Times of the Judges

GETTING EVEN

Wednesday, November 18

Reading: Judges 15

> ***Judges 15:9*** *The Philistines went up and camped in Judah, spreading out near Lehi.* ***10*** *The men of Judah asked, "Why have you come to fight us?" "We have come to take Samson prisoner," they answered, "to do to him as he did to us."* ***11*** *Then three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Don't you realize that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us?" He answered, "I merely did to them what they did to me."*

After some "cooling off" time, Samson returns for his Philistine wife only to learn that she has been married to someone else. In a fit of rage, Samson burns the Philistines' crops. This in turn is answered by the Philistines killing his would-be-wife and her father. In revenge for this murder, Samson slaughters even more Philistines.

The Philistines now take out their frustrations of the people of Judah. This causes Samson's own people to hunt him down and beg him to surrender to the Philistine rulers. Samson agrees but, instead of surrendering, when he is taken to the Philistine camp he breaks loose and kills 1000 Philistine soldiers with the jawbone of a donkey.

After this vicious cycle of revenge, Samson composes a riddle to taunt his enemies. A riddle where Samson claims all the credit for himself! He then proudly renames the place "Jawbone Hill" (Ramath Lehi). Exhausted from his slaughter, Samson now feels the weakness of thirst. For the first time since his birth, Samson utters the name of God. He has finally come to a place where his need could not be satisfied by his own efforts. His prayer, however, seems somewhat self-serving as he almost accuses God of not taking care of him! God provides water for Samson and again the place is named, not for God who provided, but after Samson who called (En Hakkore = Callers Spring).

Chapter 15 ends with the statement that Samson judged Israel for 20 years. It appears that the cycles of revenge and retaliation come to a close and Samson does what he was called to do for a period of time. If only Samson's story would end here, it would be much happier. Unfortunately, Samson's eyes will soon begin to roam again!

LESSON ONE: Both Samson and the Philistines excused their actions by saying "I merely did to them what they did to me" (15:10-11). This excuse is a favorite for justifying acts of revenge or "getting even." What did Jesus say should be our response to those who hate and mistreat us (see Luke 6:27-31)?

LESSON TWO: How can you apply the following verses to your life?

> **Romans 12:17** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is Mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.