

**A. Propounding of
the Riddle (10-14)**

14:16 (NASB95) – “you have **propounded** a riddle to the sons of my people...”

1. The Place

-Feast – מִשְׁתֶּה mishteh /
Lit “A **place** for drinking”

-Nazarite Vow
Judges 13:4, 7; Num 6:3-4

-Similar to the feast given by Laban, the father of Leah, at her marriage to Jacob (**Gen 29:22**). It was also seven days long (**29:27-28**)

-Samson’s father is singled out, perhaps because he was paying for the feast, or perhaps because he was a witness to this marriage covenant

2. The People

“they brought 30 companions...”

-These “companions” correspond to the “guests of the bridegroom” mentioned in **Matt 9:15, Mark 2:19, and Luke 5:34**

- Perhaps Samson broke with tradition by failing to bring along his own attendants; so Philistine ones were invited.

**C. Price of the
Riddle (19-20)**

**1. The Slaying of the 30
Philistine Men**

“he went down to Ashkelon”
-about twenty miles southwest from Timnah

-While Samson’s deed was cruelly brutal, we again see God overruling evil to accomplish His purpose for the Philistines (6)

**2. The Separating from His
Philistine Mate**

¹⁰His **father** went down to the **woman**, and **Samson prepared a feast there**, for so the young men used to do.

¹¹As soon as the people saw him, **they brought thirty companions to be with him.**

¹²And **Samson** said to them, “Let me now put a **riddle to you**. If you can tell me what it is, within the **seven days of the feast**, and find it out, then I will give you **thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes**,
¹³but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me **thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes.**” And they said to him, “Put your riddle, that we may hear it.”

¹⁴And he said to them, “**Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.**” And in three days they could not solve the riddle.

¹⁵On the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “**Entice your husband to tell us** what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?”

¹⁶And Samson’s wife wept over him and said, “**You only hate me; you do not love me.** You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is.” And he said to her, “Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?”

¹⁷She **wept before him** the seven days that their feast lasted, and **on the seventh day he told her**, because she pressed him hard. Then **she told the riddle to her people.**

¹⁸And 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?**” And he said to them, “**If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.**”

¹⁹And the **Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him**, and he **went down to Ashkelon** and **struck down thirty men** of the town and took their spoil and **gave the garments to those who had told the riddle**. In hot anger **he went back to his father’s house.**

²⁰And Samson’s **wife was given to his companion**, who had been his best man.

<- “back to his father’s house” / Samson left his new wife

<- “given to his companion” / Father gave his daughter to another

3. The Particulars

“riddle to you...”

The riddle was in concise Hebrew parallelism, that translates into good English verse due to accidental rhyme.

Eater – Lion

Sweet – Honey

-A Guiltless Attitude

*The riddle tells us he felt so little guilt about the experience with the lion (5-9) that he now uses it as a riddle to entertain the wedding guests.

-A Gambling Arrangement

“thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes”

Though the riddle was designed as a form of entertainment, it may have been related to the lack of proper wedding attire also (**Matt 22:11-12**)

**B. Perceiving of the
Riddle (15-18)**

**1. The Defrauding by the
Guests**

“Entice your husband to tell us...”

**2. The Deceiving by the
Bride**

“You only hate me; you do not love me” (15)

“She wept before him...”

**3. The Denouncing by the
Groom**

“If you had not plowed with my heifer...”

What does this mean?

Propounding of the Riddle (10-14)

Judges 14:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have **propounded** a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told *it* to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told *it* to my father or mother; so should I tell you?"

Feast

4960. מִשְׁתֶּה **mishteh** (1059c); from 8354; *a feast, drink*:—banquet(16), banquets(1), drank(2), drink(3), drinking(1), feast(15), feasting(7), where they were drinking(1), which he drank(2).¹

Genesis 29:22 (ESV)

²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast.

Genesis 29:27–28 (ESV)

²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

Nazarite Vow

Judges 13:4 (ESV)

⁴ Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean,

Judges 13:7 (ESV)

⁷ but he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.' "

Numbers 6:3–4 (ESV)

³ he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.

¹ Thomas, R. L. (1998). [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

Companions

Matthew 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Mark 2:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

Luke 5:34 (ESV)

³⁴ And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?

No Guilt

Judges 14:5–9 (ESV)

⁵ Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. ⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. ⁷ Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she was right in Samson’s eyes.

⁸ After some days 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. ⁹ He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.

Wedding Attire

Matthew 22:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.

Perceiving of the Riddle

Delilah

Judges 16:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies.”

Plowed with my Heifer

Expositor’s Bible Commentary

18–20 Given the answer by Samson’s wife, the Philistines triumphantly presented it before the deadline (v.18). Samson replied with another bit of verse that showed how they got the answer. Heifers were not normally used for plowing; so the thirty had not played fair.²

Faithlife Study Bible

If you had not plowed with my heifer An idiom meaning “had you not intimidated my wife.”³

Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown

18. If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle—a metaphor borrowed from agricultural pursuits, in which not only oxen but cows and heifers were, and continue to be, employed in dragging the plough. Divested of metaphor, the meaning is taken by some in a criminal sense, but probably means no more than that they had resorted to the aid of his wife—an unworthy expedient, which might have been deemed by a man of less noble spirit and generosity as releasing him from the obligation to fulfil his bargain.⁴

Bible Knowledge Commentary

If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle. In calling her a “heifer” he was ridiculing her for her untamed and stubborn spirit⁵

² Wolf, H. (1992). [Judges](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel* (Vol. 3, p. 469). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jdg 14:18). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 1, p. 168). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁵ Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Judges](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 405). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Price of the Riddle

Judges 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.