן) = Strong's #4480 BDB #577 and *ʿad* (עַד) = Strong's #5704 BDB #723.

Now, it should be obvious that Samson did not burn all of the fields and orchards of the Philistines nor did he just burn down one of each. The Hebrew singular without the definite article allows for these words to stand for groups of fields. What Samson did affected more than just one Philistine farmer and his field. This would have occurred at the end of a long, dry season, making these fields particularly vulnerable to a fire.

McGee: *He caught three hundred foxes, tied their tails together and then tied a torch on the tails, set them on fire, and let the animals loose in the fields. Of course these foxes would really take out on a run, and they would scatter the firebrands everywhere. Actually, friends, this entire episode is like a prank a juvenile would play! Samson certainly doesn't look like god's man here!*⁷

And so said Philistines, “Who did this?” And so they said, “Samson, son-in-law of the Timnite because he took his woman and so he gave her to his companion.” And so went up Philistines and so they burned her and [a house of] her father in fire.

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So the Philistines said, “Who did this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his [Samson's] woman and gave her to his companion.” Therefore, the Philistines went up and burned her and her father with fire.

A large group of Philistines discussed this saying, “Who did this?” Others answered, “Samson, who was going to be the son-in-law of the Timnite. Samson did it because her father gave her to his best man.” Therefore, they went up to Timnah and burned both her and her father.

The verb for *burn* in this verse is different. It is the Qal imperfect of *sâraph* (סָרַף) [pronounced *saw-RAHF*], which means *to burn*. Strong's #8313 BDB #976. Although the Massoretic text reads that they burn *her and her father*, the Septuagint, the Syriac and one early printed edition reads *her and the house of her father*. Very likely, *her father* is a metonym for *the house of her father*, which included both her and her father. Recall that this is the threat that the thirty Philistines had made against the woman if she did not entice Samson to reveal the meaning of the riddle to her (Judges 14:15).

It is with this verse that we get a better feel for the character of these Philistines. In the problem cited, this man and his daughter really are not the cause. However, this is a quick, cowardly and vicious way to gain some revenge—the Philistines in cold-blood burn him and his daughter alive (we can assume that the remainder of the family was burned up as well). There are times in the Bible where what and who is wrong is very subtly brought out. This verse by itself is a clue as to how degenerate and unfeeling the Philistines were.

And so said to them Samson, “If you [all] do as this because if I avenge [myself] against you [all] and after I will quit.”

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15:7

Then Samson said to them, “Since you do as this, for if I avenge [myself] against you then afterward, I will cease.”

Then Samson said to them, “Since this is your behavior, then I will take my vengeance out on you, and then I will cease.”

⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 194–195.

This verse is a bit difficult in the Hebrew, so let's start with variations of what Samson actually said:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	If this is the way you do, surely I will take revenge on you, and after that I will quit.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Though ye do the like of this yet will I be avenged upon you and afterwards will I cease.
Keil and Delitzsch	"If you do these things, I will not cease till I have taken vengeance upon you." ⁸
NASB	"Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I will quit."
NIV	"Since you've acted like this, I won't stop until I get my revenge on you."
The Septuagint	"Though you [all] may have dealt thus with her, verily I will be avenged of you, and afterwards I will cease."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	'Though ye do thus, nevertheless I am avenged on you, and afterwards I cease!'

Samson begins with the hypothetical particle *ʾim* (אִם) [pronounced *eem*], which means *if*. It occurs twice in this verse. *ʾim* can almost mean *when, since, though* when (or, if) followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event. Strong's #518 BDB #49. However, we are not followed by a perfect, but a Qal imperfect of *to do*, which is followed by *as this*, which refers to the action of the Philistines in burning down the house of the father and daughter. Then we have the conjunction *kîy* and then *ʾim* again (אִם כִּי) [pronounced *kee-eem*] which literally is *because if*; however, together they act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered *but, except, unless* and possibly *only*. Strong's #3588 & 518 BDB #471 & 49.

You may be wondering *to whom is Samson speaking?* The verb helps us out. It is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *to do*. He is speaking to some of the Philistines who actually burned the house of his fiancée and her father. It appears as though, looking at the next verse, that he is speaking directly to the perpetrators rather than through a messenger.

Then Samson uses the Niphal perfect of *nâqam* (נָקַם) [pronounced *naw-KAHM*], which means *to avenge, to take vengeance*. In the Niphal, it means *to avenge oneself*. Strong's #5358 BDB #667.

At the end of this verse we have the *wâw* conjunction, the preposition *ʾachar* (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *after, following* (Strong's #310 BDB #29), and the Qal imperfect of *châdal* (חָדַל) [pronounced *khaw-DAHL*], which means *to leave off, to cease, to desist; as well as to forsake, to leave*. Strong's #2308 BDB #292.

Pulling this entire phrase together is obviously difficult, although the general meaning can be ascertained. It is the conjunction and the hypothetical particle—the way these things were said would have given more meaning to what he said than the actual words. However, Samson both acknowledges and is abhorred by the behavior and the actions of the Philistines. It is totally out of proportion with what he did. He vows his vengeance here and, once he takes appropriate vengeance out on these Philistines, then he will stop this tit for tat (so he thinks). That Samson thinks his act will be the end of all this is surprisingly naive. However, many of us, under the control of strong emotion, do not think altogether rationally.

Vengeance in the ancient world was a common occurrence. Several cities in Israel were set aside because of man's propensity for revenge called *cities of refuge*. A man who was guilty of involuntary manslaughter could flee to one of these cities in order to escape the revenge of the family of the person who died (Joshua 20:1–9).

And so he struck them [down] calf beyond thigh a slaughter great. And so he went down⁹ and so he stayed in a cleft of a rock [in] Etam.

Judges
15:8

And he struck them down calf even to thigh, a great slaughter. Then he went down and stayed in a cleft of the rock Etam.

Samson viciously slaughtered many of them and then took refuge in the cleft of the rock near Etam.

⁸ This is more the interpretation given by Keil and Delitzsch in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 298.

