

EVERY WOMAN IN THE BIBLE:
SAMSON'S MOTHER (Judges 13)

Date: About 1200 B.C. (?)

Name: None given

Main Contribution: She carefully followed instructions concerning Samson's birth and nurture.

Her Role In Scripture:

Samson was one of the last judges to appear in Israel. While gifted with extraordinary physical strength, Samson was morally and spiritually weak. His feud was with the Philistines who dominated the Israelites in the 11 century B.C. It was rooted in personal animosity rather than a passion to free his people. While Samson killed many Philistines during his lifetime, he never won freedom from oppression for his people.

It is clear from the story in Judges that Samson's flaws were his own and cannot be traced to his mother or to his father, Manoah. Both parents are portrayed as godly and good people who did their best to respond to God and to give their son guidance.

Exploring Samson's Mother's Relationships:

While the Biblical text gives us little insight into Samson's mother's relationship with her son, we do gain insight into her relationship with God and with her husband.

The mother's relationship with God (Judges: 3,9):

Manoah's wife is described as a woman who was sterile and remained childless. It is impressive that many of the most significant women of the Bible remained childless for long periods of time before giving birth. In almost every case, the children produced had significant roles to play in God's plan for His people. It may be that the delay in bearing children had a significant impact on the spiritual life of the woman. Certainly in Rebekah and Hannah's case, the delay in childbearing drove the women to seek God's face in prayer.

While we are not told that Manoah's wife went to pray, we are told that the Angel of the Lord appeared not to Manoah, but to his wife. He informed her that she would have a child and instructed her to follow the rules imposed on those who made a Nazarite vow. This vow, which was voluntary, is described in Numbers 6:1-21. The person taking this vow was to avoid anything from the vine and anything that would make him unclean and was not to cut his hair. During her pregnancy Manoah's wife was to follow the same rules, which would then be incumbent on Samson after his birth.

When Manoah's wife reported the encounter to him Manoah prayed and asked for additional guidance. The Angel of the Lord appeared again – to Manoah's wife. She then hurried to call her husband, and the angel instructed them both.

It is significant that the Angel of the Lord chose to appear to the wife rather than the husband. She was the one who would have to follow the Nazarite rules” the Angel informed her directly rather than going through her husband as if in some sort of “chain of command”.

Her relationship with Samson (Judges 14:3):

The text tells us that Samson's father and mother tried to counsel him against seeking a wife among the Philistines when Samson saw a woman he desired. It's clear that the parents were in harmony in urging Samson to marry an Israelite. But Samson was not to be deterred by his parents. As an adult Samson was guided by his passions, rather than by wisdom or by respect for his parents.

Samson insisted that his father “get her for me” (Judges 14:4). As Samson's father, it was Manoah's responsibility to negotiate for his son's bride. In this case Manoah submitted to his son's demands, rather than the son submitting to his father's guidance. We can only assume that both parents, while they loved their son and had followed the Lords instructions in raising him, were disappointed in his decision.

MANOAH'S WIFE: A CLOSE-UP

It is appropriate that we know this woman of the Bible only as Manaoah's wife, for her unique character was displayed by implicit contrast with her husband. She recognized the “Man of God” as an angelic visitor, but rather than being over whelmed she carefully noted and remembered His instructions exactly. Her husband is the one who was upset and uncertain, worried that his wife might have overlooked something important. But when the Angel of the Lord returned He had nothing to add to what the wife had remembered. When Manoah and his wife realized that the visitor had been God Himself Manoah was frightened and fell apart. But his wife remained calm and sensible, and reasoned that if God had intended them harm He would not have accepted their offering or spoken of their future. In every way Manoah's wife showed herself to be stable and astute, a truly rational person. In this marriage it was the wife who provided emotional steadiness and strength.

SAMSON'S MOTHER: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

*Samson's mother was an obedient and godly woman. When the Lord spoke, she listened and obeyed. We too are responsible to listen and obey.

*Samson's mother did her best to follow the instructions God gave her. Yet Samson made choices she advised against. Parents nurture their children, but children are responsible for their own decisions. They must decide whether they will heed their parents' guidance.

***Samson's choices in women caused his downfall and his death. His parents urged him to find an Israelite wife, but Samson would not listen. It's hard for parents to watch their children make disastrous choices in selecting a spouse. We can offer advice and pray, but we cannot choose for them. Often we will need the grace to live with things we cannot change and to have faith in the God who works in all things for our good.**

DELILAH

Date: About 1175 B.C. (?)

