

# Judges 14:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?

## Analysis

**And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?**

This verse belongs to the Samson cycle addressing Samson's marriage and riddle at Timnath. Samson represents both the heights of God-empowered strength and the depths of human weakness through moral compromise. His Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21) set him apart as holy to God, yet his persistent violations of this vow—contact with dead animals (14:8-9), seven-day feast (likely involving wine, 14:10), and finally revealing his hair's secret (16:17)—demonstrate progressive spiritual decline.

Theologically, Samson illustrates how spiritual gifts don't guarantee spiritual maturity. The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson repeatedly, giving superhuman strength, yet this empowerment didn't produce corresponding moral transformation. His attraction to Philistine women (14:1-3, 16:1, 16:4) directly violated God's command against intermarriage with Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). This demonstrates that God can use flawed instruments for His purposes,

but this never excuses or endorses sin.

Samson's final prayer—"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me" (16:28)—shows genuine repentance and renewed faith. His death accomplished more than his life (16:30), suggesting that even spectacular failure can be redeemed when we return to God. However, the tragedy is that Samson's potential was largely wasted through moral compromise. His story warns believers that consistent holy living, not merely spectacular spiritual experiences, characterizes faithful discipleship.

## Historical Context

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**Historical Setting:** The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

**Cultural Context:** This passage relates to Samson's marriage and riddle at Timnath. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the

imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does this passage about Samson's marriage and riddle at Timnath reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

## Interlinear Text

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בַּקְרָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֲשֶׁת	וַתַּבְךְ	עַל	יְ	שְׁמַשׁ	וְ	אֶשְׁת	וַתַּבְךְ	וְ	אָמַר	בְּ	בְּ							
wept	wife	And Samson's	H5921					before him and said	H7535											
H1058	H802	H8123					H559													
תְּהִנֵּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ	אֶתְבָּתְךָ	וְ							
Thou	dost	but	hate	H3808		me	and	lovest	H157	a	riddle	H2420	me	not	thou	hast	put	forth		
													H2330							
לְבָנָי	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ	עַמְּךָ	וְ			
unto	the	children	of	my	people	H0	H3808		H5046	and	hast	not	told	before	him	and	said	H559		
H1121			H5971																	
לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא	וְ	לֹא		
H0	H2009		H1			it	my	father	H517	nor	my	mother	H3808	and	hast	not	told	H0		
אָמַדְתָּ																				
and	hast	not	told	H5046																

## Additional Cross-References

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**Judges 16:15** (Love): And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.