

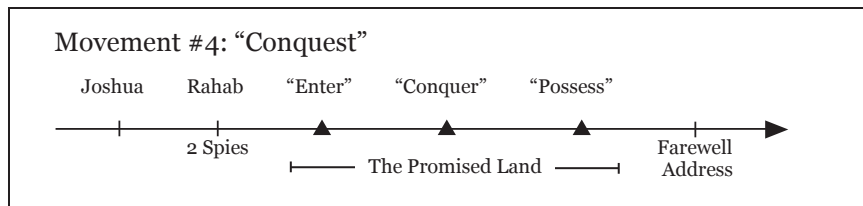
SESSION 4

Deeds of the Judges– Part Three

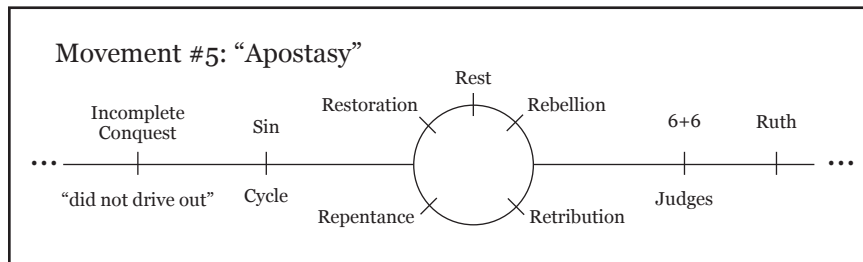
I. PRAYER/REVIEW

II. PANORAMA TIMELINES (Movements 4 and 5)

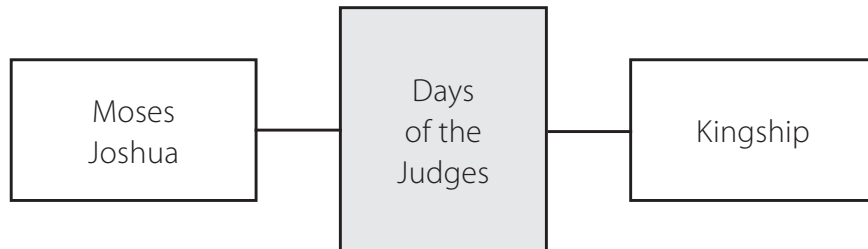
A. Movement #4: "Conquest"



B. Movement #5: "Apostasy"



III. HISTORICAL TRANSITION



IV. BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Charted

JUDGES		
KEY THEME: "Defeat & Deliverance"	KEY PHRASE: "Did Evil"	KEY CONCEPT: "Sin Cycle"
Days of the Judges 1 3	Deeds of the Judges 3 16	Difficulties during the Judges 17 21
Prologue	Body	Appendix
Sin Cycle (Judges 2)	6 Major - 6 Minor	Idolatry/Civil War

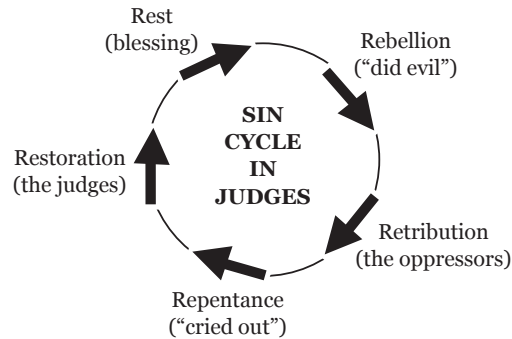
B. Major and Minor Judges: Listed

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Major Judges | 2. Minor Judges |
| • Othniel | • Shamgar |
| • Ehud | • Tola |
| • Deborah/Barak | • Jair |
| • Gideon | • Ibzan |
| • Jephthah | • Elon |
| • Samson | • Abdon |

V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (Judges 10-13)

A. The Judgeship of Jephthah: Setting (Judg 10:6-16)

1. The "Sin Cycle"



2. Rest

This element of the sin cycle suggests that some part of Israel (tribe or tribes) was at peace, not at war. The text does not declare it in this story (Jephthah) but is rather assumed.

3. Rebellion

Judges 10:6-7^a

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, ⁷he became angry with them.*

Note that the **rebellion** of the Israelites is described in two important ways:

- a. They served other gods (idolatry).
- b. They forsook (abandoned, deserted) the Lord (YHWH).

