

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are two teachers and every day during the past week we had a quiet time from 7 selected chapters from JOSHUA AND JUDGES. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned from our quiet times. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM JOSHUA + JUDGES.

(S) **SHARING FROM SELECTED CHAPTERS FROM JOSHUA AND JUDGES**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Joshua 1 and Judges 2,7,13,14,15 and 16. Now we will use our notes to share important truths and lessons from some of these chapters.

(T) **Judges chapter 7.**

I would like to share from Judges 7:1-22 about Gideon. This chapter relates how the Lord gave Gideon the victory over the Midianites. Judges 6:1-6 describes how the Israelites were again doing evil in the eyes of the Lord. As punishment, the Lord gave the Israelites into the hands of the Midianites. The Midianites were a nation distantly related to Israel. They were the descendants of Abraham with his wife Keturah (Gen 25:2) and lived in the desert east of the Jordan. Every year for 7 years, the Midianites invaded the territory of Israel together with their flocks of camels. They camped from place to place in Israel and plundered Israel's livestock and crops. The Israelites tried to hide themselves and their possessions high in difficult places in the mountains, while the Midianites ravaged their country like swarms of locusts. The Midianites so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help. And the Lord heard their cry and gave them a judge, Gideon.

Judges 7:1-8 describes how the Lord chose the soldiers through whom he would give victory to Israel. Israel had cried to the Lord for help and now the Lord wanted to teach Israel that *deliverance comes through the Lord, and not through a judge like Gideon, and also not through a military army. The Lord wanted to teach the Israelites that the real Commander of Israel is the Lord himself*. The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands." He commanded Gideon, "In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people" that anyone who trembles with fear may turn back. 22 000 men turned back. This was more than two-thirds of the whole army. But even the 10 000 who remained were too many. Once more the Lord commanded Gideon to take these men down to the water of the spring of Harod (vs 1), where he would sift the men he wanted to use from the rest. The Lord gave Gideon the selection criterion: All those who got down on their knees and brought water to their mouths with their hands, had to turn back. Only those who fell on their stomachs and lapped water like dogs from their hands in the water were selected. These 300 men showed that they were much quicker and thus more prepared for the battle than the others.

Judges 7:9-22 describes how the Lord gave victory to Israel. The Lord commanded Gideon to stalk down to the camp of the Midianites and listen to what they were saying. There he overheard a sentry telling his dream to another sentry. This Midianite soldier had a dream in which a round barley bread rolled down the mountain and struck his tent so that it collapsed. The other Midianite soldier interpreted this dream and said that this pointed to Gideon and that God had given the Midianites and their whole camp into the hands of Israel. *This proved clearly that God sovereignly ruled over the hearts and thoughts of people and that he knew precisely the most hidden thoughts and plans of his enemies*. Gideon was encouraged and devised a plan, not to fight the Midianites, but to scare the Midianites. He divided his 300 men into three groups of 100 men each. He gave them a trumpet to hold in their right hand and a burning torch within a clay jar in their left hand. And he told them to follow his example when he gave the sign. After the beginning of the second night watch, the three groups had surrounded the Midianite camp and Gideon gave the sign. He blew on his trumpet, broke the clay jar with a crash, swung his torch to and fro and shouted, "For the Lord and for Gideon!" All the 300 men followed his example. The Midianites were shocked out of their sleep. The ear-splitting noise of the trumpets gave the impression that a great army had attacked them. The torch lights flickering on all sides of the camp looked as if they were surrounded. The shattering of the clay jars seemed as if the enemy was already in the camp and was destroying everything in their way. And the war cries about the Lord and Gideon brought everybody into frenzied panic. The Midianites tried to escape, but were hindered by others trying to escape. Because the dark prevented them from distinguishing friend from foe, they turned their swords against one another. The sheer great numbers of Midianites turned everything into total chaos and they totally destroyed one another.

This historical event *proved once again that the Lord could deliver his people by letting his enemies destroy one another. And it proved that the Lord did not need great numbers of people to accomplish his purpose in this world.*

(S) **Judges chapters 13 to 15.**

I would like to share from Judges 13:1 to 15:20 about Samson. These chapters record the most important deeds of Samson during his period of being the judge in Israel. Judges 10:6-8 relates that Israel once more did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served wicked idols. Because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, the Lord became angry with Israel and sold them into the hands of the Ammonites and the Philistines. The Ammonites oppressed Israel for 18 years, during which Jephthah ruled as judge in Israel. *At the same time*, the Philistines oppressed Israel for at least 40 years, during which Samson ruled as judge in Israel for 20 years. Samson was born about 1125 BC and died about 1085 BC.

