

## Samson

**Judges 14** Once Samson went down to Timnah; and while in Timnah, he noticed a girl among the Philistine women. <sup>2</sup>On his return, he told his father and mother, "I noticed one of the Philistine women in Timnah; please get her for me as a wife." <sup>3</sup>His father and mother said to him, "Is there no one among the daughters of your own kinsmen and among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson answered his father, "Get me that one, for she is the one that pleases me." <sup>4</sup>His father and mother did not realize that this was the LORD's doing: He was seeking a pretext against the Philistines, for the Philistines were ruling over Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup>So Samson and his father and mother went down to Timnah.

When he came to the vineyards of Timnah [for the first time], a full-grown lion came roaring at him. <sup>6</sup>The spirit of the LORD gripped him, and he tore him asunder with his bare hands as one might tear a kid asunder; but he did not tell his father and mother what he had done. <sup>7</sup>Then he went down and spoke to the woman, and she pleased Samson.

<sup>8</sup>Returning the following year to marry her, he turned aside to look at the remains of the lion; and in the lion's skeleton he found a swarm of bees, and honey. <sup>9</sup>He scooped it into his palms and ate it as he went along. When he rejoined his father and mother, he gave them some and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scooped the honey out of a lion's skeleton.

<sup>10</sup>So his father came down to the woman, and Samson made a feast there, as young men used to do. <sup>11</sup>When they saw him, they designated thirty companions to be with him. <sup>12</sup>Then Samson said to them, "Let me propound a riddle to you. If you can give me the right answer during the seven days of the feast, I shall give you thirty linen tunics and thirty sets of clothing; <sup>13</sup>but if you are not able to tell it to me, you must give me thirty linen tunics and thirty sets of clothing." And they said to him, "Ask your riddle and we will listen." <sup>14</sup>So he said to them:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,  
Out of the strong came something sweet."

For three days they could not answer the riddle.

<sup>15</sup>On the seventh day, they said to Samson's wife, "Coax your husband to provide us with the answer to the riddle; else we shall put you and your father's household to the fire; have you invited us here in order to impoverish us?" <sup>16</sup>Then Samson's wife harassed him with tears, and she said, "You really hate me, you don't love me. You asked my countrymen a riddle, and you didn't tell me the answer." He replied, "I haven't even told my father and mother; shall I tell you?" <sup>17</sup>During the rest of the seven days of the feast she continued to harass him with her tears, and on the seventh day he told her, because she nagged him so. And she explained the riddle to her countrymen. <sup>18</sup>On the seventh day, before the sunset, the townsmen said to him:

"What is sweeter than honey,  
And what is stronger than a lion?"

He responded: "Had you not plowed with my heifer,  
You would not have guessed my riddle!"

<sup>19</sup>The spirit of the LORD gripped him. He went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of its men. He stripped them and gave the sets of clothing to those who had answered the riddle. And he left in a rage for his father's house. <sup>20</sup>Samson's wife then married one of those who had been his wedding companions.

**15**Some time later, in the season of the wheat harvest, Samson came to visit his wife, bringing a kid as a gift. He said, "Let me go into the chamber to my wife." But her father would not let him go in. <sup>2</sup>"I was sure," said her father, "that you had taken a dislike to her, so I gave her to your wedding companion. But her younger sister is more beautiful than she; let her become your wife instead." <sup>3</sup>Thereupon Samson declared, "Now the Philistines can have no claim against me for the harm I shall do them."

<sup>4</sup>Samson went and caught three hundred foxes. He took torches and, turning [the foxes] tail to tail, he placed a torch between each pair of tails. <sup>5</sup>He lit the torches and turned [the foxes] loose among the standing grain of the Philistines, setting fire to stacked grain, standing grain, vineyards, [and] olive trees.

<sup>6</sup>The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" And they were told, "It was Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, who took Samson's wife and gave her to his wedding companion." Thereupon the Philistines came up and put her and her father to the fire. <sup>7</sup>Samson said to them, "If that is how you act, I will not rest until I have taken revenge on you." <sup>8</sup>He gave them a sound and thorough thrashing. Then he went down and stayed in the cave of the rock of Etam...

<sup>14</sup>When he reached Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Thereupon the spirit of the LORD gripped him, and the ropes on his arms became like flax that catches fire; the bonds melted off his hands. <sup>15</sup>He came upon a fresh jawbone of an ass and he picked it up; and with it he killed a thousand men....

