

---

JUDGES 14:1 Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

---

Samson marries a wife of the Philistines, Jdg 14:1-4. Slays a young lion at Timnath, in the carcass of which he afterwards finds a swarm of bees, Jdg 14:5-9. He makes a feast; they appoint him thirty companions, to whom he puts forth a riddle, which they cannot expound, Jdg 14:10-14. They entice his wife to get the interpretation from him; she succeeds, informs them, and they tell the explanation, Jdg 14:15-18. He is incensed, and slays thirty of the Philistines, Jdg 14:19, Jdg 14:20.

#### Verse 1

Went down to Timnath - A frontier town of the Philistines, at the beginning of the lands belonging to the tribe of Judah, Jos 15:57; but afterwards given up to Dan, Jos 19:43. David took this place from the Philistines, but they again got possession of it in the reign of Ahaz, 2Chr 28:18.

---

JUDGES 14:2 He came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me as wife."

JUDGES 14:3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of your brothers, or among all my people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?"

Samson said to his father, "Get her for me; for she pleases me well."

---

#### Verse 3

Is there never a woman - To marry with any that did not belong to the Israelitish stock, was contrary to the law, Exo 34:16; Deu 7:3. But this marriage of Samson was said to be of the Lord, Jdg 14:4; that is, God permitted it, (for in no other sense can we understand the phrase), that it might be a means of bringing about the deliverance of Israel.

For she pleaseth me well - כי היא ישרה בעיני כי hi yisherah beeynai, for she is right in my eyes. This is what is supposed to be a sufficient reason to justify either man or woman in their random choice of wife or husband; the maxim is the same with that of the poet: - "Thou hast no fault, or I no fault can spy;

Thou art all beauty or all blindness I."

When the will has sufficient power, its determinations are its own rule of right. That will should be pure and well directed that says, It shall be so, because I Will it should be so. A reason of this kind is similar to that which I have seen in a motto on the brass ordnance of Lewis XIV., *Ultima Ratio Regum*, the sum of regal logic; i.e., "My will, backed by these instruments of destruction, shall be the rule of right and wrong." The rules and principles of this logic are now suspected; and it is not likely to be generally received again without violent demonstration.

---

JUDGES 14:4 But his father and his mother didn't know that it was of the LORD; for he sought an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines had rule over Israel.

JUDGES 14:5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah: and behold, a young lion roared against him.

---

Verse 5

A young lion roared against him - Came fiercely out upon him, ready to tear him to pieces.

---

JUDGES 14:6 The Spirit of the LORD came mightily on him, and he tore him as he would have torn a young goat; and he had nothing in his hand: but he didn't tell his father or his mother what he had done.

---

Verse 6

He rent him as he would have rent a kid - Now it is not intimated that he did this by his own natural strength, but by the Spirit of the Lord coming mightily upon him: so that his strength does not appear to be his own, nor to be at his command; his might was, by the will of God, attached to his hair and to his Nazarate.

---

JUDGES 14:7 He went down, and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well.

---

Verse 7

And talked with the woman - That is, concerning marriage; thus forming the espousals.

---

JUDGES 14:8 After a while he returned to take her; and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey.

---

Verse 8

After a time - Probably about one year; as this was the time that generally elapsed between espousing and wedding.

A swarm of bees and honey in the carcass - By length of time the flesh had been entirely consumed off the bones, and a swarm of bees had formed their combs within the region of the thorax, nor was it an improper place; nor was the thing unfrequent, if we may credit ancient writers; the carcasses of slain beasts becoming a receptacle for wild bees. The beautiful episode in the 4th Georgic of Virgil, beginning at ver. 317, proves that the ancients believed that bees might be engendered in the body of a dead ox: -