This extended description of the people's apostasy is more elaborate than preceding cycles. This likely points to increasing degradation of Israel's religious life and the climax of the "Canaanization" of the Israelites.

Joshua's warning had predicted the disastrous effect of not driving out the Canaanites.

Joshua 23:6-13

*“Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸But you are to **hold fast to the Lord your God**, as you have until now. ⁹“The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹So be very careful to love the Lord your God. ¹²“But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³then you may be sure that the Lord your God **will no longer drive out** these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.”*

4. Retribution

Judges 10:7^b-9

*He **sold them** into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, ⁸who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they **oppressed** all the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites. ⁹The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim; Israel was in great distress.*

- a. Note that the text references God's anger, the first time this "emotion" (anthropopathism) has been mentioned since Othniel's deliverance (cf. 3:8). Conditions are getting steadily worse.
- b. Note also that two nations are mentioned as the oppressors: the Philistines and the Ammonites. The Philistine oppression will be elaborated with

the story of the next major judge, Samson. The Ammonites will be the presenting problem that Jephthah must challenge in the present narrative.

- c. Note that the primary location of this conflict is in the area of the Trans-Jordan, that is, east of the Jordan River (called the land of Gilead).

5. Repentance

Repentance must always precede restoration.

Commonly in the Book of Judges, the phrase **“cried out”** to the Lord supposes a heart of repentance. But in this sin-cycle story the repentance seems to be in two parts.

a. Initial confession

Judges 10:10

*Then the Israelites **cried out to the Lord**, “We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals.”*

One would expect that this confession (like so many others in the Book of Judges) would issue forth into Restoration. But at this deteriorating time of deepening apostasy, God replies:

Judges 10:11-14

The Lord replied, “When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹²the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands? ¹³But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. ¹⁴Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”

Compare God's anger here with that written in Deuteronomy 32:37-38:

He will say: “Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, ³⁸the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter!

- (1) God reminds the Israelites of this past faithfulness (Judg 10:11-12).

- (2) God points out that this present people has forsaken Him and practiced idolatry (10:13).
- (3) God seemingly rejects this initial confession as ritual not reality.

b. Intense confession (brokenness)

Judges 10:15-16^a

*But the Israelites said to the Lord, "**We have sinned.** Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." ¹⁶Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the Lord.*

- (1) The Israelites acknowledge (take ownership of) their grievous sin (15).
- (2) The Israelites humbly place themselves in God's hands that He might do what's best (15).
- (3) The Israelites plead again for deliverance (15).
- (4) The Israelites remove the false gods/false worship and resolve again to serve/worship YHWH.

Insight: Repentance

The basic theological idea or meaning of repentance is "turning away from." It carries the idea of traveling in one direction and turning to travel in another. It's a change of mind or disposition with accompanying action.

To repent of sin is to change one's mind about that sin (while changing one's actions/direction). Often it carries a sense of remorse.

The story of the Israelites in Judges 10 raises the practical questions:

- Is there a difference between casual (rote) confession–repentance and sincere brokenness–repentance?
- If so, is there an application for us today? (easy confession vs. broken confession)

6. Restoration

With the second brokenness-confession (10:15-16^a) stated, the Lord compassionately responds.

Judges 10:16^b

And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.

B. The Judgeship of Jephthah: Story (10:17-12:7)

1. A leadership vacuum (10:17-18)

Judges 10:17-18

When the Ammonites were called to arms and camped in Gilead, the Israelites assembled and camped at Mizpah.

¹⁸*The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Whoever will take the lead in attacking the Ammonites will be head over all who live in Gilead."*

2. A leader emerges (11:1-40)

a. The person: Jephthah (1-3)

(1) He was a mighty warrior (1).

(2) He was the son of a prostitute (2).

(3) He was rejected as a child (2).

(4) He settled in the land Tob (3).

(5) He led a band of "adventurers" (wild and reckless) (3).

b. The plea: come! (4-11)

Judges 11:4-8

Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel, ⁵the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. ⁶"Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites."

⁷*Jephthah said to them, "Didn't you hate me and drive me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now, when you're in trouble?" ⁸The elders of Gilead*

said to him, "Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead."

Note that in this case the Lord does not directly raise up the deliverer. The elders of Gilead are desperate, even to acknowledging that he (Jephthah) would then be their acknowledged head (chief) “commander.”