Name: Delilah {duh-Li-luh: "*small, "dainty"*}

Main Contribution: She tricked Samson into revealing the secret of his strength to his enemies.

Delilah demonstrates the terrible energy of evil in a woman just as Samson demonstrates strength that is inordinate for a simple human man. She has come down through the thirty-one centuries as the woman in an unscrupulous, insidious manner, in a mission to destroy a man who seemed to be unconquerable.

Samson had not led any organized Israelite resistance against the Philistines who dominated them at the time, Samson himself had fought and killed hundreds of Philistines. Because of Samson's great physical strength, a gift from God, no Philistine force had been able to overcome him.

But Samson was morally weak, a victim of his passion for women. Today we would call Samson sexually addicted, a person unable and unwilling to exercise self-control.

The rabbis generally concede the Delilah was a Philistine, and Josephus declares her to have been one. Samson, one of the most eminent Hebrew "Judges", had to his credit many heroic achievements against the Philistines. They hated him and sought to work his ruin through Delilah.

When the affair started, the Philistines saw an opportunity to learn the secret of Samson's strength. When Samson went down to see Delilah, he had already demonstrated that he was giant in physical strength but that when it came to women he was a dwarf in willpower and moral resistance. Delilah was offered a fortune to discover the secret of Samson's strength and betray it to them, she rapidly took the bait.

Delilah lived in the Valley of Sorek, a brook valley which cut through the foothills between Philistine plains and the highlands of Judah. She possessed a fascinating quality and had an exotic kind of beauty. Though the Bible gives us no exact details of this or of what she wore, she undoubtedly decked herself in her fin-

est clothes when an eminent man like Samson called. She also probably made her home a charming and restful place. We can imagine that she had musicians plying the dulcimer and lyre on the garden terrace, where a fountain sprayed, cooling the area. A restful and seductive background for her devious plans for him. Samson was completely blind to the fact that Delilah was a deceitful woman determined to find out the secret of his great strength, so that his enemies could conquer him.

At first Samson put Delilah off with lies, telling her that fresh throng or new ropes or braiding his hair would weaken him. Three times when Solomon slept, Delilah tied him, and then awoke him with a cry that the Philistines were upon him. Each time Samson easily broke free, ready to fight.

Day after day she pressed him for the answer to where his strength came from. Finally one day Samson confessed to her the secret of his strength, which, he said was in the locks of his hair. If they were shaved, he told her, his strength would leave him and he would be like any other man. He revealed to her that even before his birth he had been consecrated to God and he had kept the Nazarite vows, one of which was that his hair would not be cut.

After this confession, Delilah made him fall asleep on her knee. Then she called her servant to come and shave the seven locks from his head.

When he woke up, he discovered that Delilah had deceived him. She was not a tender lover, but a cruel enemy. Samson knew that his strength was gone.

Where was Delilah, when they bound Samson, gouging out his eyes and binding him with bronze fetters? Had she gone to collect and spend those 1,100 pieces of silver from each of the lords of the Philistines.

Delilah: A Close-UP

The biblical texts give us a clear picture of Delilah. She was a calculating woman. She was aware of the power her sexuality gave her and quick to use sex for personal gain. While Samson had fallen in love with Delilah, she only pretended affection for him. Delilah was more than willing to let Samson use her body for she was using him to become rich.

How Samson failed to see what was happening we cannot imagine. Her repeated efforts to get him to betray the secret of his strength seems so transparent. But Samson was blinded by his passion and easily manipulated by Delilah. Her pretended doubt of his love, and her appeal to prove his love by revealing his secret, finally wore Samson down.

Delilah: An Example For Today

*Delilah hounded Samson for the secret of his strength. If someone hounds us to do or say something we

know we shouldn't, it's time to make adamantly clear that the issue is not negotiable. The other person needs to drop it, or risk the loss of the relationship.

***The story of Samson and Delilah serves as a warning. We will all lose God's empowerment should we step out of fellowship with Him.**

***Delilah reminds us that fleshly weakness can topple even the most powerful person.**

***Keeping ourselves sexually pure and equally yoked protects us from people like Delilah and is vital for empowering God's people.**

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