Pastor Aristaeus fugiens Peneia Tempe -

Quatuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros  
Ducit, et intacta totidem cervice juventas.  
Post, ubi nona suos Aurora induxerat ortus.  
Inferias Orphei mittit, lucumque revisit.  
Hic ver o subitum, ac dietu mirabile monstrum  
Adspiciunt, liquefacta bourn per viscera toto  
Stridere apes utero, et ruptis effervere costis;  
Immensasque trahi nubes, jamque arbore summa  
Confluere, et lentis uvam demittere ramis.  
Virg. Geor. lib. iv., ver. 550. "Sad Aristaeus from fair Tempe fled,  
His bees with famine or diseases dead -  
Four altars raises, from his herd he culls  
For slaughter four the fairest of his bulls;  
Four heifers from his female store he took,  
All fair, and all unknowing of the yoke.  
Nine mornings thence, with sacrifice and prayers,  
The powers atoned, he to the grove repairs.  
Behold a prodigy! for, from within  
The broken bowels, and the bloated skin,  
A buzzing noise of bees his ears alarms,  
Straight issuing through the sides assembling swarms!  
Dark as a cloud, they make a wheeling flight,  
Then on a neighboring tree descending light,  
Like a large cluster of black grapes they show,  
And make a large dependance from the bough.  
Dryden.

---

JUDGES 14:9 He took it into his hands, and went on, eating as he went; and he came to his father and mother, and gave to them, and they ate: but he didn't tell them that he had taken the honey out of the body of the lion.

JUDGES 14:10 His father went down to the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

---

 Verse 10

Samson made there a feast - The marriage feast, when he went to marry his espoused wife.

---

JUDGES 14:11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

---

## Verse 11

They brought thirty companions - These are called in Scripture children of the bride-chamber, and friends of the bridegroom. See the whole of this subject particularly illustrated in the observations at the end of Joh 3:25 (note).

---

JUDGES 14:12 Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle now. If you can declare it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing;

---

## Verse 12

I will now put forth a riddle - Probably this was one part of the amusements at a marriage-feast; each in his turn proposing a riddle, to be solved by any of the rest on a particular forfeit; the proposer forfeiting, if solved, the same which the company must forfeit if they could not solve it.

Thirty sheets - I have no doubt that the Arab hayk, or hake, is here meant; a dress in which the natives of the East wrap themselves, as a Scottish Highlander does in his plaid. In Asiatic countries the dress scarcely ever changes; being nearly the same now that it was 2000 years ago. Mr. Jackson, in his account of the Empire of Morocco, thus mentions the Moorish dress: "It resembles," says he, "that of the ancient patriarchs, as represented in paintings; (but the paintings are taken from Asiatic models); that of the men consists of a red cap and turban, a (kumja) shirt, which hangs outside of the drawers, and comes down below the knee; a (caftan) coat, which buttons close before, and down to the bottom, with large open sleeves; over which, when they go out of doors, they throw carelessly, and sometimes elegantly, a hayk, or garment of white cotton, silk, or wool, five or six yards long, and five feet wide. The Arabs often dispense with the caftan, and even with the shirt, wearing nothing but the hayk." When an Arab does not choose to wrap himself in the hayk, he throws it over his left shoulder, where it hangs till the weather, etc., obliges him to wrap it round him. The hayk is either mean or elegant, according to the quality of the cloth, and of the person who wears it. I have myself seen the natives of Fez, with hayks, or hykes, both elegant and costly. By the changes of garments, it is very likely that the kumja and caftan are meant, or at least the caftan; but most likely both: for the Hebrew has חליפות בגדים chaliphoth begadim, changes or succession of garments. Samson, therefore, engaged to give or receive thirty hayks, and thirty kumjas and caftans, on the issue of the interpretation or non-interpretation of his riddle: these were complete suits.

---

JUDGES 14:13 but if you can't declare it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing." They said to him, "Tell us your riddle, that we may hear it."

JUDGES 14:14 He said to them, "Out of the eater came out food. Out of the strong came out sweetness." They couldn't in three days declare the riddle.

#### Verse 14

And he said unto them - Thus he states or proposes his riddle: -

Out of the eater came forth meat,

And out of the strong came forth sweetness.