Jephthah, however, is suspicious. He questions their sincerity. The elders respond:

Judges 11:10-11

The elders of Gilead replied, “The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say.”¹¹ So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.

- (1) Jephthah will be the “head commander” to oppose the Ammonites.
- (2) The elders have sworn to this agreement: “The Lord is our witness” (10).
- (3) The agreement is solemnized at Mizpeh in the presence of Jephthah, the elders, and the assembled people (11).
- (4) But this raises a few critical questions:
 - (a) Where is God in this process?
 - (b) Will God accept Jephthah?
 - (c) Does Jephthah know the Lord?

c. The plan (12-28)

- (1) First round of negotiations (12-13)

Judges 11:12-13

Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king with the question: “What do you have against me that you have attacked my country?”¹³ The king of the Ammonites answered Jephthah’s messengers, “When Israel came up out of Egypt, they took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, all the way to the Jordan. Now give it back peaceably.”

- (a) Jephthah quickly enters into hard-nosed negotiations (tone and language like that of a king-peer to the Ammonite king).
 - (b) The king of the Ammonites appealed to long-past history of losing land and now taking it back. The king's history is inaccurate/skewed.
- (2) Second round of negotiations (14-28)
- (a) Jephthah corrects the Ammonite king's distorted history.
 - Israel did not take the land of the Ammonites (15).
 - Israel skirted around the land of Edom (16-17).
 - Israel passed around the land of Moab (18).
 - Israel defeated Sihon and the Amorites and captured their land (19-21).
 - (b) Jephthah concludes that if Israel drove out these people, then by what right do the Ammonites lay claim to this land (22-26).
 - (c) Jephthah concludes:

Judges 11:27
I have not wronged you, but you are doing me wrong by waging war against me. Let the Lord, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.
- (3) Ammonite king fails to respond (28)
- Judges 11:28
The king of Ammon, however, paid no attention to the message Jephthah sent him.

d. The promise (vow) (29-40)

(1) First: the empowering to lead (29)

Judges 11:29

*Then the **Spirit of the Lord** came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites.*

The empowering of Jephthah suggests that the Lord is behind the future deliverance. It may suggest that Jephthah is now the judge raised up by the Lord.

(2) Second: the making of a vow (30-40)

Judges 11:30-31

And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, ³¹whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

(3) Third: the victory won

Judges 11:32

Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands.

Insight: The rash (?) vow of Jephthah

Even as Jephthah had negotiated with his own people to be named chief commander, even as he had attempted to bargain with the king of the Ammonites, now Jephthah through his vow to the Lord attempts to bargain with God.

What is it that he will sacrifice (“whatever comes out of the door of my house”)? Herein lies the theological debate: was he expecting a person or perhaps an animal (an acceptable sacrifice)?

The fact is that his daughter came to greet him, an event that caused Jephthah to lament, “Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break” (11:35).

His daughter acknowledged that the vow must not be broken and requested time to grieve with her friends and bemoan the fact “I will never marry” (11:37). To not marry would mean no children and therefore no heirs for Jephthah (since his daughter was an only child).

So, what was the sacrifice? Did Jephthah offer as a vow the human sacrifice of his daughter? Or, did he “sacrifice” her to perpetual virginity (“never marry”) in lifelong tabernacle service (cf. Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)?

Scholars are divided as to what or whom was sacrificed.

What do you think?

3. A leader challenged (12:1-6)

a. The Ephraimites' complaint (1)

Judges 12:1

The Ephraimite forces were called out, and they crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, "Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We're going to burn down your house over your head."

b. Jephthah's reply (2-3)

Judges 12:2-3

Jephthah answered, "I and my people were engaged in a great struggle with the Ammonites, and although I called, you didn't save me out of their hands. ³When I saw that you wouldn't help, I took my life in my hands and crossed over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave me the victory over them. Now why have you come up today to fight me?"

c. Ensuing warfare (4-6)

The Gileadites (Jephthah) prevail over the Ephraimites.

4. A leader dies (12:7)

Judges 12:7

Jephthah led Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in a town in Gilead.

C. The Judgships of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15)

1. Ibzan (8-10)

(a) He was a judge from Bethlehem (8).

(b) He had thirty sons and thirty daughters (9).

