

1 Again the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. The Birth of Samson 2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, from the tribe of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and could not give birth. 3 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have not given birth, but you shall conceive a son. 4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean. 5 For behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” 6 So the woman went in and told her husband, saying, “A Man of God came to me, and His appearance was like the appearance of an Angel of God, very frightening. But I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. 7 And He said to me, ‘Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. Now drink no wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean, for the child shall be holy to God from the womb to the day of his death.’ ” 8 Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, “Lord Adonai, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born.” 9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, “Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!”

11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, “Are You the Man who spoke to my wife?” And the Angel said, “I am.” 12 Manoah said, “Now let Your words come to pass! What is to be the decision regarding the boy and his activities?” 13 So the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “The woman will guard herself from everything I have told her. 14 She may not eat anything that comes from the vine of wine, and let her not drink wine or similar strong drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her, let her observe.” 15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, “Let us delay You here, and we will prepare a young goat for You.” 16 And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Though you delay me, I will not eat your bread. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord”; for Manoah did not know he was the Angel of the Lord. 17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, “What is Your name, so when Your words come to pass we may honor You?” 18 And the Angel of the Lord said to him, “Why do you ask My name, is it extraordinary?” 19 So Manoah took the young goat and the sacrifice, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And the Angel wrought a distinct work, while Manoah and his wife were looking on. 20 And it so happened when the flame went up above the altar toward heaven, that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell upon their faces to the ground. 21 When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, Manoah knew this to be the Angel of the Lord.

22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!” 23 But his wife said to him, “If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a meat offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have made us hear such things as these at this time.” 24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to proceed out with him at the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 14

Samson Takes a Philistine Wife

1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the foreigners. 2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.” 3 Then his father and mother said to him, “Are

there not daughters of your brethren, or a woman among all my people? Must you go and get a wife from the uncircumcised foreigners?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." 4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that He was seeking vengeance against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5 So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came roaring against him.

6 And the Spirit of the Lord leapt upon Samson, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hands. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. 7 Then they went down and talked with the woman, and she was pleasing to Samson's eyes. 8 After a few days, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and some honey were in the mouth of the lion. 9 He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the mouth of the lion. 10 So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a party there for seven days, as young men do. 11 And when they saw him, they brought thirty guests and they were with him. 12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the party, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. 13 But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen cloths and thirty changes of clothing." And they said to him, "Tell the riddle; let us hear it." 14 And he said to them: "What meat comes forth from the eater, And from the strong, sweetness?" But three days passed by and they could not explain the riddle.

15 But on the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Now trick your husband so that he explains the riddle to you, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Did you invite us to do us violence?" 16 Then Samson's wife wept before him, and said, "You hate me! You do not love me! You told the sons of my people a riddle, but you have not explained it to me." And Samson said to her, "If I have not explained it to my father or my mother, why should I explain it to you?" 17 Now she wept before him for seven days while their wedding banquet lasted. And on the seventh day he told her, because she annoyed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. 18 And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun rose: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" And Samson said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have come to learn my riddle!" 19 Then the Spirit of the Lord leapt upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So Samson's anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. 20 And the wife of Samson was given to one of his companions, one whom he called friend.

Judges 15

1 Soon after these days, in the days of the wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "I will go to my wife in her private chamber." But her father would not permit him to enter. 2 Her father said, "I thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to one of your friends. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead."

Samson Decimates the Philistines

3 And Samson said to them, "This once I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines, for I will do mischief among them!" 4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails, and tied it. 5 When he had set the torches on fire, he sent the foxes out into the standing grain of the Philistines, and they burned from the threshing floor even to the standing grain, as far as the vineyard and olive groves. 6 Then the Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife

and gave her to one of his friends.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. **7** Samson said to them, “Whereas you dealt thus with her, surely I will take revenge upon you for a month and I will finally stop.” **8** So he struck them upon the thigh of the leg with a great blow. Afterward he went down and dwelt in a cave at the rock of Etam. **9** Now the Philistines went up and encamped in Judah, and they spread out across Levi. **10** And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” So the Philistines answered, “We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.” **11** Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave at the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? Why did you do this to us?” And Sampson said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