**16**Once Samson went to Gaza; there he met a whore and slept with her. <sup>2</sup>The Gazites [learned] that Samson had come there, so they gathered and lay in ambush for him in the town gate the whole night; and all night long they kept whispering to each other, "When daylight comes, we'll kill him." <sup>3</sup>But Samson lay in bed only till midnight. At midnight he got up, grasped the doors of the town gate together with the two gateposts, and pulled them out along with the bar. He placed them on his shoulders and carried them off to the top of the hill that is near Hebron.

<sup>4</sup>After that, he fell in love with a woman in the Wadi Sorek, named Delilah. <sup>5</sup>The lords of the Philistines went up to her and said, "Coax him and find out what makes him so strong, and how we can overpower him, tie him up, and make him helpless; and we'll each give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

<sup>6</sup>So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me, what makes you so strong? And how could you be tied up and made helpless?" <sup>7</sup>Samson replied, "If I were to be tied with seven fresh tendons that had not been dried, I should become as weak as an ordinary man." <sup>8</sup>So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh tendons that had not been dried. She bound him with them, <sup>9</sup>while an ambush was waiting in her room. Then she called out to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" Whereat he pulled the tendons apart, as a strand of tow comes apart at the touch of fire. So the secret of his strength remained unknown.

<sup>10</sup>Then Delilah said to Samson, "Oh, you deceived me; you lied to me! Do tell me now how you could be tied up." <sup>11</sup>He said, "If I were to be bound with new ropes that had never been used, I would become as weak as an ordinary man." <sup>12</sup>So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, while an ambush was waiting in a room. And she cried, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he tore them off his arms like a thread....

<sup>15</sup>Then she said to him, "How can you say you love me, when you don't confide in me? This makes three times that you've deceived me and haven't told me what makes you so strong." <sup>16</sup>Finally, after she had nagged him and pressed him constantly, he was wearied to death <sup>17</sup>and he confided everything to her. He said to her, "No razor has ever touched my head, for I have been a nazirite to God since I was in my mother's womb. If my hair were cut, my strength would leave me and I should become as weak as an ordinary man."

<sup>18</sup>Sensing that he had confided everything to her, Delilah sent for the lords of the Philistines, with this message: "Come up once more, for he has confided everything to me." And the lords of the Philistines came up and brought the money with them. <sup>19</sup>She lulled him to sleep on her lap. Then she called in a man, and she had him cut off the seven locks of his head; thus she weakened him and made him helpless: his strength slipped away from him. <sup>20</sup>She cried, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" And he awoke from his sleep, thinking he would break loose and shake himself free as he had the other times. For he did not know that the LORD had departed from him. <sup>21</sup>The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and shackled him in bronze fetters, and he became a mill slave in the prison. <sup>22</sup>After his hair was cut off, it began to grow back.

<sup>23</sup>Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to make merry....<sup>25</sup>As their spirits rose, they said, "Call Samson here and let him dance for us." Samson was fetched from the prison, and he danced for them. Then they put him between the pillars. <sup>26</sup>And Samson said to the boy who was leading him by the hand, "Let go of me and let me feel the pillars that the temple rests upon, that I may lean on them." <sup>27</sup>Now the temple was full of men and women; all the lords of the Philistines were there, and there were some three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson dance. <sup>28</sup>Then Samson called to the LORD, "O Lord GOD! Please remember me, and give me strength just this once, O God, to take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes." <sup>29</sup>He embraced the two middle pillars that the temple rested upon, one with his right arm and one with his left, and leaned against them; <sup>30</sup>Samson cried, "Let me die with the Philistines!" and he pulled with all his might. The temple came crashing down on the lords and on all the people in it. Those who were slain by him as he died outnumbered those who had been slain by him when he lived.

**Psalm 1.** Happy is the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked, or taken the path of sinners, or joined the company of the insolent; rather, the teaching of the LORD is his delight, and he studies that teaching day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives.

**Psalm 112** Happy is the man who fears the LORD, who is ardently devoted to His commandments. His descendants will be mighty in the land, a blessed generation of upright men. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his beneficence lasts forever. A light shines for the upright in the darkness; he is gracious, compassionate, and beneficent.

**Pirke Avot 4:1.** Ben Zoma taught: Who is powerful? One who conquers his desire, as it says, "slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and one who rules over his spirit than a conqueror of a city." (Proverbs 16:32).