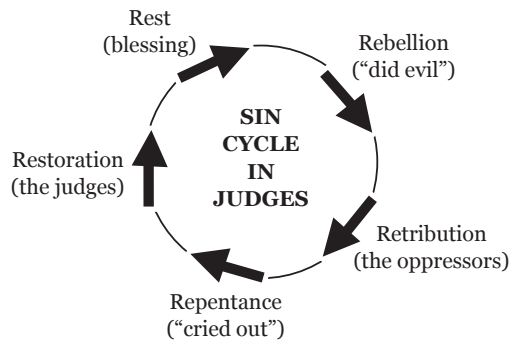
(c) He took daughters-in-law and sons-in-law from outside his clan (9).

(d) He led Israel for seven years, died, and was buried in Bethlehem (10).

2. Elon (11-12)
 - (a) He was a Zebulunite (11).
 - (b) He led Israel ten years (11).
 - (c) He died and was buried in Aijalon in the territory of Zebulun (12).
3. Abdon (13-15)
 - (a) He was a son of Hillel (from Pirathon) (13).
 - (b) He had forty sons and grandsons (who rode on seventy donkeys) (14).
 - (c) He led Israel eight years (14).
 - (d) He died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, the hill country of the Amalekites (15).

D. The Judgship of Samson: Introduced (Judg 13)

1. "Sin Cycle"



Judges 13:1

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.*

- a. "Again": the repetitive nature of the days of the judges.
- b. "Did evil": Rebellion.
- c. "Delivered them": the Lord brings Retribution.
- d. "Forty years": the longest of all the oppressions in the Book of Judges.

2. Samson's story: charted

SAMSON			
Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapter 16
Birth of Samson	Marriage of Samson	Deeds of Samson	Downfall of Samson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin Cycle • Miraculous birth • Nazarite vow • "Spirit of the Lord" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samson's demand • "Spirit of the Lord" • Riddles and rashness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philistine troubles • "Spirit of the Lord" • Judge for 20 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deception and Delilah • Nazarite vow broken • "Lord had left him" • Death

E. The Judgship of Samson: Discussed (Judg 13-16)

1. Birth of Samson (13:2-24)
 - a. The supernatural circumstances (2-7)
 - (1) The barren wife of Manoah (2-3)

Judges 13:2-3

*A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. ³The **angel of the Lord** appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son."*

Insight (Constable quoting Wiersbe, 91)

“When God wants to do something really great in His world, He doesn't send an army but an angel.”

Barren women of Scripture who supernaturally conceive include Sarah (Abraham), Rebekah (Isaac), Rachel (Jacob), Hannah (Elkanah), Elizabeth (Zechariah) and Mary (conceived by the Holy Spirit). The wife of Manoah (name?) can be added to the list.

(2) The angelic instructions (4-5)

- For the mother: no wine or alcohol or unclean food.
- For the son: Nazarite restrictions from birth.

Insight: Nazarite vows

The instructions for Nazarite vows are found in Numbers 6:1-21. Either a man or a woman could bind themselves to the vow and as such would be separated (consecrated) unto God for particular service (for life or a period of time).

Probable examples of lifelong commitment to being a Nazarite include Samson (Judg 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15).

While under the vow the person abstained from wine or alcoholic drink. The hair was left uncut. The individual could not touch a dead body (or if done, undergo a ritual of purification and re-commitment to the vow). When released from the vow certain requirements were expected.

In essence the life of a Nazarite was one of separation and consecration unto the Lord. It was a life of special devotion.

(3) The encounter described to Manoah (6-7)

Manoah's wife described the "awesome" appearance of the unnamed angelic messenger. She related the news that the miraculously conceived boy would "be a Nazarite of God from birth until the day of his death" (7).

b. The prayer of Manoah (8-14)

(1) He asks God to send "the man" again (8).

(2) God sends "the man to the wife of Manoah who finds her husband (9-11).

(3) Manoah asks "the man" what should be "the rule for the boy's life and work?" (12).

(4) "The man" ("angel of the Lord") replies:

Judges 13:13-14

*The **angel of the Lord** answered, "Your wife must do all that I have told her. ¹⁴She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her."*

c. The identity of "the man" revealed (15-23)

(1) Manoah seeks to honor the man with a specially-prepared meal (15).

(2) The figure (unrecognized "angel of the Lord") suggests that the meal be made an offering to the Lord (16).

(3) Manoah asks the figure's name to honor him, only to be told the name is "beyond understanding" (17-18).