⁹ Both the Syriac codex and one early printed edition read simply *went* rather than *went down*.

This verse is fairly straightforward, apart from the *hip and thigh* part of it. The first sentence is various rendered:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So he smote them, leg on thigh, with a great smiting...
NASB	And he struck them ruthlessly [lit., leg on thigh] with a great slaughter...
NIV	He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them.
The Septuagint	And he smote them leg on thigh a great overthrow...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And he smiteth them hip and thigh—a great smiting...

The first word to look at is the feminine singular noun *shôwq* (שׁוֹק) [pronounced *shohk*], which means *leg*. When referring to man, it is the lower portion of the leg—the calf; when referring to a sacrificial animal, it is the upper portion of the leg, or the thigh. Don't ask me why; this is all according to BDB. Strong's #7785 BDB #1003. Then we have the preposition *ʿad* (אֲד) [pronounced *ʿad*] which means *as far as, even to, up to, until*. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. This is followed by the feminine singular noun *yârek*^e (יָרֵק) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*], which means *thigh, loin, side, base, reproductive system*. Strong's #3409 BDB #437. What these words mean together is pretty much unknown. Gesenius suggests that they were all cut into pieces.¹⁰ My first thought was that the bodies were stacked that high around Sampson. Gower reasonably suggests that this is a wrestling term.¹¹ My thinking is that the vocabulary and usage of the vocabulary throughout has been heavily peppered with Philistine sayings, things that we have no way of knowing exactly what they mean, as they mostly occur only here. This was likely a tremendously vicious slaughter, but whether it went to the lengths suggested by Gesenius is a whole other matter.

The topic of where Etam was is relatively complex and unnecessary here, so we will leave it for another time. ZPEB suggests western Judah and Barnes claims that it is probably not the same Etam as is found in II Chron. 4:32, which is in Simeon (although, I don't see why not). The cleft of the rock is one of the many hiding places afforded by the mountains in that vicinity. Barnes writes: *...a site near Eleutheropolis (Beth-Jibrin) is required; and there exist some extraordinary caverns in the soft limestone or chalky rock, fifty or twenty feet deep, with perpendicular sides, opening into extensive excavations in the rock, about two hours from Eleutheropolis.*¹² Keil and Delitzsch extensively discuss where we would look in the contemporary mid-east to find the ruins of Etam: on the border of the Negev and the mountains of Judah, to which Samson would have had to have gone down from Timnath.¹³

McGee: *Notice that this is personal. This has nothing to do with his commission from God to deliver Israel from the Philistines. He is just avenging himself. His actions had nothing to do with delivering Israel. His revenge was personal.*¹⁴ I should clarify: Samson's intentions had nothing to do with delivering Israel. God's intentions were that he would deliver Israel. God used Samson's immature and juvenile behavior to begin to sever the relationship of Israel to the Philistines. As you can see, this back and forth between Samson and the Philistines was not something which was going to end. God did not want a peaceful co-existence between the two peoples. When Samson took refuge, this tells us that he knew it was not over.

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The Judæans Hand Samson over to the Philistines

And so came up Philistines and so they camped in Judah and so they were let go in the Lehi.

Judges
15:9

Then the Philistines came up and they camped in Judah and they spread out in Lehi.

As a result, the Philistines came up in force and camped out in Judah, spreading out in the Lehi area.

¹⁰ H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 812.

¹¹ *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; Ralph Gower; ©1987 by Moody International; © by Moody Press; p. 314.

¹² *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 454.

¹³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 299.

¹⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 195.

You will note that throughout the past two chapters, the only Israelite in this war was Samson. Insofar as the Philistines were concerned, their problem was not with the Israelites, but with Samson. The fact that he was an Israelite should not have been an issue from their point of view.

The last verb is the Niphal imperfect of *nâṭash* (נָטַשׁ) [pronounced *naw-TAHSH*], which means *to leave, to forsake, to permit*. In the Niphal, it means *to spread oneself out* (it is used of the tendrils of a vine in Isa. 16:8). It means, in the Niphal, *to be let go*, as with a rope (Isa. 33:23). Strong's #5203 BDB #643. These men found a central area in which they camped and they spread out like tendrils from there throughout the rest of Judah; they were cut loose and let go. We are not told any more than this. We don't know if they ran raiding parties or what exactly they did. Whatever it was, they got the attention of the Judæans.

Although Lehi is only mentioned in this passage, the Greek name given it in some Septuagint manuscripts is similar to Siyyaj (but, not very), and some associate the ruins of Siyyaj with it. Its real significance is its Hebrew name, which is *l'chîy* (לְחִי) [pronounced *l'-KHEE*], which means *jawbone*. For those of you who recall this story, this name has meaning for you already. Strong's #3896 BDB #534. Although this area could be called *Lehi* because of the many bones found there; it was probably so named after this incident and used in this verse proleptically. Since this story is recorded after the incident, the common name given to this area is used.

Apparently, although the Philistines had control over a portion of Israel, they did not occupy each and every city under their control. In fact, the control by the Philistines was considered to be not that bad of a deal; the Israelites apparently did have some freedom and were detached somewhat from the Philistines. There was some intermingling which was a result of the free will of the participants (see the previous chapter). So, apart from the fact that the Philistines were ruthless and pagan, their rule over Israel was accepted by most of the people of Israel as a simple fact of life.

Apparently, the Philistines, when entering into an area for a military operation, moved in as a tight organization and then spread out in the area where they were to invade. We find this here and in II Sam. 5:19, 22.

And so said a man of Judah, “Why have you come up against us?” And so they said, “To bind Samson we have come up; to do to him as which he did to us.”

Judges
15:10

So the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” And they replied, “We have come up to bind Samson—to do to him as he did to us.”

Therefore, the men of Judah said to them, “Why have you come up against us?” And the Philistines replied, “We have come up to place Samson under arrest and to do to him and he has done to us.”

