

Recap of 8/6/17 (Judges 14:10-20):

1. God's purpose for Samson's life is spelled out in Judges 13:5, a fact which explains his marriage to a Philistine woman (Judges 14:4). Also, the Holy Spirit was active in Samson's life, as witnessed by Judges 13:25; 14:6; 14:19; and 15:14.
2. The requirement of the Nazirite vow which the angel of the Lord emphasized when announcing the coming birth of Samson to his mother was the requirement concerning not cutting his hair (13:5). Among all the requirements of the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6, not cutting their hair was especially a symbol of separation to God. These may be the reasons that though Samson seems to have violated the Nazirite vow concerning grapes and dead bodies, it wasn't till his hair was cut (16:17-20) that his strength left him.
3. Samson's parents contract his marriage to the Philistine woman, and after waiting through the betrothal period they go down to Timnah for the wedding. By custom, there was a seven day wedding feast. Samson makes a wager with his Philistine "attendants" concerning a riddle he concocted around his killing the young lion previously, and the honey he found in the carcass later. They are unable to answer the riddle and threaten his bride and her family. She cries until Samson relents and tells her the answer to the riddle. As a result, in anger, Samson goes to a city 23 miles away and where he struck down 30 Philistine men to pay his debt.
4. God uses Samson to provoke the status quo with the Philistines. His personal anger is not the issue here but rather his public role in delivering Israel from Philistine oppression.
5. Though, in my estimation, personal forgiveness for wrongs is not the primary meaning of this passage; forgiveness is, for us, the better way when we are wronged. Forgiveness releases us from the pain of the past and frees us from the wrong. We must reject a "get even" or a "pound of flesh" mentality. Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18: 21ff is that we must forgive without limits. To be forgiven a great debt is to be obligated to forgive lesser debts against us. Our sin, past, present, and future has been totally forgiven at Calvary, surely then, we can forgive others who sin against us. Or as Paul says in Ephesians 4:32 that based on God's inexhaustible forgiveness to us, we must be forgiving to others.
6. Christian ethicist, Lewis B. Smedes, has written extensively on the subject of forgiveness. He is worth reading.