

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 15

Vv. 1- 8 *Samson burns the Philistines' fields.* Samson left Philistia after he had killed thirty men to give changes of garments to the men who found out his riddle by their devious ways. Later he returned and found that his father-in-law had given his wife to another man. This so enraged Samson that he caught foxes, tied a firebrand to the tails of each pair, and set them loose in the standing grain-fields. This brought a great devastation on the land.

Vv. 9-13 *Samson delivered to the Philistines by the men of Judah.* Samson went up into the hill country of Judah to hide from the Philistines after he had destroyed their fields. The men of Judah were distressed when the Philistines came after him and asked Samson to give up himself to the Philistines. When the men of Judah promised

Samson that they would do no harm

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to him themselves, he allowed the men of Judah to deliver him into the hands of his enemies.

*Vv. 14-20 The slaughter of one thousand Philistines.* Samson had no weapons of war with which to defend himself, but even the jawbone of an animal became a vicious weapon of destruction in the hands of the new leader among the Israelites. His secret of strength was in the Spirit of the Lord which came mightily upon him (v. 14) . Ramath-lehi received its name from this unusual event which took place there.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A man's foes are those in his own household.* Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman caused him a lot of trouble and brought much grief on both the Philistines and Samson. He was enraged because the Philistines used his wife to find the meaning of his riddle; and after he had killed thirty of them to get changes of raiment to give as a reward to his thirty companions, he left Philistia for awhile. Later he returned, thinking he would visit his wife, but on this occasion he learned his wife's father had supposed Samson was not pleased with his daughter and had given her to be another man's wife. This was an insult to Samson, and he vented his wrath on the Philistines by destroying their fields of grain. The Philistines in turn burned Samson's father-in-law because his treatment of Samson had brought this loss of grain upon them. Sin often causes grief to everyone, even those who are only remotely connected with a sinful

situation.

2. *Sinners trouble their own houses.* Samson's associations with the Philistines not only caused him to be unwelcome in their midst, but the men of Judah wanted him to stay out of their territory. They were afraid the Philistines would punish them on account of Samson's actions. The men of Judah, therefore, asked Samson to allow them to deliver him to his enemies. Samson agreed upon the condition that the men of Judah themselves not afflict him. Thus, a sinner often finds himself beset on every hand—both friends and foes.
3. *God can strike a straight blow with a crooked stick.* The many devious ways of Samson detract from what might otherwise be a very admirable character. Through him, one thousand Philistines were slain on the occasion when the men of Judah delivered him to the Philistines. Even though Samson had broken a part of his vow, God used him to effect a mighty deliverance against the oppressors of Israel. God does not approve of sinful deeds, but God does use men who sometimes sin to champion His causes of righteousness.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Samson Is Denied His Wife 15:1, 2*

But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go into my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

#### *1. What was the time of the wheat harvest? 15:1*

Wheat harvest comes in Palestine in the early part of June. By that time, several weeks of the dry season

have elapsed, and the fields are in full bloom. Samson went down to Philistia at this very interesting and beautiful time of the year. With him, he took a present for his wife, The present may seem strange to modern times, but it was a customary present for that time. If the animal was used at the time, all who participated in the festive occasion would enjoy the benefits of a gift of a young goat, A delicious and nourishing meal would have been prepared, and the festive occasion would have brought joy to all.

2. *Why did Samson's father-in-law give his wife to another man? 15:2*

Samson was shocked to learn that he was no longer welcome in his father-in-law's house as the husband of his older daughter. The father-in-law excused himself for having given his older daughter to another man by saying he supposed Samson was not pleased with her. He would have come to this conclusion because Samson had gone out from the wedding feast in a rage and killed thirty Philistine men in order to give thirty changes of raiment to his companions who had tricked him into revealing the meaning of his riddle. The father-in-law must have received another dowry from a second husband, and his greediness probably prompted him to make this arrangement for his daughter's second marriage. His eagerness to give his younger daughter to Samson indicates his desire for the dowry which would have been customary.

*Samson Burns the Philistines' Corn 15:3-13*

3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them *a* displeasure.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put *a* firebrand in the midst between two tails.