My impression is that the Philistines had more than a strong military presence, but that they carried out raids against the people of Judah. When approached by the Judæans, they explained why they were doing what they were doing. Despite what God had told the Israelites, they were willing to endure subjection to the Philistines. Keil and Delitzsch: *Instead of recognising in Samson a deliverer whom the Lord had raised up for them, and crowding round him that they might smite their oppressors with his help and drive them out of the land, the men of Judah were so degraded, that they cast this reproach at Samson.*¹⁵

In case you are concerned with right and wrong here, both Samson and the Philistines were wrong. Both sides had engaged in bad behavior. Siding with the Philistines over Samson was not a choice that the Judæans made out of some well-thought-out moral code, it is a choice that they made out of expediency. They were more afraid of the Philistines than they were of Samson, so they were more than willing to give Samson over to them. God's intention behind all of this was to set up a barrier of animosity between the Jews and the Philistines. The Philistines had reached a point of degeneracy that was infectious and therefore dangerous to Israel. Israel's only hope was to remove the Philistines from that area entirely. Again, this has nothing to do with Samson being right and the Philistines being wrong. The key is God's plan.

¹⁵ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 299.

And so went down three thousand a man of Judah unto a cleft of a rock Etam and so they said to Samson, “Do you not know that they are ruling in us, Philistines? And why this you have done to us?” And so he said to them, “As which they did to me, so I have done to them.”

Judges
15:11

So 3000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are ruling against us? Then what [is] this you have done to us?” And he replied to them, “As they have done to me, so I have done to them.”

So, 3000 Judæan men went down to the cleft of the rock Etam, where Samson was staying, and said to him, “Don’t you realize that the Philistines rule over us? Just what on earth do you think you are doing?” He replied to them, “Just as they have done to me, so I have repaid them.”

The verb found five times in this and the previous verse is *ʿâsâh* (אָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. It is first found in the Qal infinitive construct in v. 10, and then in the Qal perfect after that. Strong's #6213 BDB #793.

Rotherham gives two possible renderings for the second thing the Judæans say: “*What then is this thou hast done to us?*”; or, “*What, then, has thou now done to us?*” I don’t quite follow where the *now* comes from, but Rotherham cites work of Gesenius.

It has come to the point where, no matter what Samson *does* to the Philistines, they will feel as though they must retaliate; and vice versa. The final adverb in this verse is *kên* (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*], which means *so* or *thus*. Strong's #3651 BDB #485. Obviously, Samson is not operating under some carefully thought-out moral code. He’s pissed off at the Philistines and he lets them know it. I recall a friend of mine who had a disagreement with a neighborhood association. Their mutual animosity grew to the point where he was planting 10 foot bamboo stalks in his front yard and they were evicting him from his own house. Neither side was right; they just got further and further out of control.

The Judæans have fallen a long way since Judges 1; you will recall that they and the Simeonites were of the few tribes to aggressively pursue God’s promise. God told them to take the Land of Promise and they continued to do so. In fact, at one time, they even possessed some of the solidly Philistine controlled cities, e.g., Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. Now here, they gather in force against one of their own in favor of the Philistines. Obviously, these Judæans should have gathered behind Samson to throw off the rule of the Philistines. Instead, they gather to do the bidding of those who rule over them. Here is the one man of Israel who could lead them to victory over the Philistines—and inside they know this—yet, they view him as trouble.

Under human viewpoint, the action taken by the Judæans seems reasonable—the problem is apparently one of their own, so they plan to get that problem under control. What the Judæans never seem to ask themselves is *why* are they under the control of the Philistines. In Lev. 26:25, God promises this to Israel if they move away from Him: “I will bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you will be delivered into enemy hands.” From the curses of disobedience: “The alien who is among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower.” (Deut. 28:44). The result was Judges 13:1: *Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of Jehovah, so that Jehovah gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.* And, finally, Psalm 106:40–43: *Therefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against His people and He abhorred His inheritance. Then He gave them into the hand of the nations and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them and they were subdued under their power. Many times He would deliver them. They, however, were rebellious in their counsel and so sank down in their iniquity.*

And so they said to him, “To bind you we have come down; to give you into a hand of Philistines.” And so said to them Samson, “Swear to me lest you fall in me yourselves.”

Judges
15:12

So they said to him, “We have come down to bind you and to give you into the hands of the Philistines.” Then Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not fall on me yourselves.”

The men replied to Samson, “We have come here in order to tie you up and give you over to the Philistines.” Then Samson made them promise, “Swear to me that you will not attempt to kill me yourselves once I have allowed you to tie me up.”

Samson first requests the Niphal imperative of *shâ^bva^ç* (שׁוּבָה) [pronounced *shaw^b-VAH*], which means *to swear, so seven oneself, to imprecate, to curse, to swear an oath, to take a solemn oath, and often to extract an oath (from someone else)*. Strong's #7650 BDB #989. Samson desires an oath from his fellow Israelites; he follows this with the conjunction *pen* (פֶּן) [pronounced *pen*], which means *lest, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that [plus a negative]*. Strong's #6435 BDB #814.

What Samson does not want to happen is for his own fellow countrymen to first bind him, and then attempt to kill him themselves. He has no argument with the Judæans. He did not want them to bind him and then to the Qal imperfect of *pâga^ç* (פָּגַעַ) [pronounced *paw-GAHÇ*], which means *to fall upon, to meet, to encounter*. Strong's #6293 BDB #803. Now, Samson is not really all that concerned for his own well-being; he is concerned for the well-being of these 3000 Judæans. If they tie him up and then try to kill him, Samson will be forced to act against them. Samson is aware of his super-human strength and realizes that he could do a great deal of harm to any group of people.

Now, what is particularly humorous about this passage is that you have 3000 of Judah's bravest men who have come to apprehend Samson, and, essentially, they ask him for his permission to tie him up. Samson's strength was well-known and well-respected. Even with the odds 3000 to 1, the Judæans still decide to be safe and to ask Samson for his permission to bind him.

And so they said to him to say, “No, for a binding we will bind you and give you into their hands and a killing, we will not kill you.” And so they bound him in two ropes new [ones]; and so they brought him up from the rock.

