

and made to grind in the prison house. Slowly his hair began to grow again.

One day the Philistines met to offer a sacrifice to their god Dagon. They were happy to have Samson prisoner and as they celebrated it was decided to bring Samson into the huge building and make fun of him. So they stood him between two large pillars and Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house stands so that I can lean upon them".

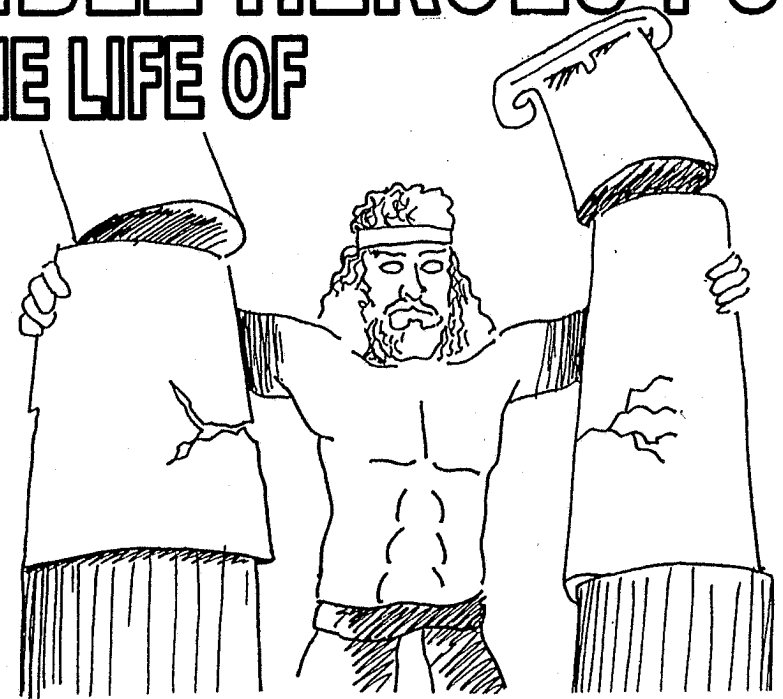
Now the house was crowded with men and women and all the lords of the Philistines were there. On the roof were three thousand more watching Samson. Samson's hair had grown again while he was in prison.

Samson called to God, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes". So Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, one with his right hand and the other with his left. He said, "Let me die with the Philistines". Then he bowed himself with all his might and the house fell on all that were there. He slew more enemies at his death than those he had killed in his life. His people buried Samson between Zorah and Eshtaol where Manoah his father was buried.

We can see from Samson's story how foolish he was to get mixed up with Israel's enemies and to make decisions in his life, like getting married, without God's guidance. This led to his imprisonment, blindness and eventually his death. You can ask God to guide you in every decision in your life. You can read more about Samson in Judges chapters 13-16.

BIBLE HEROES : 8

THE LIFE OF



SAMSON



THE LIFE OF SAMSON

We can read about the life of Samson in the book of Judges. It was a time when the Philistines were in power for a period of forty years in the land of Israel. There was a man called Manoah whose wife had a visit from the angel of the Lord who told her that she would have a son. She should not drink wine or any strong drink or eat anything that was unclean until her son was born, and that he mustn't drink strong wine or have his hair cut. He would be a Nazarite and help Israel against the Philistines.

When the child was born they called him Samson and he grew into a strong young man. One day he told his mother and father that he wanted to marry a Philistine woman so they all went down to a place called Timnath where there were vineyards. A young lion roared against Samson and he killed the beast with his bare hands. When he came back a second time he saw that there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion so he ate the honey and gave some to his mother and father.

Soon after, a feast was held and thirty Philistines were invited to join Samson. At the feast he gave them a riddle to solve; whoever won would get thirty sets of clothes. This was Samson's riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The riddle meant the honey from the carcass of the dead lion and when no-one could work it out they made his wife get Samson to tell her by threatening to burn down her father's house. Samson told his wife the answer to the riddle but was so angry about what the Philistines had done he went down to Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their clothes and gave them to those men that answered the riddle.

Samson was angry with his wife as well and he left her at Timnath and went back to his parent's house. One day he decided to visit his wife but was not allowed to see her as her father had married her to someone else. In revenge Samson caught three hundred foxes, tied them tail to tail and set light to a firebrand between the tails. He let

them into the cornfields of the Philistines and also the vineyards and olive groves. The harvest was burnt up. This caused the Philistines burn his wife and her father. Samson killed many of them before going to live on the top of the rock of Etam. The Philistines were rulers in the land of Israel and demanded that Samson be handed over to them for punishment. This threat to all of them caused the men of Israel to bind Samson, with his agreement, and offer him as a prisoner to the Philistines. However, when the Philistines shouted against him he broke the cords easily. Then he took the jawbone of an ass and killed a thousand men with it! He was very thirsty and called to God who made water come out of a rock. Samson judged Israel for twenty years in the days of Philistines.

Then Samson went to Gaza (a Philistine town) and his enemies thought they had him trapped. They waited by the city gates. At midnight, when it was all quiet Samson lifted up the city gates, posts and bar, put them onto his shoulders and carried them to the top of a hill before Hebron. This might have been as much as 30 miles!

Now Samson loved a woman called Delilah and the Philistines told her to find out the secret of his strength. If they could capture Samson she would be given a large amount of silver. When she first asked him, Samson said if he was bound with seven green, fresh cords he could be taken. This didn't work so she tried again and he told her that if he was bound with new ropes he would become weak. When she called "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson", he broke the ropes like a piece of thread. Delilah kept on at him and at last Samson told her the truth. He said he had been a Nazarite from birth and his hair had never been cut. If he was shaved he would become as weak as any other man. The Philistines brought her money and as Samson was asleep a razor was taken and seven locks shaved off his head. "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson", she said and he awoke thinking he could just shake off his bonds.

However, his strength had gone and the Philistines took Samson, put out his eyes and took him to Gaza where he was bound in brass chains