Instead of strong, the Syriac and Arabic have bitter. I have no doubt that the riddle was in poetry; and perhaps the two hemistichs above preserve its order. This was scarcely a fair riddle; for unless the fact to which it refers were known, there is no rule of interpretation by which it could be found out. We learn from the Scholiast, on Aristophanes, Vesp. v. 20, that it was a custom among the ancient Greeks to propose at their festivals, what were called γριφοι, griphoi, riddles, enigmas, or very obscure sayings, both curious and difficult, and to give a recompense to those who found them out, which generally consisted in either a festive crown, or a goblet full of wine. Those who failed to solve them were condemned to drink a large portion of fresh water, or of wine mingled with a sea-water, which they were compelled to take down at one draught, without drawing their breath, their hands being tied behind their backs. Sometimes they gave the crown to the deity in honor of whom the festival was made: and if none could solve the riddle, the reward was given to him who proposed it. Of these enigmas proposed at entertainments etc., we have numerous examples in Athenaeus, Deipnosoph, lib. x., c. 15, p. 142, edit. Argentorat., and some of them very like this of Samson for example: - Διδους τις ουκ εδωκεν, ουδ' εχων εχει; "Who gives, and does not give?

Who has not, and yet has?"

This may be spoken of an enigma and its proposer: he gives it, but he does not give the sense; the other has it, but has not the meaning. Εστι φυσικη θηλεια βρεφη σοζους' υπο κολποις Αυτης ταυτα δ' αφωνα βοην ιστησι γεγωνον. Και δια ποντιον οιδμα, και ηπε ι ρ ο υ δια πασης, Οις εθελει θνητων· τοις δ' ου παρεουσις ακουειν Εξεστι· κωφην δ' ακοης αισθησιν εχουσιν. "There is a feminine Nature, fostering her children in her bosom; who, although they are dumb, send forth a distinct voice over every nation of the earth, and every sea, to whom soever they please. It is possible for those who are absent to hear, and for those who are deaf to hear also."

The relator brings in Sappho interpreting it thus: - Θηλεια μεν ουν εστι φυσικη, επιστολη. Βρεφη δ' εν αυτη περιφερει τα γραμματα Αφωνα δ' οντα ταυτα τοις πορρω λαλει, Οις βουλευθιου903? ετερος δ' αν τυχη τις πλησιον Εστως αναγιγνωσκοντος, ουκ ακουσεται. "The Nature, which is feminine, signifies an epistle; and her children whom she bears are alphabetical characters: and these, being dumb, speak and give counsel to any, even at a distance; though he who stands nigh to him who is silently reading, hears no voice."

Here is another, attributed by the same author to Theodectes: - Της φυσικης οσα γαια φερει τροφος, ουδ' οσα ποντος, Ουτε βροτοισιν εχει γυιων αυξησιν ομοιαν. Αλλ' εν μεν γενεσει πρωτοσπορω εστι μεγαστη, Εν δε μεσαις ακμαις μικρα, γηρα δε προς αυτω Μορφη κα ι μεγαθει μειζων παλιν εστιν απαντων. "Neither does the nourishing earth so bear by nature, nor the sea, nor

is there among mortals a like increase of parts; for at the period of its birth it is greatest, but in its middle age it is small, and in its old age it is again greater in form and size than all."

This is spoken of a shadow. At the rising of the sun in the east, the shadow of an object is projected illimitably across the earth towards the west; at noon, if the sun be vertical to that place, the shadow of the object is entirely lost; at sunset, the shadow is projected towards the east, as it was in the morning towards the west.

Here is another, from the same author: - Εισι κασιγνηται διτται, ὧν ἡ μια τικτει Την ἑπεραν, αυτη δε τεκουσ' ὑπο τησδε τεκνουται. "There are two sisters, the one of whom begets the other, and she who is begotten produces her who begat her."

Day and night solve this enigma.

The following I have taken from Theognis: - Ηδη γαρ με κεκληκε θαλαππιος οικαδε νεκρος, Τεθνηκως, ζω φθεγγομενος στοματι.

Theogn. Gnom., in fine. "A dead seaman calls me to his house; And, although he be dead, he speaks with a living mouth."

