

Timeline of Truth: Samson, the Selfish Judge – The Victory of Samson (Judges 15:1-20)

<p>¹ After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into <i>her</i> room."</p>	<p>1. Samson Visits His Wife <i>a. TIME: Wheat harvest: June-July</i> <i>b. REQUEST: Visit his wife</i></p>
<p>But her father would not permit him to go in. ² Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. <i>Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.</i>"</p>	<p>2. Samson Is Told of a Surprising Change <i>a. "You are not permitted"</i> <i>b. "I gave her (in marriage) to your friend"</i> <i>c. "Please marry her better younger sister"</i></p>
<p>³ And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!" ⁴ Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned <i>the foxes</i> tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. ⁵ When he had set the torches on fire, he let <i>the foxes</i> go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards <i>and</i> olive groves.</p>	<p>3. Samson Repays with Fire <i>a. His implied justification (personal offense)</i> <i>b. His collective direction: The Philistines (14:4)</i> <i>c. His controlled design</i> <i>d. His catastrophic destruction</i></p>
<p>⁶ Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.</p>	<p>4. The Philistines Seek Revenge <i>a. Their Question: Who? / Why?</i> <i>b. The Answer</i> <i>c. Their Response</i></p>
<p>⁷ Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease." ⁸ So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.</p>	<p>5. Samson Exacts His Own Revenge <i>a. His justification (personal offense)</i> <i>b. His limit</i> <i>c. His actions</i></p>
<p>⁹ Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. ¹⁰ And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."</p>	<p>6. The Philistines Enter Judah for Samson <i>a. Philistine army deploys</i> <i>b. The question from the men of Judah</i> <i>c. The intention of the Philistines</i> <i>d. [No resistance from men of Judah?] – friction</i></p>
<p>¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What <i>is</i> this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." ¹² But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves." ¹³ So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.</p>	<p>7. The Men of Judah Approach Samson <i>a. They deploy a large force against Samson</i> <i>b. They are comfortable in the present slavery</i> <i>c. They view Samson's assault as negative</i> <i>d. They desire to deliver Samson to his death</i> <i>e. Samson responds humbly</i> <i>f. They agree to his request</i> <i>g. They bind Samson with two new ropes</i> <i>h. They work on behalf of the enemy (2 sides...)</i></p>
<p>¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that <i>were</i> on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. (cp. 14:6, 19) ¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. ¹⁶ Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!" ¹⁷ And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.</p>	<p>8. The Philistines Attack Bound Samson <i>a. The enemy rushes on him</i> <i>b. The Spirit of the LORD enables him</i> <i>c. He breaks the ropes with ease</i> <i>d. He finds a donkey jawbone</i> <i>e. He kills 1,000 men</i> <i>f. He highlights his victory</i> <i>g. He names the place after his victory</i> <i>h. "Jawbone Height"</i></p>
<p>¹⁸ Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹ So God split the hollow place that <i>is</i> in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.</p>	<p>9. Samson Cries to the LORD in Thirst <i>a. He acknowledges the LORD's empowerment</i> <i>b. He asks for the LORD's provision (physical...)</i> <i>c. God splits a rock, creating an ongoing spring</i> <i>d. "The Well of Him that Called"</i></p>
<p>²⁰ And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.</p>	<p>10. Samson's Period of Impact</p>

Samson was a creature of impulse, working out his life in blind, almost animal fashion, perceiving the next thing that is to be done not in the light of religion or duty, but of opportunity and revenge. (Watson, Robert; *The Complete Biblical Library: The Old Testament, Vol. 5, Joshua-Judges-Ruth*; Springfield, MO; p. 433)

The Apathy of Israel. That leads us to the second thing we need to see in verse 1. Actually, it is hard to see because it is something which is not there. Sometimes silence is eloquent, and that is true here. At every point in the book of Judges, when the people turned from God and experienced God's judgment of political bondage, they reached a point where, as a nation, they repented and cried out to God for a deliverer, a judge to liberate them.

That never happened against the Philistines. Not once did the people realize their danger and cry out to God to deliver them. Things were going too well for that. It was a time of affluence. Because there was no national repentance, there was no national deliverer. The people were slowly but surely losing their identity, but they were so ignorant of what was going on that when God did send Samson, they were ready to hand him over to death rather than to upset the Philistines.

Those two facts—Philistine assimilation and Hebrew apathy—were the keys to God's purposes through Samson. Israel was facing a unique situation. They had not repented, so the Lord did not send a national liberator. Samson was an individualist, fighting personal battles. The other major judges—Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah—led a repentant people against the enemy. Samson, by contrast, fought alone, and his battles were very personal affairs. Not once was he joined in battle by so much as one man. Therefore, when we study his life and see his enormous failures, we need to balance our disgust with the recognition that Samson singlehandedly exposed the dangers of the Philistines and held back their control of Israel. He was the one man of his day who realized that a person or nation could not compromise and remain free to serve God. (Inrig, Gary; *Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*. Moody Press, Chicago, IL; p. 207)

7 Men of Judah. Inrig, pp. 236-237

10 The date of Samson. The period of Samson's twenty-year judgeship (Judg. 15:20) is best placed in the twenty years falling between the battle of Aphek (1 Sam. 4:1-11), when the ark was captured by the Philistines, and the battle of Mizpeh, which brought victory for Israel over this enemy (1 Sam. 7:7-13. The dates involved were c.1075 to 1055 B.C. So, then, the total philistine oppression of forty years (Judg. 13:1), which ended with the Mizpeh victory, was just half over when Samson entered the picture. The logic of bringing Samson, with this manner of Philistine opposition, on the scene at this half-way point in the total forty-year oppression may be thought of as follows:

The first half of the oppression was serious enough for Israel, no doubt, but certainly nothing like it would have taken place following the Aphek battle, had not something been done to interfere. Israel was fully defeated in this disastrous occasion, even twice, and the ark of God was seized by the enemy. The leading priests of the day, Hophni and Phinehas, shameful as their conduct had been, were killed in the Philistine onslaught. After this, all that Israel could naturally expect from the enemy was a marked increase in degree of oppression and suffering. If oppressive measures had been imposed already, they could be expected to be doubled in severity and, if they had been imposed over only a part of the country before, they could be expected to be brought over a much larger area in the days ahead.

There was need, then, for a countermeasure to keep this from happening, one which at least could hold off such increased Philistine activity until God could see the time right for effecting a full Israelite victory. That countermeasure proved to be Samson and his frustrating feats of strength. The final blow would come at Mizpeh, when under Samuel's leadership the Israelites would have a complete military victory that would bring the forty-year period to an end. Meanwhile Samson was to keep the Philistines occupied in their interest with himself, so that Israel generally might be spared from what otherwise certainly would have come upon them. (Wood, Leon; *Distressing Days of the Judges*, Academie Books, Grand Rapids, MI; pp. 303-304)

Lessons:

- 1. We are called to be holy and _____ . We are not to become comfortable living like the world around us.**
- 2. We are to do what God wants for God's _____ .**
- 3. We are either working for God and His people or working against God and His people. "There are no non-combatants..."**
 - a. Are we helping or hurting the _____ of God?**
 - b. Are we encouraging or discouraging the _____ of God?**
- 4. God _____ us to do what He commands us to do.**
- 5. We are to believe God's _____ and act on them. Samson expressed belief (faith) in God during such times.**
- 6. God works His _____ in spite of selfish motives. (We may ruin ourselves but we cannot ruin God's _____.)**