The Philistines probably emigrated from Crete to Canaan and became a strong nation and oppressed Israel. By choosing an ordinary childless couple to be the father and mother of Samson, God showed that he was the One who delivered a powerless Israel from their powerful oppressors. Samson had to be a Nazirite, that is, a person set apart to God from his birth. A Nazirite had to abstain from alcohol and had to leave his hair uncut.

One day, Samson went down to Timnah, a Philistine town, and there he saw a Philistine woman whom he wanted to have as his wife. His parents objected, but according to Judges 14:4, they did not know that Samson was destined to be God's instrument to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Therefore *Samson was deliberately seeking for an occasion to confront the Philistines*. Undoubtedly Samson followed the stirring of the Holy Spirit in doing this, but the way in which Samson did it shows that *he was a sinful and imperfect instrument in God's hands*. Judges chapters 14 and 15 relate four incidents from the life of Samson.

Samson's first confrontation with the Philistines. When Samson travelled with his parents to Timnah to arrange for the marriage, he killed a lion with his bare hands. He did not tell his parents about this. Some time later, when he went to Timnah to marry the girl, he saw that a swarm of bees and honey were in the lion's carcass. He scooped out some honey with his hands and ate as he went along. During the first day of the wedding feast, he made a bet with his 30 Philistine companions, that they would not be able to solve his riddle. His riddle was, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." When the companions realised that they could not solve the riddle, they threatened the bride that unless she coaxes Samson for the solution, she and her family would be burned to death. For the rest of the feast, she cried and coaxed Samson, until he finally told her the meaning of the riddle. She told the companions and so Samson lost the betting. Without realising it, the Philistines gave Samson his first opportunity to confront them. Samson was waiting for such an opportunity. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in power. This means that the Holy Spirit took control of Samson and made him an instrument to punish the Philistines. Samson killed 30 Philistines and gave their clothes as the price of the betting to the companions. Burning with anger, Samson returned to Israel. Samson's act was not a personal revenge. He acted as one called by God to be a judge and showed that he was the most formidable opponent of the Philistines. Through his instrument Samson, the Lord himself fought against those who oppressed his people Israel.

Samson's second confrontation with the Philistines. Later Samson returned to Timnah to fetch his wife. Without Samson's knowledge, her Philistine father had already given her to another man. Without realising it, the Philistines gave Samson a second opportunity to confront them. Samson felt that through this faithless kind of treatment, the Philistines showed how much they despised the Israelites. Therefore Samson revenged himself not only against his wife's father, but also against the Philistines as a nation. He caught 300 foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He caused immense damage to their grain fields, vineyards and orchards.

Samson's third confrontation with the Philistines. The Philistines went and burned Samson's wife together with her family to death. Without realising it, the Philistines gave Samson a third opportunity to confront them. Samson viewed their act as proof that the Philistines cowardly avoided confrontation with him, by hurting him indirectly. Therefore, Samson decided to revenge his wife's death. He attacked the Philistine gang viciously and slaughtered many of them. The Bible says that Samson beat them with crushing blows, so that he shattered their shank bones and hips. This showed that even without the power of the Holy Spirit, Samson was very strong and could kill people with blows of his bear hands.

Samson's fourth confrontation with the Philistines. Then Samson withdrew and stayed in a cave. It is remarkable that Samson made no effort to organise Israel against the Philistines. This was probably because he felt personally called to be God's instrument of punishing the Philistines and that in this he did not need any other human help. Samson did not attack the Philistines, but waited until the Philistines themselves gave him an opportunity to confront them, either when they challenged him or when they treated him with injustice. That is why in Judges 15:11 he said to his fellow-Israelites that he only does to the Philistines what they do to him.

Again without realising it, the Philistines gave Samson a fourth opportunity to confront them. The Philistines had military garrisons in several places in Israel and forced the Israelites to pay tribute. This time, the Philistines went up to

Judah and camped on Judah's territory. They were not interested to attack Israel, but only to capture Samson. The Israelites were too afraid to resist or fight the Philistines. They even co-operated with the Philistines and promised to capture Samson. Being cowards and afraid, the Israelites sent 3000 men to capture Samson. Samson did not want to confront his own people. So he willingly agreed to be captured and delivered over to the Philistines. Samson was bound with two new ropes and led to the Philistines. Samson was delivered by his own people into the hands of the Gentiles to be killed. Later the same happened with Jesus Christ. When the Philistines saw him bound, they came to him running and shouting in their over-boldness. But then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in power. The ropes snapped like charred flax. Samson grabbed a fresh jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand Philistines with it. In this way, God's promise in Joshua 23:10 went into fulfilment, "One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you" (Dt 32:30).