Judges
15:13

So they answered him, saying, “No, we will certainly tie you up and then give you into their hands; but we will certainly not kill you.” Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

So they answered him, saying, “No we bind you and give you into their hands, but we will definitely not kill you.” Then they tied him up with two new ropes and took him out from the rock.

Here, we find a couple of infinitive absolutes and imperfects together. There is one thing that they definitely would not do, and that is *kill* Samson; and there is one thing that they would definitely do, and that is *tie* Samson up. Now, from a distance, we might side with the Judæans against Samson. He has been involved in acts of terrorism against the Philistines and they have the choice between facing the wrath of the Philistines for something which they have no part in or they can turn Samson over to them.

One of the things that you may have missed is that Samson asks them to promise one thing, and they promise another. Samson did not ask them to promise not to kill him. Samson asks them, in v. 12, not to *pâga^ç* him. *Pâga^ç* (פָּגַעַ) [pronounced *paw-GAH* or *paw-GAHÇ*] means *to fall upon, to meet, to encounter*. Strong's #6293 BDB #803. What they promise not to do, and very solemnly, is not to *mûwth* him. *Mûwth* (מִוַּתַּ) [pronounced *mooth*] means *to kill* (in the Hiphil). They promise Samson that they will not kill him. Strong's #4191 BDB #559. Samson did not need them to promise him this. He obtained their promise for their benefit and protection, not for his. The Judæans are his people. Samson is pretty messtup, but he knows that he should not turn on his own

people. If they attempted to kill him, then he would be forced to defend himself and to turn against fellow Israelites. Asking these Judæans not to attack him while tied up is perhaps the first honorable thing that Samson does and very few people ever recognize it.¹⁶

You may wonder, what ought these men to have done? Should they have just let Samson go and let the Philistines terrorize them? Bear in mind that Samson is not intentionally some great freedom fighter—he is almost an unwilling participant in all of this. What Israel should be doing is throwing off the yoke of the Philistines; what Israel should do is revolt against the Philistine rule. God has given Israel this land and He instructed them to destroy all of the heathen of the land. God allowed groups of unbelievers to remain in the land so that Israel would continue to know war. Now, what these Israelites and Samson should have done is stood up united against the Philistines and thrown off their yoke of bondage. However, neither Samson nor the Israelites think about this as an option. It just does not occur to them; even though what you have here is the strongest man alive and 3000 of Judah's bravest men, neither party realizes that this is the perfect opportunity to overthrow Philistine rule.

God deals with *what is* in this life. The Judæans are not about to rise up against the Philistines; Samson is not yet ready to lead the people with regards to anything, although he finally shows some compassion for someone other than himself. God has a plan for Samson's life, and, in this case, He will haul Samson kicking and screaming into that plan.

In this verse we have the masculine plural noun עֲבֹת (עֲבֹת) [pronounced *gûh^b-VOHTH*], which means *a twisted cord, rope, cord*; Young renders this as *thick rope*. Strong's #5688 BDB #721. It is modified by the adjective חַדָּשׁ (חַדָּשׁ) [pronounced *khaw-DAWSH*], which means *new*. Strong's #2319 BDB #294. We will find these words used again in Judges 16:11–12.

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Samson Kills 1000 Philistines with the Jawbone of an Ass

He [even] he came in as far as Lehi and the Philistines were shouting to meet him. Judges 15:14a **He [even] he came in as far as Lehi and the Philistines were shouting to meet him.**

Samson, of his own volition, walked right into the camp of the Philistines in Lehi; when they saw him coming, they ran out shouting at him, to meet him.

We will need to split v. 14 up into two parts, as there is so much to cover here. There are so many things which are completely ignored in this chapter by those who claim to exegete it. The first is the very common verb, which *Samson* is the subject of—the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *bôw* (בֹּו) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. It means *to bring something, to carry* when found in the Hiphil. It is not found here in the Hiphil. We do not find the sentence *the Judæans brought Samson to the Philistines*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. The Judæans tied up Samson because he allowed them to. They gave Samson their promise that they would not attack him, which spared their lives, not his (they did not realize that, but then, hundreds of expositors missed that as well). At best, they accompanied Samson to the Philistines or they escorted Samson to the Philistines, but *they* did not *bring* him to the Philistines. Samson went to them entirely under his own volition. Now, you may think that I am making a big deal out of something which is not a big deal. God's Word was inspired by God the Holy Spirit. There are no accidents in the way that Scripture is recorded. The Hiphil stem is not used here because Samson was not *brought* by anyone. If anything, he *led* these men to the Philistines. One more thing: this sentence does not begin with the verb nor does it begin with the *wâw* consecutive, which is what you would expect. This verse actually begins with the 3rd person masculine singular personal pronoun—the 3rd person masculine singular subject is built into the verb—it does not *have* to be here. In the Hebrew, these things jump right out at you. You expect one thing and you get another. The Hebrew paragraph has a lot of *wâw* consecutives

¹⁶ In fact, in this chapter, there will be two times where Samson acts with some integrity, revealing some spiritual growth, and there is no commentary anywhere that I am aware of which even notices this.

followed by short thoughts, and suddenly, when you run into something like this, you sit up and take notice. You would expect, with 3000 men and Samson all tied up, that we would find the wâw consecutive followed by the 3rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect of bôw'. You do not expect to see the 3rd person masculine singular personal pronoun—it hits you right between the eyes; it grabs you by the shirt collar and lifts you up. It tells you that these 3000 men, who tied Samson up (after receiving his permission), did not bring Samson to the Philistines. God the Holy Spirit put it here to tell us that Samson, of his own volition, walked right into that camp of the Philistines—a camp which would later bear the name of the weapon that Samson will use against them. This passage does not even tell us what happened to these 3000 men—were they with Samson? Did they walk with him most of the way, point out the Philistines camp, and then turn tail and retreat? We don't actually know. In any case, they do not appear to be around when Samson actually meets up with the Philistines. Once Samson is in view of the Philistine camp, the Israelites, if they were still around, certainly retreated quickly.