**Pirke Avot 2:8** Hillel taught: The more flesh, the more worms; the more possessions, the more worries; the more wives, more witchcraft; the more maidservants, more lewdness; the more menservants, more thievery.

However - the more Torah, the more life; the more study with colleagues, the more wisdom; the more collegiality, more understanding; the more good deeds, the more peace.

The acquisition of a good reputation brings personal gain, but one who has acquired Torah has acquired eternal life.

**Pirke Avot 3:1** Akavia ben Mahalalel taught: Reflect on three things and you will not come to sin: Know where you came from, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an account. Where did you come from? From a putrid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, worms, and maggots. And before whom are you accountable? Before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

**Talmud Avoda Zara 19a.** Happy is the man who fears the Lord" (Psalm 112:1). Happy is the man and not the woman? R. Amram said in the name of Rav, "Happy is the one who repents when he is a man." R. Yehoshua b. Levi said: "Happy is the one who overpowers his *yetzer* [his nature] like a man."

**Bava Metzia 84a:11-13** . One day Rabbi Yochanan was swimming in the Jordan. Resh Lakish saw him and leapt into the Jordan after him. Rabbi Yochanan said "Your strength [would be better spent on] Torah." Resh Lakish said, "Your beauty [is more dazzling than that of] women." Rabbi Yochanan said "If you return [to a life of Torah], I will give you my sister who is more beautiful than me." Resh Lakish accepted, Resh Lakish tried to go back and collect his weapons but he was not able to go back. Rabbi Yochanan taught him [Resh Lakish] scripture and he taught him Oral Torah and he made him a great man.

### **Chaim Nahman Bialik, "City of Slaughter," 1905**

Arise and go now to the city of slaughter / Into its courtyard wind your way;

There with your own hand touch, and with the eyes of your head,

Behold on tree, on stone, on fence, on mural clay, the spattered blood and dried brains of the dead.

Descend then, to the cellars of the town / There where the virginal daughters of your folk were fouled,

...This is the place the wild ones of the wood, the beasts of the field

With bloody axes in their paws compelled thy daughters yield. Fouled and despoiled!

Note also do not fail to note, in that dark corner, and behind that cask

Crouched husbands, bridegrooms, brothers, peering from the cracks,

Watching the sacred bodies struggling underneath the bestial breath, stifled in filth, and swallowing their blood!

Watching from the darkness and its mesh the lecherous rabble portioning for booty their kindred and their flesh!

Crushed in their shame, they saw it all; They did not stir nor move; They did not pluck their eyes out;

They beat not their brains against the wall! "Perhaps, perhaps," each watcher had it in his heart to pray: "A miracle, O Lord,—and spare my skin this day!" Those who survived this foulness, who from their blood awoke, Beheld their life polluted, the light of their world gone out— How did their menfolk bear it, how did they bear this yoke? They crawled forth from their holes, they fled to the house of the Lord, They offered thanks to Him, the sweet benedictory word. The Cohanim sallied forth, to the Rabbi's house they fled: Tell me, O Rabbi, tell, is my wife permitted me? The matter ends; and nothing more. And all is as it was before.

### A.D. Gordon, "Logic for the Future," 1910.

The way of national rebirth] embraces every detail of our individual lives. Every one of us is required to refashion himself so that the Exile Jew within him becomes a truly emancipated Jew; so that the unnatural, defective, splintered person within him may be changed into a natural wholesome human being who is true to himself; so that his life of Exile, may give way to one that allows him to develop freely, to his fullest stature in all dimensions.

And when, O Man, you will return to Nature on that day your eyes will open, you will gaze straight into the eyes of Nature, and in its mirror you will see your own image. You will know that you have returned to yourself.

You will see that from you from your hands and from your feet, from your body and from your soul heavy, hard, oppressive fragments will fall and you will begin to stand erect. These were fragments of the shell into which you had shrunk, and out of which you have finally emerged. On that day, O Man, deep in your heart you will know that you had been wandering until you returned to Nature. For you did not know Life.

### A Joke

A boy comes home from school and tells his mother he got a part in the school play.

"That's wonderful!" says the mother, "Which part?"

"The part of a Jewish husband," says the boy, proudly.

Frowning, the mother says, "Go back and tell them you want a speaking role!"