- The "angel of the Lord" is the pre-incarnate Christ.
- Isaiah describes the future Messiah's name (or, at least, His descriptors) as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).
- The New Testament speaks of the Messiah as bearing the name "Immanuel" (God with us) or "Jeshua" (God saves).

(4) Manoah prepares the meal (offering) as a sacrifice only to see the figure (“angel of the Lord”) ascend upward in the flames not to be seen again (19-20).

(5) Manoah has a moment of revelation (21-23).

Judges 13:21-23

*When the **angel of the Lord** did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the **angel of the Lord**.²² “We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!”²³ But his wife answered, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.”*

d. The boy is born (24-25)

Judges 13:24-25

*The woman gave birth to a boy and named him **Samson**. He grew and the Lord blessed him,²⁵ and the **Spirit of the Lord** began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

2. The marriage of Samson (14:1-20)

a. Samson demands a Philistine wife (1-4).

Judges 14:1-2

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman.² When he returned, he said to his father and mother, “I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.”

(1) Canaanite marriages were forbidden in Mosaic Law (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:13).

(2) Nonetheless, Samson per the customs of the day demands that his parents arrange the marriage.

(3) Samson’s parents are greatly disappointed, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among our people?” (3).

(4) Samson responds: “Get her for me” (3).

Insight:

The Nazarite young Samson shows no evidence of piety or devotion to God. He demands what was forbidden, to intermarry with the uncircumcised, oppressor Philistines.

Yet behind all the demands and disobedience, God is at work:

(His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.) (Judg 14:4)

God can even work through man's bad choices to accomplish His greater purposes.

- b. Samson (and his parents) arrange for the wedding (5)

Judges 14:5^a

Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother.

- (1) Samson has convinced (badgered?) his parents concerning the Philistine marriage.
- (2) The party departs to Timnah to complete arrangements (see 14:7: "he/Samson liked her").
- (3) Samson is separated from his parents on the journey—Samson will be alone when he faces the lion (14:5^b).

- c. Samson and his riddle (5^b-18)

- (1) On the way to Timnah to meet with his future, Philistine wife, Samson has an encounter with a lion.

Judges 14:5^b-6

As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him.

⁶*The **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done.*

(2) Later, in the return to Timnah to formally marry his Philistine bride, he turns aside and sees surprisingly (supernaturally?) that bees have made a hive and honey in the carcass of the lion (6-9).

- Samson eats some of the honey.
- Samson gives honey to his parents (without explanation).

(3) The Wedding Feast begins (10-11)

Judges 14:10-11

Now his father went down to see the woman. And there Samson held a feast, as was customary for young men. ¹¹When the people saw him, they chose thirty men to be his companions.

- Customarily a wedding feast would last a week, then the consummation of the marriage.
- Samson did not have attendants (groomsmen) so thirty Philistines were provided for him.
- These attendants were more like bodyguards (over Samson, the foreigner-groom) than companions.

(4) Samson proposes a riddle-contest (12-13)

Judges 14:12-13

"Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. ¹³If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes."

"Tell us your riddle," they said. "Let's hear it."

(5) Samson speaks the riddle (14)

Judges 14:14

He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." For three days they could not give the answer.

(6) The riddle is solved

- Three days passed and the thirty have no answer (14).
- On the fourth day the thirty enlist Samson's soon-to-be wife to assist them. She agrees and begins to wear down Samson's resolve through peevish whining and tears (15-17).
- On the seventh day Samson is worn down and tells his "fiancée" (note: the marriage will not be official until the seventh day and the consummation).
- The companions reveal the answer (to get the wagered reward of clothing).

Judges 14:18

Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle."

d. Samson's wedding story: summarized (19-20)

Judges 14:19-20

*Then the **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father's home. ²⁰And Samson's wife was given to one of his companions who had attended him at the feast.*

- (1) For the third time in his life the Holy Spirit works in/through Samson (cf. 13:25; 14:6, 19).
- (2) Samson is perhaps unwittingly accomplishing the role of judge to deliver the Israelites from Philistine oppression. His motives are mixed (if even that) but God is working nonetheless through him and his failings.
- (3) His passionate anger against the thirty companions of Timnah has translated into the death of thirty Philistines at Ashkelon.

(4) To top it off, Samson returns to Timnah to discover that his “fiancée” has been given to one of the thirty.