12 But they said to him, “We have come down to bind you so that we may deliver you to the Philistines.” Then Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves.” **13** So they spoke to him, saying, “No, but we will bind you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not put you to death.” And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from that rock. **14** When they came to Lehi, the Philistines wailed loudly and ran to engage him. But the Spirit of the Lord leapt upon him, and the ropes on his arms became like flax burned with fire, and his bonds fell away from his hands. **15** He found the jawbone of an ass that had been cast aside, and he reached out and took it, and struck a thousand men with it. **16** Then Samson said: “With the jawbone of an ass I utterly destroyed them, For with the jawbone of an ass I struck down a thousand men!” **17** And so when he had finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place the Ramath Lehi. **18** Then he became exceedingly thirsty, and wept before the Lord and said, “You were well-pleased to grant this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now I shall die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised.” **19** And God broke open a hollow in the ground, and out from it water came forth, and he drank. His spirit returned and he was revived. Therefore he called it “the Spring of the One Who Called,” which is in Lehi to this day. **20** And in the days of the Philistines, he judged Israel twenty years.

Judges 16

Samson and Delilah

1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. **2** When someone told the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “Let us wait until dawn, and we will kill him.” **3** Samson slept till midnight and rose up, and at midnight he took hold of the doors of the gate of the city with the two gateposts, and lifted them up with the bar, and placed them on his shoulders. He then carried them to the top of the mountain facing Hebron, and he set them there. **4** Sometime thereafter, he came to love a woman in Ashdod whose name was Delilah. **5** And the leaders of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Trick him and find out where his great strength lies. Learn by what means we may overpower him, so that we may bind him and humble him. If you do, every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.” **6** So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you can be bound that you may be subdued and controlled.” **7** And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven damp cords, not yet spoiled, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” **8** So the leaders of the Philistines brought her seven damp cords, not yet spoiled, and she bound him with them. **9** And with her in the private chamber, an ambush was set. And she said to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he broke the cords as if someone should break a thread of flax when it touches the fire. Thus the secret of his strength remained unknown. **10** Then Delilah said to Samson, “Indeed! You deceived me and told me lies. Now therefore, tell me what you may be bound with.” **11** So he said to her, “If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” **12** Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and those in ambush came out of the private chamber, and she said to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he broke them off his arms like thread. **13** And Delilah said to

Samson, “Indeed! You have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me, I entreat you, with what can you be tightly bound?” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head into a braid, and secure them together with a wall peg, I will be weak like any other man.” 14 And so it happened when he was asleep, Delilah braided the seven locks of his head and secured them with a wall peg, and said to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” And he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the peg. 15 Then Delilah said to Samson, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You deceived me a third time; and you have not yet told me where your great strength lies.” 16 And it came to pass, after she pestered him continually with her words and pressured him sorely, that his spirit failed him almost to death. 17 Then he told her everything in his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a holy one of God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like all other men.” 18 And Delilah discerned he told her all his heart, and she sent and called for the leaders of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he told me all his heart.” So the leaders of the foreigners went to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 Delilah lulled Samson to sleep on her knees, and called for a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Thus she could finally subdue and control him, for his strength departed from him. 20 And Delilah said, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” So he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as before, and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. 21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with fetters of bronze; and he was grinding grain in the prison house. Death of Samson 22 Soon the hair of his head began to grow as before it was shaven. 23 And the leaders of the Philistines met to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to make merry. And they said, “Our god delivered our enemy, Samson, into our hands.” 24 When the people saw Samson, they praised their god; for they said, “Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, the destroyer of our land; the one who multiplied our dead.” 25 And when their heart was merry, they said, “Call Samson out of the guard house, and let him play before us.” So they called Samson from the prison house, and he played before them. And they slapped him and stationed him between the pillars. 26 Then Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars that support the house, so that I can lean on them.” 27 Now the house was full of men and women, including all the leaders of the Philistines, with about seven hundred men and women on the roof watching while Samson played. 28 Then Samson wept before the Lord, saying, “Lord, my Lord, remember me now. O God, strengthen me just this once so I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.” 29 And Samson took hold of the two pillars of the house, the very two which held up the house, and he leaned himself against them. He grasped one with his right hand and the other with his left, 30 and then Samson said, “Let my life end with the Philistines.” And with all his strength, he pushed on the pillars, and the house came crashing down on the leaders and all the people in it. In his dying, Samson caused more people to die than were brought to death in his life. 31 And his brothers and all his father’s household came there and took him. They brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He judged Israel for twenty years.

NEXT WEEK’S READING : The Story of Ruth

Ruth 1: 1 - 4: 22