Now, how would you, a person who does not read Hebrew, recognize what's really going on here? Only in Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* do we have a clue—the word *he* is enclosed with double brackets, meaning that the idea that we are dealing with a 3rd person masculine singular is of great importance here. These new ropes and the 3000 Judæans were unable to force Samson to do anything—he walked into the camp of the Philistines under the choice of his own free will.

The Philistines had not even left Lehi. They knew that they could depend upon the Judæans to bring them Samson. Now, you will note that we do not have a court system in place. Samson is not brought in and put on trial. What he faces is these Philistines and what they are doing is the Hiphil perfect of rûwa' (רוע) [pronounced *roo-AH* or *roo-AHG*], which means *to shout*. The Hiphil is used because they are caused to should be what is in their souls. They have hatred and seek vengeance on Samson. They *know* who burned the fields and they are going to make him pay. Strong's #7321 BDB #929. This is not some battle cry, nor were they crying out in panic—these Philistines are disgruntled, so say the least, with Samson, and here he is, walking into their camp, all tied up, and they rush him. They are a mob and they plan to tear him limb from limb. The yelling is a part of their anger. After all, what mob attacks with a silent fury?

And so fell upon him a Spirit of Y^howah and so were the ropes which [were] upon his arms as flax which they burn in fire. And so melted his bonds from upon his hands.

Judges
15:14b

Then the Spirit of Y^howah fell upon him and the ropes which [were] on his arms became as flax which is burned with fire; so the bonds melted from around his hands.

Suddenly, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him and he broke the ropes around his arms as if they were nothing.

The verb with the Holy Spirit is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of tsâlach (נִלְצָ) [pronounced *tsaw-LAHCH*]; it is also given as tsâlêach (נִלְצָ) [pronounced *tsaw-LAY-ahkh*], which, according to the lexicons (BDB and Gesenius), means *to penetrate, to rush, to advance, to come upon, to attack, to fall upon, to be successful, to prosper; it means to penetrate then advance*. This almost appears to be one of those words that you simply close your eyes, reach into a hat, and then take out the meaning that you like. However, it is not that way. When followed by the preposition 'al (עַל) [pronounced *a*] (Strong's #5921 BDB #752), it means *to come upon, to fall upon, to rush upon*. Context then determines the nuances of meaning. Most of the time, it simply means *to be prosperous, to be successful*. The relationship is: the result of falling upon someone is a successful attack. Strong's #6743 BDB #852. We are never actually told whether this filling of the Holy Spirit was the result of Samson's volition or whether God provided the Holy Spirit apart from Samson's volition. My thinking is that, when put into this hopeless situation, tied up and standing helpless before hundreds of vicious Philistines, Samson, a Nazirite, spoke to God. Any believer or anyone who has given even a small thought to God, would, under similar circumstances, stop for a second and consult God about a situation like this. Any normal person would say one or two words to God while tied up and being approached by a thousand or more angry Philistines.

Now, let's approach this from a different standpoint—the spiritual blessings which God gives to us are a result of His sovereignty and our volition. Now, we all receive a spiritual gift or gifts which may lie dormant at salvation.

When we signed up for God's plan, we may not have realized that a spiritual gift was a part of the package (we don't even have a clue as to all that is included in this package). However, it is our non-meritorious volition which results in God's gifts to us, one of which includes the Holy Spirit. After this, we are filled with the Holy Spirit right after we name our sins to God. In other words, for us in the Church Age to receive the filling of the Spirit, an act of volition is required. For this reason, even though it is not recorded, I think we can conclude that Samson said a few words to God and God blessed him with the Holy Spirit.

There is a lot of confusion as to the source of Samson's strength. He was not strong because he had long hair or because he did not drink alcohol. He was strong when God the Holy Spirit gave him strength. The giving of the phenomenal strength tends to be found during times of great crises; however, we will find, in the next chapter, that it is tied directly to his Nazirite vows as well.

I mentioned the Hebrew for *ropes* or *ords* in the previous verse because it was in the masculine gender in that verse. It is in the feminine gender in this verse. My feeling is that these ropes, able to bind Samson, have suddenly become like strings, powerless in their control of him. With *ropes*, we have the 3rd person, feminine plural, Qal imperfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which means *to be, to become*. \ Strong's #1961 BDB #224. What they ropes *become* is the masculine plural of *pish^eteh* (פִּשְׁתֵּה) [pronounced *pish^e-TEH*], which means *flax, linen*. Strong's #6593 BDB #833. So you are wondering, *what the hell is flax?* Flax is a plant grown in the Palestine region (recall it mentioned back in Joshua 2:6), which is cured in various ways and used to make linen (in fact, the Talmud goes into great detail as to how *orthodox Jews should harvest, bleach and prepare linen used by the rabbis*.¹⁷ Apparently, the effect of the ropes around Samson's hands were like tying a couple of plants around then. However, the writer goes into more detail. They were not simply *as flax*, but *as flax they burn with fire*. The verb is the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *bâ'ar* (בָּעַר) [pronounced *baw-YAHR*], which means *to burn*. Strong's #1197 BDB #128. The subject of the verb is a bit abstruse, but that is unimportant. The result is the same. The rope around the hands of Samson was nothing to him, under the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, although this may strike some of us as bordering on fairy tale, that is not the case. There have been rare instances of men lifting cars off of others—so our bodies have capabilities beyond what we are able to call upon under normal circumstances. Now, obviously, this does not mean that you have super-human strength when filled with the Holy Spirit. It simply means that this was a part of Samson's gift.

What the ropes around his hands did was the Niphal imperfect of *mâçaç* (מָצַח) [pronounced *maw-SAUCE*], which means *to dissolve, to melt*; it is most often used figuratively for the heart becoming faint or fearful. Strong's #4549 BDB #587. In other words, the rope used to tie his hands was nothing to him.