This dead seaman is a conch or large shellfish, of which the poet was about to eat. The mouth by which it spoke signifies its being used as a horn; as it is well known to produce, when opened at the spiral end and blown, a very powerful sound.

JUDGES 14:15 On the seventh day, they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may declare to us the riddle, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you called us to impoverish us? Is it not so?"

JUDGES 14:16 Samson's wife wept before him, and said, "You just hate me, and don't love me. You have told a riddle to the children of my people, and haven't told it to me." He said to her, "Behold, I haven't told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?"

JUDGES 14:17 She wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and on the seventh day, he told her, because she pressed him severely; and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

Verse 17

And she wept before him - Not through any love to him, for it appears she had none, but to oblige her paramours; and of this he soon had ample proof.

JUDGES 14:18 The men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" He said to them, "If you hadn't ploughed with my heifer, you wouldn't have found out my riddle."

Verse 18

If ye had not ploughed with my heifer - If my wife had not been unfaithful to my bed, she would not have been unfaithful to my secret; and, you being her paramours, your interest was more precious

to her than that of her husband. She has betrayed me through her attachment to you. Calmet has properly remarked, in quoting the Septuagint, that to plough with one's heifer, or to plough in another man's ground, are delicate turns of expression used both by the Greeks and Latins, as well as the Hebrews, to point out a wife's infidelities. Thus Theognis, Gnom. v. 581: - Εχθαιρω δε γυναικα περιδρομον, ανδρα τε μαργον. Ὅς την αλλονριην βουλετ' αρουραν αρου. "I detest a woman who gads about, and also a libidinous man, who wishes to plough in another man's ground."

Fundum alienium arat, incultum familiarem deserit.

Plautus. "He ploughs another's farm, and leaves his own heritage uncultivated."

Milo domi non est, perepre at Milone profecto

Arva vacant, uxor non minus inde parit.

Martial. "Milo is not at home, and Milo being from home, his field lies uncultivated; his wife, nevertheless, continues to breed, and brings forth children."

There is the same metaphor in the following lines of Virgil: -

Hoc faciunt, nimo ne luxu obtusior usus,

Sit genitali arvo, sulcosque oblimet inertes.

Geor. l. iii., v. 135.

In this sense Samson's words were understood by the Septuagint, by the Syriac, and by Rabbi Levi. See Bochart, Hierozoic. p. 1, lib. ii., cap. 41, col. 406. The metaphor was a common one, and we need seek for no other interpretation of the words of Samson.

JUDGES 14:19 The Spirit of the LORD came mightily on him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and struck thirty men of them, and took their plunder, and gave the changes of clothing to those who declared the riddle. His anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

#### Verse 19

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him - "The spirit of fortitude from before the Lord." - Targum. He was inspired with unusual courage, and he felt strength proportioned to his wishes.

He - slew thirty men - and took their spoils - He took their hayks, their kumjas, and caftans, and gave them to the thirty persons who, by unfair means, had solved his riddle; thus they had what our version calls thirty sheets, and thirty changes of raiment. See the note on Jdg 14:12.

JUDGES 14:20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

#### Verse 20

But Samson's wife was given to his companion - This was the same kind of person who is called the friend of the bridegroom, Joh 3:29. And it is very likely that she loved this person better than she

loved her husband, and went to him as soon as Samson had gone to his father's house at Zorah. She might, however, have thought herself abandoned by him, and therefore took another; this appears to have been the persuasion of her father, Jdg 15:2. But her betraying his secret and his interests to his enemies was a full proof he was not very dear to her; though, to persuade him to the contrary, she shed many crocodile tears; see Jdg 14:16. He could not keep his own secret, and he was fool enough to suppose that another would be more faithful to him than he was to himself. Multitudes complain of the treachery of friends betraying their secrets, etc., never considering that they themselves have been their first betrayers, in confiding to others what they pretend to wish should be a secret to the whole world! If a man never let his secret out of his own bosom, it is impossible that he should ever be betrayed.