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5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

9 Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

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3. *What did Samson mean by a displeasure? 15:3*

Samson had in mind the bringing of injury or calamity upon the Philistines. The word is sometimes translated as an evil, He certainly had in mind the afflicting of many casualties in Philistia. He regarded the treatment which he had received from his father-in-law as but one more instance of the attitude of the Philistines towards the Israelites. He was determined to avenge the wrong which he had received from one member of the Philistines upon the entire nation, or at least upon the whole city of Timnath,

4. *Were foxes plentiful in Philistia? 15:4*

The word translated "foxes" in the Hebrew is *shualim*. On some occasions it might be translated as jackals. These are animals which resemble foxes and are frequently classed with the foxes even among the Arabs of the present day. The animals are still found in great quantities around Joppa, Gaza, and in Galilee. They run together and may be rather easily caught.

5. *What kind of grain was destroyed? 15:5*

The authorized version has the word *corn*, but the reference is to shocks of wheat which were mentioned in verse five. Some of the grain was still standing in the field; some of it had been cut and gathered into bundles. Bundles had been placed in shocks, and the people were eagerly anticipating the storing of the grain from the harvest. Samson's act of vengeance brought great hardship upon them. The fires raged so heavily that destruction was even brought to the vineyards and the olive groves.

6. *Did the Philistines kill Samson's wife? 15:6*

The Philistines found out what had happened. They knew Samson had done them this "displeasure" on account of the treatment which he had received at the hands of his father-in-law, the Timnite. As a result, the Philistine

people vented their wrath upon the Timnite and Samson's former wife. It is not clear whether they actually burned them, but it is suggested by Keil and Delitzsch that they burned his house to the ground with the occupants inside it.

7. *What is the meaning of the expression, "hip and thigh"? 15:8*

Such an expression is proverbial for a cruel, merciless slaughter. The German people are known for "cutting arm and leg in two." Commentaries make reference to the Arabic "war in thigh fashion." Samson's great strength enabled him to run in hot pursuit of his adversaries. When he caught them, he would be able to stand his ground in hand-to-hand combat. Today, athletes are greatly concerned about their legs. When strength goes from their legs, they are no longer able to perform as in former days. It is easy to see how Samson was described as having smitten the Philistines "hip and thigh."

8. *Where was Etam? 15:11*

Two places by the name of Etam are mentioned in the Scripture. One, mentioned in II Chronicles 11:6, lies between Bethlehem and Tekoa. This spot was fortified by King Rehoboam and stood south of Jerusalem in the "hill country of Judah. The other is mentioned in I Chronicles 4:32, along with Ain, Rimmon, and other Simeonite towns. Since Samson "went down" to Etam, the latter place fits very well. He would have had to "go up" if he were to go to the aforementioned Etam.

9. *Where was Lehi? 15:9*

The Philistines advanced with their armies to avenge themselves for the *defeat* they had sustained at the hands of Samson. They came into the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah and spread themselves out in Lehi. This spot is probably mentioned again in II Samuel 23:11.

It cannot be traced with any certainty, but the consensus of opinion among Biblical geographers is for placing it in the southwestern approach to the mountains of Judah near Beersheba.

*10. Why were the men of Judah alarmed? 15:10*

By fleeing to a place in the south part of the Promised Land, Samson had led the Philistines to come up into the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah. The presence of the armies of the oppressors would cause great concern to the men of Judah. They evidently did not recognize Samson as a deliverer whom the Lord had raised up for them. They did not crowd around him in order to smite the oppressors with his help and drive them out of the land. They had been so degraded by the Philistine oppression that they cast reproach upon Samson.

*11. Why did the men of Judah rebuke Samson? 15:11*

The men of Judah rebuked Samson for coming into their territory to hide from the Philistines. Furthermore, they chided him for having smitten the Philistines in the first place. They asked him if he did not know that the Philistines ruled over the Israelites. If he were aware of this, the men of Judah felt it was foolish to offend their oppressors. As a result, they had come in great numbers to deliver Samson to the Philistines.

*12. Why did Samson allow the men of Judah to bind him?  
15:12*

Samson did not want to fight with members of one of the tribes of Israel. Consequently, Samson asked the men of Judah only to deliver him to the Philistines without their harming him themselves. He had no fear of the enemies of the people of the Lord, but he was concerned lest his own people turn against him. Such a circumstance as revealed here indicates Israel was one people, even though all did not rally

to support Samson.

*Samson Slays a Thousand Philistines 15:14-20*

14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16 And Samson said,

With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,  
with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

19 And God slave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

*13. Why did Samson use a jawbone of an ass? 15:15*

The men of Israel were probably without weapons. Such was their condition in the days of Saul. Samson had killed the lion with his bare hands; but when he confronted the hosts of the Philistines, he used the first object available to him. Some believe his weapon was the kind of a tool which the men of Israel used in cutting grain.