There is a reason that God the Holy Spirit provides a variety of spiritual gifts to men and there is a reason that you are not required to study on your own God's Word. God provides the gift of pastor teacher to dig out exactly what is here. There is a lot of information to be found in vv. 12–14; a great many spiritual lessons as well. In your read through the Bible in that one year program, you read through these few verses in 4.5 seconds, and gave their content even less thought. For those who studied by Bible, you might have given this portion of God's Word five minutes thought, if that. You will note how much additional information that the NIV Study Bible gives us on these verses? They tell you the shouting was a battle cry (which is incorrect) and that Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad (see Judges 3:31). How about Barnes' take on this passage? He tells us that burned flax would be easy to break. I say this not to belittle either source, as I draw from a great deal of material and insight from them. My point is that God provided for you a pastor teacher to explain to you just exactly what is in God's Word; he is going to explain God's Word to you that, if you had a month to study the same passage, you would not find it; if you went into a Bible study group and you all said nice things to each other and everyone gave their opinions of what was going on here, in quiet religious reflection, you would not even glean a tenth of what is here. That is because this is not the method God gave to the church to understand His Word. God gave the church pastor-teachers with good reason. Now, your pastor does not explain God's Word? Then what the hell does that tell you, Einstein? You are under the wrong pastor teacher.

¹⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 546.

And so he found a jawbone of an ass, a fresh [one] and so he put out his hand and seized her and so he struck down with her a thousand men.

Judges
15:15

Then he found a fresh jawbone of an ass, so that he put out his hand and seized it. Then he struck down with it a thousand men.

He suddenly saw a fresh jawbone of an ass, which he reached out and grabbed. Then he used it to kill 1000 men.

There are several moments here which are unaccounted for. We don't know if Samson suddenly ran, whether he just reached out and there was the jawbone, or what happened. We are first given the Qal imperfect of *mātsâ* (מָצָא) [pronounced *maw-TSAW*] and it means *to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover*. Strong's #4672 BDB #592. In the moments or minutes which followed, Samson laid hold of a weapon. What he seized was the masculine singular of *l'chîy* (לָחַץ) [pronounced *l'-KHEE*], and it means *jaw, cheek, jawbone*. Strong's #3895 BDB #534. This of course is the jawbone of the masculine singular of *chāmôwr* (חֶמְרִי) [pronounced *khuh-MOHR*], which means *male donkey, he-ass*. Strong's #2543 BDB #331. Then we have an adjective. The reason we know it describes the *jawbone* rather than the *ass* is that it is the feminine singular of *ṭârîy* (טָרִי) [pronounced *taw-REE*], which probably means *fresh*. It is only found in two places—here and Isa. 1:6. Strong's #2961 BDB #382. The importance of the jawbone being fresh is that it was not yet dry and brittle. I don't quite follow why it is in the feminine singular whereas the other words are both masculine.

What Samson did was the Qal imperfect of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*], which means *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. When found in association with hands in the Qal stem, *shâlach* means *to reach forth, to reach out, to put out*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. Then we have the Qal imperfect of *lâqach* (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHKH*] which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. I mentioned these verbs because what you would expect would be Qal perfects here. You would expect a completed action. However, what we find are three Qal imperfections strung together by three *wâw* consecutives. When we find the *wâw* consecutive linking a host of Qal imperfections, the sense is not a continued action in the verbs, but a continued, chronological, logical action of the action of the verbs. That is, there is a continued action, but it is all of the verbs together which give us a continued action, rather than the verbs taken individually (in fact, it was from constructions like this that the *wâw* consecutive first was called a *wâw* conversative, which is an incorrect designation and function). The final verb actually does act like an imperfect on its own, and what calls our attention that we have come to the end of this consecutive action is the final verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâkâh* (נָכַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*] which means *smite, assault, hit, strike*. It is not found in the Qal, so the Hiphil does not necessarily carry with it causative action. Strong #5221 BDB #645.

The fight which ensued must of have been incredible. We are told practically nothing about it except that Samson killed 1000 men. One of the great chapters of the Bible is Lev. 26—most of it is God telling Israel that He is going to kick their butts out of the Land of Promise, and they haven't yet even entered into the Land of Promise. However, in the beginning of this chapter, God also promised them blessings if they obeyed Him. **"You will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword."** (Lev. 26:7–8). After Israel entered the land and was firmly planted, Joshua, from his deathbed, told them: **"You will cling to Jehovah your God, as you have done to this day. For Jehovah has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and, as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for Jehovah your God is He who fights for you, just as He has said. So take the responsibility to love Jehovah your God."** (Joshua 23:8–11).

And so said Samson, "With a jawbone of the ass, a heap, two heaps; with a jawbone of the ass, I have killed a thousand men."

Judges
15:16

Then Samson concluded, "With a jawbone of an ass, one heap, two heaps; with a jawbone of an ass, I have killed 1000 men."

And then Samson concluded, "I have piled them up in heaps using the jawbone of an ass. With this jawbone of an ass, I killed 1000 men."

Here, we have somewhat of a poetical statement which is also confusing (as is much poetry). Let's see how others have rendered the first half of this relatively simply quote of Samson's:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	With the jawbone of an ass— Have I piled them up in heaps!
NASB	"With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps [Lit., Heap, two heaps]...
NIV	"With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them...
Septuagint	"With the Jawbone of an ass, I have completely destroyed them..."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	'With a jaw-bone of the ass—an ass upon asses...

What we have literally is *With a jawbone of the ass, the ass, the two asses...* The Hebrew word is *chămôwr* (חֹמֶר) [pronounced *khuh-MOHR*], which means *ass, male donkey, he-ass*. Strong's #2543 BDB #331. You are probably wondering from where does the NASB get the translation *heap; two heaps* and why do I agree with them? This is the word *chômer* (חֹמֶר) [pronounced *KHOH-mer*], which has several means, one of which is *clay, mortar* (Gen. 11:3 Ex. 1:14 Job 4:19). This *pile* or *heap* of mortar has two other related meanings. It can refer to the hardened clay, as in what kind of a house it is or what the house was made out of (Job 4:19), to bodies of *clay* (Job 13:12); it can refer to a *pile* or *stack* of something (Ex. 8:14 Habak. 3:15)¹⁸; and it can refer to a unit of Hebrew measure, an *homer* (much like our *bushel*) (*homer* is obviously a transliteration). Strong's #2563 BDB #330. You will note the difference between the words is primarily vowel points. *Donkey* has the additional *wâw* in it. My guess is that additional *wâw* was added as a scribal error and that what we have here is a victorious play on words made by a very tired man. Samson looks at the bloodied jawbone of the ass in one hand, and the piles of men around him, and makes this comment. As for the translation in the Septuagint—my guess is that they went rather free-form at this point.

