

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-9 Samson

God often uses unlikely persons to do great things. Each of us is unlikely to be a godly leader—unlikely because of low status, or gender, or handicap of some kind, or youthfulness. Or we come from a poor village, or from a one-parent family. Samson was an unlikely leader, and a crude hero who wasted his opportunities.

The Israelite tribes had offended Yahweh again by worshiping the gods of Canaan. So God used people from the seacoast area—the Philistines—to punish Israel. They lived in five large cities between the Judean foothills and the Mediterranean Sea. They knew how to use iron to make tools and weapons. Israel had only a softer metal, bronze; they didn't know how to make iron. The Philistines became Israel's constant enemy until King David defeated them many years later.

Yahweh decided to prepare a leader to deliver Israel from the Philistines. He arranged for a husband and wife to have a miraculous pregnancy. An angel appeared to a childless woman one day. "You have been unable to have children, but you shall bear a son. Stay away from wine and grapes, and don't eat forbidden food. Don't cut the boy's hair, either. The boy will be dedicated to Yahweh from birth" (Jud 13:3-5). The angel promised that this boy would grow up to begin to remove the Philistine threat.

She ran home and told her husband Manoah what the angel had said. Manoah decided to pray. "Yahweh, please let your angel appear again and tell us how to bring up this boy."

The angel appeared again to the woman alone in a field. She ran to summon her husband. "The angel came back!" she said. "Come and see!"

Manoah went and spoke to what he thought was a man, "Are you the one who spoke to my wife?"

"I am," replied the angel. "You and your wife should do everything I told her."

To honor the angel, Manoah and his wife made an offering of a goat and some flour. As the offering was burning, the angel went up in the smoke. Then the couple knew that God had sent an angel to them.

Months later a boy was born and named Samson. Years went by as he grew up. Yahweh blessed him during these years of growth. The Spirit of Yahweh began to stir him (Jud 13:6-25).

One day Samson walked from the foothills into a Philistine village. He saw a Philistine woman and fell in love with her. Back home, he spoke rudely to his parents, "I saw a woman in Timnah; now get her for me!"

His parents protested, "Can't you marry an Israelite woman instead? Why marry a Philistine woman who doesn't worship God as we do?"

Samson insisted, "Get her for me; she is the one I want." This was a bad decision, but God brought good from it. (He used it to bring judgment on the Philistines.)

On the way to Timnah to propose marriage, Samson was attacked by a lion. He was so strong that he killed the lion barehanded. The Spirit of Yahweh gave him power to do it. He walked on and proposed to the woman he loved. She accepted, for Samson was already wealthy and famous in the foothills.

On one of his trips back and forth to see her, he saw the carcass of the lion beside the road. Honeybees had built a nest there. He scraped out a handful of honey and walked along eating it. Samson was not taking his religious vow seriously. He wasn't supposed to touch anything dead, but he did anyway. His parents had taught him what they had promised the angel, but Samson didn't pay attention to their vow.

The week of the wedding arrived. During the feast, Samson told a riddle to the guests. He promised 30 sets of clothing to the men who could solve the riddle. Here's the riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet." For three days no one could answer the riddle.

Philistine men at the feast threatened Samson's wife. "Persuade Samson to reveal the riddle, or we will burn your house. We can't afford to pay him 30 sets of clothing."

So his wife came to Samson and cried tearfully, "You must hate me. You told a riddle to the guests, but you didn't tell me the answer." She wept and nagged him day after day, and on the last day of the wedding week, he told her.

She told the men, and the men said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?"

Samson replied angrily, "You would not have solved my riddle, if you hadn't threatened my wife." The Spirit of Yahweh came on him in power. He walked over 20 miles to Ashkelon, a large Philistine city. He killed 30 men there, took their fancy clothes, and gave them to the men who had solved the riddle. In anger he went back to his parents' home in the foothills.

His father-in-law gave his wife to another man. He thought Samson had broken off the marriage. Later in the summer Samson brought a present to his wife. "I want to stay with my wife," he told his father-in-law.

"You cannot," he said, "I gave her in marriage to another man. Why don't you marry her younger sister instead?"

Samson was angry. "This time no one can blame me for revenge against you Philistines." He caught 300 foxes, tied them in pairs, and fastened torches to their tails. He set the torches on fire and turned the foxes loose in the Philistine wheat fields, vineyards, and olive groves. Fire destroyed all their crops.

"Who did this?" asked the Philistine elders. They were told that Samson had done it. In revenge they killed his wife and her father. Samson fought back again, killing many Philistines.

Samson was hiding, and some of his countrymen found him. “Let us tie you with ropes and hand you over to the Philistines.” Samson agreed to be tied up and handed over. When they handed him over, the Spirit of Yahweh rushed on him again. He broke the ropes like threads. He swung a donkey’s jawbone and killed a thousand Philistines.

For the first time Samson prayed. “Lord, please give me some water. I’m thirsty after this fighting.” The Lord supplied water for him near the battlefield. After these battles, Samson led Israel for 20 years in the days of the Philistines.

This story is **important** because it shows us that God continued to help the Israelites after the death of Joshua. He planned to raise up Samson as a great and godly deliverer from Philistine dominance. But Samson didn’t treat God’s blessing as a precious thing.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God is willing to use imperfect people like Samson. This is encouraging to all of us. Yet, those years in the history of Israel were stressful years. Faithfulness to Yahweh was rare.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. How did God prepare a new leader for the Israelites? [Pause]
A. If you said, “He sent an angel to announce the miraculous birth of Samson,” you are correct.
2. Why was Samson successful in fighting against the Philistines? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “God helped him grow up to be powerful and strong, and from time to time, God’s spirit gave him superhuman strength and bravery,” you answered correctly.
3. How do we know that Samson didn’t take his vow to God seriously? [Pause]
A. If you said, “He kept on touching dead men and animals, he was rude to his parents, and he was unfaithful to God in his relations with women,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it.

Listen to Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose [you] It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (1Cor 1:26-31). Gather some of your friends together and consider how God has moved in your lives. Has he been faithful to you? Have you been faithful to him? Pray with your friends, asking God to help each of you to become all that you can be in Christ.