

Judges Chapter 14 Part 1

The book of Judges is not a military handbook on strategy and tactics. But, it does contain such kinds of information. We know from this book that it was God’s will for the sons of Israel to “learn war,” which of course, would contain weapons, strategy and tactics and training. It is obvious from previous narratives in the book of Judges that they were lacking in all these categories, so God provided “motivation” to learn.

Judges 3:1 Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan;

Judges 3:2 only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly).

What kinds of tactics are contained in the book of Judges? Here is a quick, cursory list. I may add to this list when we have completed the book of Judges. Originally, I thought to include information from just the major judges. But Shamgar and Abimelech add some interesting items. This list is not meant to be comprehensive or from an Army perspective.

Narrative	Tactics
Othniel	“Overpowered” the enemy (NIV): military might
Ehud	Hidden sword (deceit), “secret” message (deceit)
Shamgar	Unusual weapon: Ox goad
Barak	“Lure”, use of weather/terrain, deceit again (Jael)
Gideon	Deceit(300) night fighting, Pursuit, Reinforcements
Abimelech	Raze the city, Destroy the citizenry, ambush
Jephthah	Diplomacy, devastate enemy towns, passwords
Samson	Riddle (deceit), unusual weapon: donkey jawbone, brute force

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Also, as an application, remember that Christians are in a spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Since we live post-cross, we live in the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict. Our battle is not specifically against “flesh and blood” but against angelic beings. But it is not a battle in which we attack. We put on the armor of God to defend against attack. We stand firm in dependence on the Holy Spirit and Bible Doctrine (which includes promises and descriptions of the character of God). But the “battle is the Lord’s” as far as attacks from angelic beings are concerned. We depend upon the might of the Holy Spirit amplified by our understanding of Bible Doctrine. We stand firm in our faith and let Jesus do the strategy and tactics. God has a plan. We follow in faith.

Before we start on tonight’s lesson, there is something you must understand. The Philistines are ruling over Israel. This is not supposed to be. But, due to sin, God gave them into the hand of the Philistines. Now God is going to “begin” to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

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They are the enemy, not friends, not lawful rulers. They are to be fought and defeated.

Judges 13:1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.

This is difficult since the sons of Israel are not suffering to any great degree under the Philistines. But know this, God is going to deliver them from the Philistines. That is what Samson was born to begin, but He had to incite a conflict to get the sons of Israel to fight their enemy.

Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Here is the point: The Philistines are the enemy. Killing Philistines, especially when empowered by the Holy Spirit, is killing the enemy. Many commentators will accuse Samson of murder. They have problems with phrases like “this was of the Lord” and the Spirit descending upon Samson just before he wipes out a bunch of Philistines. But this warfare that Samson will be engaged in, is not typical warfare. Today we might call it “asymmetric” warfare. Per Merriam-Webster online this is, “warfare that is between opposing forces which differ greatly in military power and that typically involves the use of unconventional weapons and tactics (such as those associated with guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks).”

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In the book of Judges, we certainly have unconventional weapons and tactics.

In the book of Judges, the author narrated different battles between the sons of Israel and their enemies.

Now let us begin our study of chapter 14.

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

Note that there is an abrupt change between the end of chapter 13, Samson's birth, and chapter 14, the first narrative. Samson's youth has already been explained very briefly by,

Judges 13:24 Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the Lord blessed him.

Judges 13:25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Other events in Samson's youth are not given because they are not pertinent to the narrative purpose in Judges.

Saw. Seeing a woman is nothing bad. But the context suggests that he lusted after her.

Judges 14:2 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

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Saw. Same root as used in the previous verse. A very common word in Hebrew. That is to be expected since Hebrew is about seeing and touching and hearing.

In Timnah. What was Samson doing in Timnah? He didn't appear to have a job. Perhaps he was just "wandering around."

Get her for me. This was not unusual for the parents to arrange a marriage for a son. This was attempted in Genesis 34 when Shechem asked his father to get Dinah for him as a wife. Same kind of thing happened to get Isaac a wife. As far as we know, Samson only saw her. How does he know anything about her?

Do we want to criticize Samson for picking a wife by sight? There were times that a wife was picked for a son, sight unseen. Our culture is different today. Or is it?

Thomas Constable explains that culture. It is actually still practiced in many countries today.

"Dating, as we know it in the West, was unknown in Samson's culture. Instead, the parents of young people would customarily contact each other, and arrange for their children to meet and eventually to marry."

Judges 14:3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."