3. The vengeance of Samson (15:1-20)

a. The return to Timnah (1-8)

After his anger had cooled Samson returned with a bridal gift (“young goat”) to consummate the interrupted wedding feast. His father-in-law had given the “bride” to another and offered the younger sister. Samson now (as contrasted to before) believes he has the right to enact revenge. He burns up valuable Philistine fields.

Judges 15:6-8

When the Philistines asked, “Who did this?” they were told, “Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, because his wife was given to his companion.” So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death.

⁷Samson said to them, “Since you’ve acted like this, I swear that I won’t stop until I get my revenge on you.”

⁸He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam.

b. The pursuit to capture Samson (9-13)

(1) The Philistines enter the land of Judah (9),

(2) The Philistines only want Samson as their prisoner (10).

(3) The men of Judah choose to compromise with the life of Samson rather than fight for their freedom from the Philistines (11-13).

c. The power of Samson comes upon his enemies (14-17)

Judges 15:14-17

*As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands.*

¹⁵Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it

and struck down a thousand men. ¹⁶Then Samson said, "With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey's jawbone I have killed a thousand men." ¹⁷When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi.

d. The prayer of Samson, now a deliverer-judge (18-21)

Judges 15:18-19

Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord, "You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore, and it is still there in Lehi.

(1) Samson gives God the credit (18).

(2) Samson cries out for God's help (18-19).

(3) Samson will judge for seventeen years (21).

4. Samson and Delilah (16:1-22)

a. His immoral behavior at Gaza (1-3)

Instead of being the judge-deliverer of the oppressors, the Philistines, Samson engages in an inappropriate liaison with a prostitute.

b. His ill-advised affair in the Valley of Sorek (4-5)

Judges 16:4-5

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. ⁵The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

c. His ill-fated interactions with Delilah (6-20)

Delilah was bribed to find the secret to Samson's power and strength. Thus, a cat-and-mouse episode began.

The following chart summarizes the affair (6-20).

SAMSON AND DELILAH			
The aim: To discover the secret of Samson's strength			
Episode Number	Samson's Revelation	Delilah's Action	Result
1 (16:6-9)	Tie me with seven fresh thongs (bowstrings)	"Philistines are upon you"	Samson breaks the bonds ("You made a fool of me")
2 (16:10-12)	Tie me securely with new (unused) ropes	"Philistines are upon you"	Samson snaps the ropes ("Fool of me... lying to me")
3 (16:13-14)	Weave seven braids of my head... tighten with a pin to a loom	"Philistines are upon you"	Samson pulls up pin and loom (Don't love me... "made a fool of me"... Nagging day after day)
4 (16:15-20)	Told her everything... shave my head (Nazarite)	Lulled Samson to sleep... cut his hair "Philistines are upon you"	"And his strength left him" "...the Lord had left him"

d. The inglorious aftermath (21-22)

Judges 16:21-22

Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

²²But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

5. Death of Samson (16:23-31)

a. Rulers of the Philistines celebrate through sacrifice to Dagon the fall of Samson (23-24).

b. Rulers of the Philistines bring Samson to gloat over him (25).

Judges (16:25)

While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars...

c. Samson turns the tables upon the rulers of the Philistines (26-30).

Judges 16:28-30

Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." ²⁹Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, ³⁰Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

d. Burial of Samson (31)

Insight: Samson

Samson was a tragic figure with great promise at his birth, mostly a dismal failure in life with a brief personal revival at the end.

As a Nazarite, he consistently broke his vow: he drank wine (likely other alcoholic drink), he touched a dead carcass, and he allowed Delilah to cut his hair.

Further, he had the enabling Holy Spirit but seemingly little appreciation for it. He was lusty, selfish, rash, impious.

Yet, for all that, God chose to use him in spite of his weakness. Is there a lesson here for us all?

IV. TAKEAWAYS

A. From Jephthah

1. Selfish ambition can lead to disaster.

Philippians 2:3

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...

2. Rash vows are to be avoided.

Numbers 30:1-2

Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: ²When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Matthew 5:33-37

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

B. From Samson

At least three lessons can be learned from Samson's life. Note the following taken from Cupp, "Panorama of the Bible," 96:

1. Samson's life parallels the journey of Israel. Both were called to be holy/separated unto the Lord; both ignored God's clear command of purity.
2. Samson chased after foreign women; Israel chased after foreign gods.
3. Samson had the power of the Holy Spirit but lost it; Israel had the presence of Holy Spirit but neglected it.