

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"Samson--Lion and Riddle"

Judges 13:24-14:20

Introduction

1. The Philistines subjugated Israel for 40 years (13:1). In the middle of this period, God raised up Samson to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (13:5). He was born with a spiritual assignment!
2. Samson's birth was unusual. It was predicted by the angel of the Lord (13:3ff.). Although Manoah was Samson's father, his mother's name is unknown. Yet he was God's man for the hour.
3. The activities of Samson seem to center around three women: a. Timnath (14, 15), b. Gaza (16:1-3), c. Sorek (16:4-22). Each of these incidents in his life are linked with the divine purpose for his birth (13:5). Take the first woman and the events related to her and see God's beginning to relieve the pressure of Philistia from Israel.

1. INCEPTION 13:24, 25.

Samson was a child of promise. The name given to him might well bear a meaning on what he did to the home of Manoah. His name means "little sun." In Hebrew his name is "Shimshon," hence the English rendering is a shortened form. The Bible indicates he grew naturally and the Lord blessed him supernaturally. The Spirit of God came upon Samson in an unusual fashion. Although the Bible does not give a direct indication of what is meant by this phrase, it is certain that what did take place was no ordinary action. Hence, it may mean that special strength was given to him by the Spirit. In any case, his divine assignment did not lack divine enablement. The Spirit of God is mentioned three other times in relation to Samson (14:6, 19; 15:14).

2. SELECTION 14:1-4.

a. Personal

Samson went directly to the Philistine camp at Timnath. There he found a woman whom he desired for his wife. Now such action is in direct opposition to the revealed will of God (Deut. 7:3, 4). But God had a purpose for this event (14:4).

b. Parental

Even in certain modern societies, parents arrange marriages as outlined here. Albeit, Manoah and his wife objected in line with the Scriptures!

c. Practical

The relationship between Samson and the woman of Timnath was in fact like modern spy activity. It was to the

end that through Samson an occasion might be sought against the Philistines (14:4). Really, this was an occasion "from" the Philistines and not "against" them. This is why Samson said that the woman was "right in his eyes" (14:3). She was in full view of the divine purpose for him (13:5).

3. DEMONSTRATION 14:5-18.

a. Of strength vv. 5-7.

Enroute to Timnath, it is pointed out that Samson had occasion by himself to overcome a lion. It was with the special strength which the Holy Spirit provided for him. To overcome a wild animal is not a one-man job, but for Samson it was because the Spirit of God was with him. The Scripture is clear: he had nothing in his hand with which to perform the act. The Spirit had cleft him or broke through upon him. The verb "talked" (v. 7) suggests that Samson espoused the woman. She was right in his eyes (cf. v. 3).

b. Of vow v. 10.

Question is raised over the "feast" which Samson arranged. Did he in fact break his Nazarite vow in this? The obvious answer is "no." Had he so done, he would not have succeeded in his overthrow of the Philistines (vv. 19, 20). Furthermore, he did not counter his vow in coming near the lion either since the law dealt with persons and not animals (Num. 6:6; Lev. 21:11).

c. Of wisdom vv. 8-18.

It was common for riddles or proverbs of this sort to be told at occasions as described. In any case, all that was left of the lion was a skeleton and bees would happily take advantage of this. It is assumed by the text (v. 8) that considerable time elapsed between the killing of the lion and the return of Samson to find the honey. An established colony was there when he arrived (v. 8). Samson proposed a riddle on this item (v. 14). It was only through the Timnath woman that the Philistines guessed the riddle (v. 18). This angered Samson and he slew 30 Philistines to provide the 30 changes of clothing for those who guessed his riddle (v. 19). Meanwhile, his "wife" was given to his best man (v. 20).

Conclusion Ashkelon is about 25 miles from Timnath. It may have been a city particularly bitter against Israel. This is where Samson went to "begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." The whole account can only be understood in the light of God's purpose for Samson. May our lives be lived consistent with the purpose God has for each of us.