Uncircumcised. This is bad for two reasons. First, being uncircumcised means the woman is outside of the covenant. Secondly, this would

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suggest she is an unbeliever with idols of “strange” gods that would corrupt Samson, just like it did for Solomon. Yet, in a sense, this is the state of the culture among the sons of Israel. This is the principle behind the New Testament warning to not marry an unbeliever.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2 Corinthians 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

A trivia point: The words for circumcised and uncircumcised are from different roots.

She looks good to me. This is not the word previously used of seeing. It is more about meeting some standard and being pleasing. It can mean “straight” or “right.” Constable translates this as “she is right in my own eyes.” In this context, he has only “seen” her. So he is basing his assessment on how she appears to him. Again, Samson is not outside the culture in which he lived. In fact, the wording “connects” with the very theme of the book of Judges:

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Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

It is the same phrase in both places. The phrase in Judges 14:3 is tailored to the context, “she is right in my own eye.” (Reference Gary Kukis). This thread in the fabric of Scripture shows that God is working through Samson who demonstrates the outcome of rejecting God and trusting “your lying eyes.” That would be conflict. In this case, armed conflict. Later on, the sons of Israel will be upset with Samson. But they shouldn’t have been. He was just doing what was “right in his own eyes,” the same thing they were doing. Bam!!!

Judges 14:4 However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

This is a powerful verse. We need to spend time on it.

Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. This is why Samson was tasked by God, to begin to deliver Israel. The uncircumcised Philistines were making the rules and they were not in sync with God’s will.

It was of the Lord. Literally, “From the Lord/Yahweh it.” No verb. “Was” is assumed from the syntax.

Surprise! Surprise! Surprise! Some have problems with this. God is promoting an apparent violation of the law. In this case, God is using Samson’s “what was right in his own eyes” to provoke the Philistines.

Now I will provide several quotes which amplify this in different ways.

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From Keil and Delitch (K&D):

“The aversion of his parents to the marriage was well founded, as such a marriage was not in accordance with the law. It is true that the only marriages expressly prohibited in Ex. 34:16 and Deut. 7:3, 4, are marriages with Canaanitish women; but the reason assigned for this prohibition was equally applicable to marriages with daughters of the Philistines. In fact, the Philistines are reckoned among the Canaanites in Josh. 13:3 upon the very same ground.”

Here is a quote from Block:

"Judges 14:4 is not only shocking, but it is also the key to chaps. 14—15. Accordingly, although Yahweh is largely absent from the narrative, in one way or another his agenda is being achieved in Samson's life. At the same time, while Yahweh's agenda is being achieved, the course of Samson's life is all downhill, a fact reflected by the fivefold repetition of the verb yarad, 'to go down' (14:1, 5, 7, 19; 15:8)."

God allows events that appear to take believers outside the bounds of the Law (permissive will of God—in this case in the furtherance of His plan). Look at Hosea:

Hosea 1:2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.”

God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute. Both “go” and “take” are *imperatives*. This is to parallel the decadent culture of the sons of Israel at that time. So now, Samson is allowed to marry an unbelieving woman of the “uncircumcised” Philistines (literally, “foreskinned” Philistines). Based upon other previous narratives in the book of Judges, this is not

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out of the ordinary for the Israelites. More importantly, as Hosea 1:2 points out for Hosea, Samson is doing something in the physical world that the sons of Israel are doing against God in the spiritual realm. But God the Holy Spirit uses his human viewpoint and lust to accomplish the will of God to start the deliverance of the sons of Israel.

When the sons of Israel condemn Samson for what he has done, we see a condemnation of the accusers. Similar concept from Romans chapter 2:

Romans 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Samson's "wrong" in the physical world points to the wrong of the sons of Israel in the spiritual world.

Per Gary Kukis:

Now, at first glance, one would think that Samson is unable to approach this woman and get the ball rolling himself. In fact, it is almost endearing. However, what we are dealing with here is more a system of customs and mores. The parents of the bride and groom were integral to the marriage and marriages generally required close family involvement. In fact, very often the father even chose the bride or groom for his child (see Gen. 24:3–9 Judges 12:9 Neh. 10:30). In this case, we have a marriage between people of two different nations and ethnic backgrounds, which required even more finesse. If Samson just showed up on his own to take this woman, he would be risking his life. One of the most important considerations was that the groom's family paid the bride's family a dowry for the bride. I assume it accomplished three purposes—the bride's family knew they had an expensive and needed

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commodity; this dowry indicated that the woman's new family was well-to-do and would be able to provide well for her; and thirdly, and most importantly, the dowry was set aside for the wife by her father, just in case anything ever occurred to the husband. According to Gower, the father could spend the interest that he might get from the dowry, but not the dowry itself.

