

*Dr. Jamoke's Little Book of Hitherto  
Uncompiled Facts and Curiosities  
Regarding Bees*

by  
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*with*  
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New London Librarium

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Gods, Goddesses,  
Nymphs, Saints,  
& Suspicions

Your Lord revealed to the bees: ‘Build dwellings in the mountains and the trees, and also in the structures which men erect. Then eat from every kind of fruit and travel the paths of your Lord, which have been made easy for you to follow.’ From inside them comes a drink of varying colours, containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect.

Qur’an, 16:69

My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

Proverbs 24:13-14

The tears of the Egyptian god Ra became bees as they fell.

The Egyptian goddess Nut could manifest herself as a bee, and for all anybody knows, she still can.

Bubilas and Austeėja were the Lithuanian god and goddess of bees.

Bhramari was the Hindu god of bees.

Colel Cab was the Mayan goddess of bees.

Samson, of Biblical fame, was not only strong but clever. In a rather complicated story involving uncircumcised Philistines and a weeping wife who lay sore upon him, Samson got into an altercation with a young lion in a vinyard. The cat came to regret the encounter. Samson left it for dead and went off to meet a woman among the aforementioned Philistines. “She pleased Samson well,” it says in the King James version. So he took her back home to meet the folks. Along the way, he came across the dead lion. Its carcass was full of bees and honey! So he dug in, ate some, then dug out more to take to his parents.

He then—this was on his wedding day—presented the Philistines with a riddle: “Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.”

He gave them seven days to solve it. If they did, he’d give them 30 sets of garments. If they didn’t, they’d have to give him as much.

When bees to distance wing their flight  
Days are warm and skies are bright  
But when their flight ends near their home  
Stormy weather is sure to come.

From beavers,  
bees should learn to mend their ways.  
A bee works;  
a beaver works and plays.

A swarm of bees in May  
is worth a load of hay;  
A swarm of bees in June  
is worth a silver spoon.  
a swarm of bees in July  
is not worth a fly.

No bees,  
no honey.  
No work,  
no money.

The study of bees is melittology.

The honey bee is classified thus:

Kingdom: *Animalia* (because they are multicellular, can move of their own volition, and ingest organisms or their products)

Phylum: *Arthropoda* (because they have an exoskelton and no spine, a segmented body with a pair of joined appendages for each segment)

Class: *Insecta* (because they have compound eyes, two antennae, and three body sections, each with a pair of legs.

Order: *Hymenoptera* (because they have membranous (*hymen*) wings (*ptera*))

Family: *Apidae* (because it's a bee)

Subfamily: *Apinae* (because it has a pollen basket)

Genus: *Apis* (Latin for bee)

Species: *Apis mellifera* (from the Greek, *meli*, meaning honey, and the Latin, *fero*, meaning carry.

Officially—that is, nomenclaturally—*honey bee* should be two words, though less picky dictionaries tend to recognize *honeybee* as a word. The Integrated Taxonomic Information System of the Entomological Society of America, lists the *Apis mellifera* as “honey bee.” The term isn’t like *dragonfly* and *butterfly*, which are each one word because they aren’t flies.

The genus *Apis* can be divided into three branches based on how they nest.

Open nest bees: *Apis dorsata* and *Apis laboriosa*

Dwarf, single-comb bees: *Apis florea* and *Apis andreniformis*

Cavity nest bees: *Apis cerana*, *Apis koschevnikovi*, *Apis nuluensis*, *Apis nigrocincta*, and *Apis mellifera*.

Bees are found throughout North America, from Arctic Alaska to tropical Florida and southern Mexico. They live in deserts, forests, meadows, and cities. The only places free of bees are the tops of high mountains.

Of the 20,000 species of bees in the world, about 4,000 species are native to North America.

The honey bee isn't one of the natives.

Honey bees forage from morning until evening. (Beekeepers often orient the hive opening to the east so the early sun shines in the door, all the sooner to tell the bees it's time to get to work.) Bees can remember what time higher food sources were available on a previous day, so on the subsequent day, they will forage more at that time. They generally spend less than five minutes at a foraging site.