And so he was as his finishing to speak, and so he cast away the jawbone from out of his hand and so was called to the place the that Ramath-lehi [*Hill of jawbone*].

Judges
15:17

So it was, as he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone from out of his hand; therefore, that place was called Ramath-lehi.

As soon as he finished speaking, Samson chucked the jawbone and named this place Ramath-lehi (which means, *hill of the jawbone*).

Ramath-lehi means *the hill of [the] jawbone* (recall that the spelling of *jawbone* and the proper name of this place are the same). Rotherham suggests this means either *the throwing away of jaw-bone* or *jaw-bone height*, which is a goofy meaning. Samson didn't put the jawbone in a tree; he didn't name it *the throwing away of a jaw bone* because he picked up a jawbone and then chucked it. Samson names this what he does because he has just used the jawbone of an ass to leave piles and piles of dead Philistines. We have seen the name *ramath* many times used in conjunction with the name of a city. It is simply a transliteration of *râmath* (רַמַּת) [pronounced *raw-MAHTH*], which is the construct of the word *râmâh* (רַמָּה) [pronounced *raw-MAW*], which means *height, high place*. We actually only find this noun *not* used as a proper noun in Ezek. 16. Strong's #7413 BDB #928. *Lehi*, as you recall, means *jawbone*. The two together are often taken as the proper noun. Strong's #7437 BDB #928. We may take this in two different ways: (1) this could be a reference to the stacks of bodies made by the jawbone; or, (2) Samson could have done his primary fighting from a hill, and hence named it. Given what Samson said in the previous verse, the former seems to be the most apropos.

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¹⁸ This is actually the rarest usage, these two being the only times this word is found used in this way, and the latter passage is dubious.

Samson Establishes a Relationship with God

And so he was thirsty very and so he called unto Y^howah and so he said, “You [even] You have given in a hand of Your servant the deliverance the great the this and now I will die in the thirst and I will fall into a hand of the uncircumcised.”

Judges
15:18

And he was extremely thirsty, so he called out to Y^howah, and he said, “You [even] You have given into the hand of Your servant this great deliverance; now [it appears as though] I will die of thirst and then fall into the hands of the uncircumcised.”

Samson became extremely thirsty, and he then called out to Jehovah, saying, “You, even You, have given into the hand of your servant, this great victory. Now, it appears as though I will die of thirst, and thus fall into the hands of the uncircumcised.”

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *tzâmê* (צָמַח) [pronounced *tzaw-MAY*], which means *to thirst*. Strong’s #6770 BDB #854. It is modified by the adverb *m^eôd* (מְאֹד) [pronounced *m^e-ODE*], which means *exceedingly, extremely, very*. Strong’s #3966 BDB #547.

Then Samson does something which we have not seen him do yet—he calls out to God. What God gave into his hand was feminine singular *t^eshûw’âh* (תִּשׁוּעָה) [pronounced *t^e-shoo-GAW*], which means *deliverance, salvation*. Usually, this word is used in conjunction with God, as in God provides the deliverance or the salvation (I Sam. 11:13 II Kings 13:17 Psalm 38:22); it can be used in a temporal sense (Judges 15:18 II Sam. 19:2 Prov. 21:31), an eternal sense (Psalm 51:14 71:15); and there are times where it appears to be both (Psalm 119:41 146:3). Surprisingly enough, this is the first appearance of this word in Scripture (it is not found in any of the writings of Moses or in the book of Job; and it is found but this one time in the book of Judges). It is found 31 times in the Old Testament. Strong’s #8668 BDB #448.

What Samson says he will die of is the masculine singular noun cognate of the verb we just looked at (as you would have expected). I hope that you grasp what it is that Samson is actually saying—he does not appeal to God’s mercy but to God’s plan. He does not beg God for something to drink—he points out that God has just given him this incredible victory over these Philistines, and now, he is so thirsty, that he could drop in his tracks and be killed by the Philistines. This would be incongruous for God to deliver him from all these Philistines and then allow him to die at the hands of a few Philistines due to his being incredibly thirsty. Grudgingly, we have to hand it to Samson—he is correct in what he is saying. It wouldn’t make sense for God to deliver him as He has and then just allow him to die of thirst. And, despite all of his shortcomings, and Samson had a lot of them, he had enough doctrine in his soul to appeal to God based upon God’s righteousness and God’s plan. Let me make an application for you—in prayer, you are much better off appealing to God’s justice and righteousness than you are to His mercy and kindness; you see, in His mercy and kindness, He may have you under severe discipline, and, therefore, appealing to His mercy and kindness will not make it stop hurting. However, if you can appeal to God’s perfect justice in prayer, then you can expect Him to answer your prayer. You may want to know if there is a catch to all this. Certainly there is; you must know God’s Word in order to understand His justice and righteousness; you only need to know a thimbleful more than nothing in order to appeal to His mercy and kindness. It is just in the latter case, God may not answer your prayer as you would like Him to.

Have I appealed to God on the basis of His justice and His plan in prayer? You had better believe it. And do I get the answer I expect—almost every time. Now, you are reading this and you’re thinking, *I really don’t get the difference between the two approaches*. And that is why, when you pray to God, it is pretty much hit and miss when it comes to Him answering your prayers. Sometimes He does and sometimes He doesn’t; and you don’t have a clue as to why He does and why He doesn’t (actually, God answers all prayers which are properly delivered; He just doesn’t always answer them yes).