Instances are known of their placing sharpened flint stones in the ridges of jawbones and using them as scythes to cut their grain. Samson may have had such a fearful weapon available to him.

*14. What is the meaning of the name Ramath-lehi? 15:17*

The literal meaning of Ramath-lehi is "the jawbone height." Samson gave this name to the place where he met and defeated the Philistines. For this reason, it is probable that the name Lehi was given to the place where he fled only after this encounter. The author of the book of Judges used the name naturally as the name by which the spot was known when the book was written.

*15. What is the 'meaning of the name En-hakkore? 15:19*

The fountain which was caused to spring forth in Lehi was named En-hakkore, which means "the crier's well which is at Lehi." The place was still known when the book was written. Such a wonderful provision for Samson is reminiscent of that which was made for the Israelites at Horeb and in Kadesh (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8, 11). Samson was very near exhaustion after he had slain *a* thousand of the Philistines in the different places suggested by the reference to heaps upon heaps (verse 16). God miraculously supplied water in the place of the jaw, Lehi; and Samson was revived.

*16. Why were the days of Samson's judgeship called the days of the Philistines? \_15:20*

Samson judged while the Philistines oppressed Israel. His rule was twenty years out of this period. This reference indicates clearly how the oppression may have overlapped the times of the judgeships of the various leaders in Israel. For this reason, it is better not to add up all of the chronological notes, but to use only the years of the judgeships in order to determine the entire span of the period covered by the book of Judges.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 15

1. How many foxes did Samson catch?
2. What did he tie between the tails of each pair of foxes?
3. Who burned Samson's father-in-law and his wife?
4. Where did Samson go to escape from the Philistines?
5. How many men from Judah went out to catch Samson?
6. With what did the men of Judah bind Samson to deliver him to the Philistines?
7. What did Samson use to kill the thousand Philistines?
8. What did Samson call the name of the place where he killed the one thousand Philistines?
9. What did Samson call the name of the place where God gave him water to drink?
10. How long did Samson judge Israel?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 16

Vv. 1- 3 *Samson in Gaza*. The city of Gaza was one of the five cities in the Philistine Pentapolis. Samson had gone down to Ashkelon to kill the thirty men from whom he took the changes of raiment to give to his companions at the wedding feast. This city of Ashkelon was also one of these five most important Philistine cities. After he was spurned by his wife and her father, he went to Gaza; and it also felt the sting of the hand of the strong man from Dan.

Vv. 4-20 *Samson and Delilah*. The association of Samson and Delilah proved to be the undoing of this last of the judges. It is not stated that Samson married Delilah. He married only the

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woman of Timnath who had pleased him earlier in his life. The Bible does say, however, that Samson loved Delilah, Evidently the love he felt for her was not returned, for she entered into an agreement with the lords of the Philistine cities whereby she delivered Samson to them to be destroyed.

Vv. 21-31 *Samson's last days and death.* The Philistines blinded Samson and imprisoned him. His great strength was put to work in a mill as he performed the task which was ordinarily done by animals, Samson stood as a symbol of the people of Israel. His imprisonment represented the triumph of the Philistines over the people of God. For this reason, the Philistines brought him out of the prison to their temple in order that they might torment him and revel in their victory,

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *"Her house is the way to hell" (Proverbs 7:27).* The writer of Proverbs concluded his chapter of advice for a young man by describing a harlot and saying, "Her house is the way to hell." As the proverb says, "She hast cast down many wounded" (verse 26). Samson's first step on the road to ruin was his going to the Philistines to marry a wife. At the harlot's house in Gaza, he is well on the way to the depths of despair.
2. *The Lord was departed.* In the days before the flood God said that His Spirit would not always strive with men. They were wicked and yet he gave them 120 years to obey the preaching of Noah. Paul said that

God gave up the people of his day who were reprobate (Romans 1:24) . Samson broke every part of his vow, and the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. The irony of the tragedy was revealed when Samson was aroused from his sleep and did not realize God's Spirit had left him. Christians who have been promised the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit should pray daily lest the Spirit depart from them and leave them powerless.

3. *Only this once.* Samson prayed for God to give him one more victory over the Philistines. He had allowed his hair to grow and was evidently keeping the vow of the Nazarites which had been upon him from his birth. God did not forsake him in his great need. Workers for the Lord often come to the real moment of truth. On these occasions they pray for God to strengthen them for the critical moments of their lives. God does not forsake those who love Him.