

WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS MAN

If we were to take a character from Scriptures and mention some of the lesser known facts about him, I wonder how many people would be able to recognise this man. Let us see...

He was the first person ever to use the proverb: Don't plough with another man's heifer ...

As a young man he brought his wife a young goat as a gift ...

At one stage he nearly died of thirst ...

One of his biggest personal problems was his impatience ...

Towards the end of his life he acted as an entertainer of the crowds ...

Now, should we add a few more well known facts about this person, I am sure everyone would know immediately which man is under discussion.

He got his hair cut not long before his death

He lost his eye-sight shortly before his death

He was thrown into prison shortly before his death

He killed more people when he died, than what he killed throughout his whole life

The man, of course, is Shimshon, or better known as Samson. The extremely strong man who ruled over Yisrael for 20 years in the days when the Philistines were posing a very real threat to the people of Yisrael. Let us take a brief look at the circumstances in which those lesser known events took place in his life.

He used the proverb about ploughing with another man's heifer when he spoke to the men who had forced his wife Timnah to drag the answer to a riddle out of Shimshon. The riddle was about the lion that Shimshon had killed and the honey that he had found in the carcass when he came around the second time. They (the men of the city) ploughed with his (Shimshon's) heifer, by using his wife to get to the answer and then pretending to have found it themselves (Shophetim / Judges 14:18).

He brought his wife a young goat as gift after he had spent some time at his parent's home having killed thirty Philistines in anger. This was because he needed thirty garments that he had promised to give to the men of the city, should they come up with the answer to his riddle. The ironic thing is that when he brought this gift to his wife, he found out that in the meantime his father-in-law had given his wife to his friend and wanted him (Shimshon) to take her sister as wife instead. This enraged Shimshon in such a way that he set alight the grain and the vineyards and the olive-trees of the Philistines, using 300 foxes that he had caught and chased into their fields with torches attached to their tails (Shophetim / Judges 15:1).

So, how did it happen that he nearly died of thirst? Out of fear for the Philistines, 3000 men of Shimshon's own people (Yehudim) came to him and informed him that they were going to deliver him into the hands of the Philistines. They bound him with two new ropes but the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Shimshon - he broke the ropes as if they were nothing, picked up a jawbone of a donkey and killed 1000 Philistine men with it. Following this battle, he became extremely thirsty and cried out to Yahweh: "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant. And now, am I to die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" So Yahweh supernaturally

provided water from a hollow place in the field and Shimshon's thirst was quenched (Shophetim / Judges 15:18).

What about Shimshon's impatience? This, of course, transpired a number of times, but never more clearly than when the second important woman in Shimshon's life, Delilah, kept on nagging with Shimshon that he should tell her the secret of his strength. In Shophetim (Judges) 16:16 we read these words: "And it came to be, that she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his being was wearied to death" (Afrikaans: "hy het so ongeduldig geword dat hy kon sterf"). He told her about being a Nazirite and the oath that his parents had taken before Yahweh (including never to cut his hair) and Delilah consequently used this information to bring about Shimshon's final downfall. And in his last days, while in prison, being in shackles and having his eyes stabbed out, Shimshon, among other things, was forced to entertain the crowds of the Philistines - perhaps with song and music, perhaps with his body and his immense physical strength, we do not know - but this gave him the opportunity to come out in the midst of a celebration attended by a great number of Philistines and bring down the two main columns of the building, killing thousands in the process, including himself.

What is it that we should learn from the life of Shimshon? Should we take to heart the lesson that it is wrong to plough with another man's heifer or to take unfair advantage of the kindness and the belongings of other people? Perhaps we should, but more importantly, Shimshon is a reminder to us that no advantage in knowledge or in belongings or in strength or in wealth, can be compared to the advantage of knowing Yahweh and trusting Him to take care of our lives and providing in every need that we may have. Sometimes, like Shimshon, we become weary and impatient when we look around us and listen to the things people are saying, and then we tend to take matters into our own hands - only to find out that in our confusion we have given up the advantage of having Yahweh on our side. Giving up the advantage of trusting Yahweh with our whole beings and now we find ourselves in a desperate situation: Instead of just silently looking on while He is fighting our battles for us, all of a sudden we are restlessly pacing up and down and trying in vain to find the inner peace that we once had.

Should we take to heart the lesson that it is risky to share our secrets with those near to us? I don't think so. Secrets, in a sense, become irrelevant when there is a relationship of trust between two or more people. A much more important lesson from the life of Shimshon, one that may also be seen as a secret - a secret that even Shimshon did not fully know or understand, is this: Yahweh has a hidden, but exalted plan and purpose for my life. The exalted calling on Shimshon's life was that he was destined to be a strong ruler who had to deliver the Yisraelites from the hands of the mighty Philistines! If I want to live life to its full, I need to look at the bigger picture. That means not becoming entangled in personal battles and selfish ambitions but becoming available as an instrument in Yahweh's hands more and more - for the benefit of others, not for my own pride or my own enjoyment. Only then will I come to know the full shalom of Yahweh.

Should we take to heart the lesson that a oath to Yahweh should never be broken? Of course this was crucial in the life of Shimshon: When he broke his Nazirite oath and got his hair cut, it was the beginning of the end for him and for his rule over Yisrael. But breaking an oath is no worse or no more damaging than forgetting an oath - especially forgetting the oaths that Yahweh had taken with us in mind. Forgetting these oaths, not making them part of our lives, not putting our faith and our trust in them, boils down to exactly the same as breaking an oath. What oaths are we talking about? Think, for a moment, about these:

Yahweh's oath that He would keep us from day to day, that He would guide us and show us the way to go (Tehillim 91:14).

Yahweh's oath that He would take care of our enemies and not allow them to get the better of us (Tehillim 81:14).

Yahweh's oath that He make us prosperous and bless us abundantly more what we can ever imagine (YeshaYahu 52:13).

Of course all of these oaths come to us with a flip side attached to it - there are conditions that we should keep from our side to make these oaths valid for ourselves. Let us learn from the life of Shimshon to keep our side of the covenant with Yahweh but, equally important, to deliberately remember those things that Yahweh had promised with an oath - not allowing the Enemy to make us forget these truths, only to be overcome by the stormy seas and the confusing world that we often find ourselves in.