

**Intercultural Escalating Revenge Cycle:  
From 1,200 B.C. (the Bible, Judges 14-16)  
(sound familiar?)**

**A story of two Cultures: 'I' Culture & 'P' Culture**

**'I' Culture**

**Starts in a domestic situation: a wedding feast**

'I' Groom's trick riddle to get out of paying obligatory, costly gift to wedding guests: "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve it within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But if you cannot explain it to me, you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."

The 'P' wedding guests replied, "Pose your riddle." (14:12-13)

So, the groom told them the riddle.

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Group victimology + extortion-death threat**

For three days they could not explain the riddle. So they threatened the new wife, "Entice your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father's house. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours?" (14:14-15)

The new wife extorts by tears and threats: "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to my wedding guests, but you have not explained it to me." He replied, "What?! I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?" So she wept on him continually. Finally, on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the wedding guests. (14:16-17)

The 'P' wedding guests 'magically' solve the trick riddle (14:18)

**V**

## **'I' Culture**

### **First Escalation Beyond 'Domestic'**

Anger + unjustified murder & robbing others

His anger kindled, the groom went down to 'P' territory and killed thirty men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. Then he returned to his father's house. (14:19)

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Second 'Spiteful' Escalation**

Spiteful love-hurt revenge

They gave his wife to another: A short while later the man visited his wife with a gift. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife." But her father would not permit it. Her father said, "I really thought you thoroughly hated her; so I gave her to your best man. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead."  
(15:1-2)

**V**

## **'I' Culture**

### **Third 'Racial' Escalation**

'Straight-forward', 'sophomoric stunt' revenge

The Man: "This time I shall be blameless if I harm those 'P's!" Then he went and caught 300 foxes. He took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. After setting the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain, and burned up the standing grain, shocks, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. (15:3-5)

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Fourth 'Savage' Escalation**

Savage-'shocking' revenge

The 'P's questioned, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "The man, because his wife was given to his best man." So the 'P's burned her and her family and their house to the ground. (15:6)

**V**

## **'I' Culture**

### **Fifth 'Genocidal' But Limited Escalation** Rules-based (*lex talionis*) and limited reprisal

Man: "As they did to me so I will do to them . . . and after that I will cease." So he attacked the 'P's with a great slaughter; then he left. (15:7)

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Sixth Political Escalation** Cross border political extortion

The 'P's went to the nearest 'I' town across the border: "We have come to arrest the man, to do to him as he has done to us" (implied: if you don't turn him over we will do it to you). (15:9-10)

**V**



## **'I' Culture**

### **Orderly prisoner exchange**

3,000 armed men went to take him into custody: "Do you not know that the 'P's are in charge? What have you done to us?" Man: "I just did to them as they did to me." Their reply, "We're here to arrest you and turn you over to them." Man: "Swear to me that you will not kill me." They swore, "No, surely we will not kill you, just restrain you and deliver you to them." So they bound him and brought him to the agreed place (15:11-13)

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Seventh Mob Escalation**

They were met by a mob intent on annihilation

At that moment the 'P's rushed against him shouting. (15:14)

**V**

## **'I' Culture**

### **Defense-Revenge**

He broke his restraints, seized the nearest implement and killed 1,000 'P's, shouting, "I stopped them!" Then he kept the peace between the 'I's & 'P's for twenty years. (15:15-20)

**V**

The man must have preferred 'P' girls for he frequented them, and was almost caught a few times. First with a harlot in Gaza, and then he "loved Lydia."  
(16:1-4)

**V**

## **'P' Culture**

### **Eighth escalation, after a grudge held many years**

So the 'P' leaders bribed Lydia to set a 'honey trap': "Entice him to find out where his great strength lies so we may overpower him, and we will give you 1,100 pieces of silver." L. tried several times without success to set an ambush and entice him to find his secret. She kept saying, "You mock me and lie. How can you say, 'I love you'? Tell me what works." After she pestered him daily and pressed him, he relented. When she saw he told her the truth, she set one more ambush. She lulled him to sleep, cut off his hair, and then taunted him loudly to signal the conspirators. This time his strength left him. They kidnapped, blinded and imprisoned him to hard labor at the Gaza prison. (16:5-21)

**V**

## **Ninth and Final Escalation**

The blinded man was brought out to perform at a 'gloat' fest. He died in the process of pulling the roof down on the heads of almost 3,000 leaders.  
(16:23-30)