Judges 15:20 says, "Samson led Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines." At this point, the actual work of Samson as judge in Israel ended. Judges chapter 16 describes Samson's fall and death, rather than his work as a judge. Throughout his period as a judge, the Israelites did not act against the Philistines. The oppression of the Philistines continued throughout Samson's life. Only in the time of David, were the Philistines finally conquered (2 Sam 8:1).

### (T) Judges chapter 16.

I would like to share from Judges 16 about Samson's fall and death. This chapter does not record Samson's work as a judge, but the sad consequences of his departure from the Lord. Towards the end of Samson's life, Samson again went to the territory of the Philistines. *Samson was overly confident and reckless.* In Gaza, he spent the night with a prostitute. The Philistines came to hear about this, surrounded the house and guarded the gates. However, they were afraid to attack Samson. By succumbing to his lust, Samson needlessly endangered his own life. During the night, Samson woke up, tore the two doors out of the city gate and carried them for more than 50 kilometres to the top of a mountain west of Hebron. He deposed the doors in the heart of Israel's territory with the purpose to show Israel's triumph over the Philistines and to cause the Philistines to tremble before the power of Israel's God.

Some time later, Samson again went to the territory of the Philistines, met a woman, called Delilah and fell in love with her. Samson's relationship with Delilah was not motivated by marriage, but by lust. *What Samson did was to tempt the Lord.* He had trusted in his own power and went to sin in the country of the Philistines. This was not how God wanted him to act and therefore, his visits to Delilah became his downfall and death. The Philistines bribed Delilah with a large amount of money to betray Samson and discover the secret of his strength. Both Delilah and Samson regarded her desire to see him lie powerless in her arms as a game. *Samson was playing a very dangerous game!* Again and again, Samson saw how Delilah first coaxed him with her nagging and tears and finally betrayed him. And yet, he did not leave her, because he had become a slave of his lust relationship with her. When she had tied him with seven fresh thongs that had not been dried and shouted that the Philistines were coming to capture him, he snapped them easily. The same happened when she tied him with new ropes that had never been used. When she wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on the loom and tightened it with a pin and shouted that the Philistines were coming to capture him, he pulled himself free. Delilah nagged and prodded him day after day until he was tired to death and told her his secret. He told her that he was a Nazirite set apart to God since birth and that if the hair of his head was shaved off, he would become as weak as any other man. Delilah put Samson to sleep on her lap and had his hair shaved off. Samson's strength left him. Thus Delilah subdued Samson. When she shouted that the Philistines were coming to capture him, he thought that he could escape like the other times. But *Samson did not know that the Lord had left him.* The Philistines gouged his eyes out, bound him with bronze shackles, imprisoned him at Gaza and set him to grind corn, which was the work of a female slave.

Samson's power was not in his long hair, but rather in the fact that the Lord had been with him. When Samson left the Lord, the Lord left him and Samson lost his power. By revealing his secret to the Philistines, Samson actually collaborated with his enemies. Samson had to know that the God of Israel did not allow anyone to mock him, nor to play with the gift that God had entrusted to him. Samson had to experience that God's gift can be lost!

The disarmament of Samson, which began in the lap of Delilah and was cruelly completed in Gaza, was the deepest point of Samson's life. *God used it as a punishment to break his sinful relationship with Delilah and to bring him to repentance to the Lord, the God of the Bible.* In his humble state, Samson again found himself and he found the Lord. The visible sign that God had not completely left Samson was that his hair began to grow again. *From the moment of his fall, the Lord began to lift him up again and to prepare him for the moment in which he could remove the bad name he had brought on the God of Israel and on himself.*

The Philistines organised a great feast to celebrate their victory over Samson. Thousands of people jammed in the temple and on the roof of the temple to see Samson. They made fun of Samson. Finally, Samson was put between the two pillars in the centre of the temple, which support the roof of the temple. Samson prayed to the Lord and asked him to strengthen him once more. Then he put his arms against the two pillars and pushed them from one another with all

his might. The whole roof collapsed on top of all the Philistine rulers and thousands of people died. When Samson died, he killed more Philistines than when he lived.

The history of Samson illustrates in a striking way the sovereign power of the God of the Bible. When his enemies were at the top of their power, he utterly humbled them together with their idols by means of a conquered and seemingly powerless instrument! In this way, also the humour of God is illustrated, as is recorded by David. In Psalm 2:2-4 is written, "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. ... The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them."

Here Samson is a type of Jesus Christ, who precisely through his death defeated God's enemies and saved his people (Col 2:15).

(S)     **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Every day have a quiet time from one chapter from 1 Samuel. The selected chapters are 1 Samuel 2,3,8,15,16,17 and 18. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share your discoveries, lessons and blessings. Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)  
Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".