And so split open God the mortar which [was] at Lehi and so came out from him waters. And so he drank and so returned his spirit and so he revived; concerning so was called her name En-hakkore, which [is] in Lehi unto the day the this.

Judges
15:19

So God split open the mud which [was] at Lehi and waters came out from it. And so he drank and his spirit returned and he was revived. Therefore, he called its name En-hakkore, which is in Lehi until this day.

Then God split open the ground in Lehi and water spurted out of it. Then Samson drank and his strength returned to him, and he was revived. He therefore called the name of this spring En-hakkore, which is in Lehi even until today.

Because there are some difficult and rare words in this passage, the resultant translations will be very different; for example:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So then God clave open the hollow that is in Lehi, and there came therefrom water and he drank, and his spirit came back, and he revived, —for this cause called he the name thereof Ain-hakkore, which is in Lehi until this day.
NAB	Then God split the cavity in Lehi, and water issued from it...
NASB	But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength [lit., spirit] returned and he revived. Therefore, he named it En-hakkore [i.e., <i>the spring of him who called</i>], which is in Lehi to this day.
NJB	Then God opened a hollow in the ground, the hollow there is at Lehi, and water gushed out of it...
REB	God split open the Hollow of Lehi and water came out of it...
The Septuagint	And God broke open a hollow place in the jaw, and there came thence water, and he drank; and his spirit returned and he revived; therefore, the name of the fountain was called 'The well of the invoker,' which is in Lechi until this day.
TEV	Then God opened a hollow place in the ground there at Lehi, and water came out of it. Samson drank it and began to feel much better. So the spring was named Hakkore [Hebrew means "caller"]; it is still there at Lehi.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And God cleaveth the hollow place which <i>is</i> in Lehi, and waters come out of it, and he drinketh, and his spirit cometh back, and he reviveth; therefore hath <i>one</i> called its name 'The fountain of him who is calling,' which <i>is</i> in Lehi unto this day.

As you can see, we have a fair amount of agreement; however, we may not walk away satisfied that we know exactly what happened in this verse. What God did was the Qal imperfect of bâqa' (בָּקַע) [pronounced *baw-KAHG*], which means *to cleave, to break open, too break through*. Strong's #1234 BDB #131. What God split open was the masculine singular of mak^etêsh (מַכְתֵּשׁ) [pronounced *mahk^e-TAYSH*], a word found only here and in Prov. 27:22 (and possibly in Zeph. 1:11*, where it appears as a proper noun). It is respectively rendered as *hollow-place* and *mortar* (NASB, NIV, Young) and as *hollow* and *mortar* (Rotherham). My thinking was that Samson collapsed upon the ground, next to a place of mud, and suddenly, through this mud, spurts a geyser, when then comes back down on Samson. However, that is because of my own imperfect vocabulary. A *mortar* is also a *bowl* made of very hard material and often various substances and placed into this bowl and ground into a powder. So we do not have a difference in the translation, as long as we are aware of what a *mortar* is. Strong's #4388 (& #4389) BDB #509. What the waters do is the Qal imperfect of yâtsâ' (יָצַא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. What we have likely is a cavity in the ground (the corresponding Greek word means a *tooth socket*), which is absolutely dry as a bone, to the point of appearing like a *mortar*. God split this open and out gushed water. Barnes explains: *The word translated "hollow place," means a mortar (Prov. xxvii. 22), and is here evidently a hollow or basin among the cliffs of Lehi, which, from its shape, was called "the mortar." A spring, on the way from Socho to Eleutheropolis, was commonly called Samson's spring in the time of St. Jerome and writers of the in the 7th, 12th, and 14th centuries.*¹⁹ Strong's #3318 BDB #422.

¹⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 455.

I guess that I should add that Keil and Delitzsch go into no little detail on why this does *not* mean that the water shot out of the jawbone of the ass from a hollow spot socket. Although it seems like a ridiculous theory, the rabbis passed down the idea that this word referred to the socket where a tooth would go and Luther, among others, proposed the theory that the water came out of the recently discarded jawbone of the ass. If by any chance you have fallen for that theory, led me recommend Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 300.

The result of this down pour of water is that Samson drinks. Then we have the feminine singular noun rûach (רוּחַ) [pronounced *ROO-ahkh*], which means *wind, breath, spirit, apparition*. Strong's #7307 BDB #924. What his spirit does is the Qal imperfect of shûw^bv (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*]; which means *to return, to revive, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996.

Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of châyâh (חַיָּה) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which means, *to live, to have life, to revive, to recover health, to be healed, to be refreshed*. Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310. I mentioned the 3rd person masculine singular because we are not referring to the spirit (which is the feminine singular) but to Samson himself.

This is followed by the preposition 'al (עַל) [pronounced *ah*] [Strong's #5920 & #5921 BDB #752] and the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*] [Strong's #3651 BDB #485]. Together, 'al and kên mean *upon the ground of such conditions, therefore, on this account, on account*.

Obviously, En-hakkore is a transliteration, which means *spring of crying out [or, of calling out]*. *Spring* = Strong's #5869 (& #5871) BDB #745. *Calling out* = Strong's #7121 BDB #894. Together, they make up the proper name Strong's #5875 BDB #745. That particular part of Lehi retained that name up until the day of the recording of this incident. Rotherham calls it *the fountain of him that cried out*.

At the time of the writing of this portion of God's Word, this spring was still to be found in Lehi.

And so he judged Israel in days of Philistines twenty years. Judges 15:20 **And so he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines [for] twenty years.**

So Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for a period of twenty years.

This gives us a rough idea as to the kind of government which was in place. The Philistines still had an uneasy rule over Israel, but Samson had the position of judgeship (or, rulership) in the land. The reason that we suddenly have a position of authority for Samson is that he finally called out to God for help. The filling of the Holy Spirit in the past does not appear to be the result of an act of volition on his part (although we are not really told). However, at this point, Samson called upon God, God answered, and Samson recognized that it was an answer from God. This is what it took for Samson to gain a position of authority in Israel.

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