There are, of course, some parallels of sorts between this narrative and the narratives of Jesus in the Gospels. Here is an observation from Robert Chisholm that dovetails into the Gospel narrative of Jesus:

“Knowing that Samson's destiny was to deliver Israel, we expect the divine spirit (13:25) will move him to initiate some type of military encounter with the Philistines. We read instead of Samson's intention to marry a Philistine woman. His parents voiced their objection by reminding him that intermarriage with the uncircumcised Philistines was inappropriate. Their concern seems valid and their logic convincing, but then the narrator startles us by informing us that Samson's desire for the woman was “the Lord's doing, for he was seeking an opportunity to stir up trouble with the Philistines.”

As Herman pointed out in his series on Samson, the first thing that Jesus did was to attend a wedding feast. But Jews who recognized Jesus as “the Prophet,” expected Him to deliver Israel from Rome.

John 6:14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed (feeding the 5,000), they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

John 6:15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to

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make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Jesus will not engage in battle until the 2nd Advent. The 1st Advent is not what the Jews were looking for. They were looking for a king to lead them in battle against Rome. Instead they got Isaiah 53!

Judges 14:5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him.

It is obvious from the narrative that Samson and his parents got separated. The text does not say how or why. Maybe his folks were slow walkers and Samson had the heebie-jeebies and had to run ahead and then stop and wait. Perhaps something like the tortoise and the hare.

Vineyards. He stopped at or near a vineyard. Uh Oh! Grapes. A Nazirite was not supposed to touch grapes. He is pushing the envelope here.

Behold. Look! I have ranted before about “behold.” It doesn’t communicate much in today’s English. But “Look!” does.

Came roaring toward him.

Chisholm sees a link between this narrative and a later narrative when Samson has “victories over the Philistines at Ashkelon and Lehi, where the Lord’s spirit also “rushes upon” him and enables him to kill his enemies with supernatural ease (see 14:19; 15:14). In both 14:5-6 and 15:14 the phrase “to meet him” (with hostile intent) follows a verb for roaring/shouting (the human equivalent of a lion’s roar) and precedes the reference to the Lord’s spirit rushing upon Samson.”

Another commentator (Emmrich) takes this further. He shows that this is like king Saul. Another of those threads of the fabric of Scripture.

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“The first two kings of Israel would finish what Samson had begun. That Saul should be understood as replicating and continuing Samson’s struggles against the Philistines is quite evident from the correspondences between the portrayals of both leaders. In both cases, the main national enemy were the Philistines. The unique phrase [mightily came upon him the spirit of the Lord] followed by the name of the Spirit’s recipient is employed almost exclusively for these two characters (cf. Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6). Again, both are subjected to the Philistines’ ridicule in the house of their idols (Judg 16:25; 1 Sam 31:4, 9–10) and terminate their lives by way of suicide (Judg 16:30; 1 Sam 31:4).

Judges 14:6 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

The Spirit of the Lord. Samson’s strength is from the Lord. Later on, it would seem that Samson takes his strength for granted. But it is from the Lord. Eventually, at the end, he will recognize this.

Once we become believers in Christ and children of God, our lives are not ours. We belong to God because we are “in Christ” positionally. Our lives can in some respects be looked upon as preparation for the Millennium and eternity. There are many personal lessons we must learn. One of the most difficult is humility, grace orientation. That is one that Samson eventually learns.

Here are some pertinent comments from Gary Kukis on the two levels of the text, something I have talked about repeatedly:

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“You have to realize that there are portions of the Bible which function on two levels—first of all, there was a literal Samson and he had two parents who went with him to Timnah. This was a young lion possibly on its first hunt for food. However, this is all representative of what is to come. Samson, as we have seen, represents both Christ and Israel. As Christ, he will meet and defeat this lion, just as our Lord broke the back of Satan on the cross. As Israel, he will meet and defeat this lion, as Israel will meet the Philistines and destroy them.”

Judges 14:7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.

Talked to the woman. Uh Oh! From our present day perspective two people need to engage in courtship before deciding on getting married. What Samson said previously is that he saw a woman. So now he wants to marry her so he talks to her.

Are we perhaps judging Samson too quickly? When it says “she looked good,” was that strictly visual or is this assessment of his future bride based in part upon the conversation?

Judges 14:8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

Judges 14:9 So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.