Busy as a bee? Which bee? How about busy as bee researchers at the University of Illinois who set up five hives each with about 2,000 day-old bees. They fasten tiny transponders to a bunch of the bees so they could count, with scanners, how many were going out to forage. They found that 20 percent of a hive's bees accounted for 50 percent of the foraging activity. In other words, there were a lot of less busy bees. When the scientists killed a number of bees who had been going out to forage, other bees were replacing them within a day. Whether the less active bees were lazy or just held back for emergencies was not determined. In any event, not all bees are as busy as beavers.

An experiment showed that bees, despite having a brain no bigger than a sesame seed, can recognize human faces. The bees were presented with photographs of two faces. One face had sucrose in front of it, the other a quinine solution that is bitter to bees. Later, when the reward and punishment were removed, bees tended to go to the face that used to offer a reward. One bee got the “right answer” 93.9% of the time on the first day of training and 75.9% two days later. However, if the photos were turned upside down, performance declined significantly.

One ounce of honey would be enough to fuel a honey bee for a trip around the world. A 7-11 Super Big Gulp™ cup of honey would be enough to get two bees around the world once and then to the moon and back. A Super Big Gulp of Mountain Dew, on the other hand, would most certainly kill them both.

A bee package consists of three pounds of bees in a box with screen on two sides. You want to install those bees as soon as you get them. You can see the bees in there, eager to get out and get back to normal life. You can also see a can in there, hanging from the top. It's full of sugar water from which the bees have been sipping through little holes in the bottom. Beside the can hangs the queen cage a little box the size of a clumsy carpenter's thumb.

(If you have received a queen only, without a package, to replace an old queen, the instructions are basically the same. Just make sure there is no queen in the hive or the young and the old will end up fighting until one of the two is dead. If there's still an old queen in the hive, find her, behead her, and leave her body outside the hive near the entrance so her loyal subjects get the message.)

The queen is in a cage because she is not the natural, original queen of the bees she is with. They still see her as an intruder. If she weren't in a case, they'd kill her. The complication of installing a package of bees is the process of not releasing the queen until she's accepted as one of the gang. Here's how:

1. Take the package to a hive that is all set up and ready to go, including a feeder with sugar water. (This hive would

be just a single brood chamber, or, better, a nuke (short for “nucleus,” a small hive with only five frames). A nuke’s smaller size makes it easier for a small swarm to keep themselves warm. Remove the top from the hive or nuke. Remove the inner cover. Remove a frame from the middle of the set of frames. Ideally, this frame will have comb on it. (Beg or buy a few frames with comb from another beekeeper. It will help a lot because the queen will immediately have somewhere to lay eggs.) In the upper part of the comb, in the corner that will be at the back of the hive, carve out a vertical space big enough for a queen cage, about an inch wide and three inches long. If the frame has no comb, see below.

2. Now to get the queen cage out of the package. Pry up the flat piece of wood at the top of the package. See the can. See the silvery disk next to it. From that disk hangs the queen cage. If you pull it up, bees will start flowing up through the hole, each and every one of them in a bad mood. You want to avoid that. So give the package a solid thump on the ground or the top of the hive. The bees will fall to the bottom of the box in a mass of confusion. This will give you a few seconds to pull up the queen cage and quickly set the flat piece of wood back over the hole before bees come flying out.

3. Look at that queen! Isn’t she beautiful—long, slender

and tan, like a Girl from Ipanema with six legs, diaphanous wings, and a spermatheca ready to go. See her wiggle in there with her comfort maids. If the queen isn't wiggling, you've got yourself a dead queen and a real problem. Call a beekeeper or the jerk who sold you the bees. You need a queen, and quick.

4. There are two ends to the queen case, each with a short tunnel capped with a tiny cork. One side you can't see because of the silvery disk nailed in place. Pull that disk off. Now see how one tunnel is packed with a white candy. The idea is, the queen is going to start eating her way through that tunnel while the bees outside start eating their way in. By the time they meet, they will have been in the hive long enough to become friends. The drones, of course, will be going absolutely nuts. So pull the cork out of the candy tunnel. Leave the other cork in place! It's an emergency exit. We'll get to that.

5. Nestle that queen cage into the place you carved in the comb. Best to put the candy tunnel facing up. This is so that if a bee dies inside, her body doesn't block the tunnel. Set the cage so that screened part faces the inside of the hive. This is so the bees can see and tend to their queen. Carefully set the frame back in place in the hive. Give the bees a pollen patty to help them produce comb. Put the inner cover on.