

DILIGENT PARENTS AND REBEL CHILDREN

GOLDEN TEXT

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord”.
(Colossians 3:20).

USEFUL PRACTICE

The way we raise them and bring them up has an impact on our children's behavior in the world, but it does not nullify their individual responsibility for their own choices.

SCRIPTURE READING

Judges 13:1-7, 24; 14:1-3

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

2 A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth.

3 The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son.

4 Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean.

5 You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

6 Then the woman went to her husband and told him, “A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn’t ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name.

7 But he said to me, ‘You will become pregnant and have a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from the womb until the day of his death.’”

24- The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him

Judges 14

1- Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman.

2 When he returned, he said to his father and mother, “I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.”

3 His father and mother replied, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.”

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I) To present the sinful context of Israel and the faithfulness of Samson's parents to the Lord;

II) To identify the commitment of Samson's parents to his moral and spiritual education under divine blessing;

III) To raise awareness that Samson's wrong behavior in his adult life, as well as its consequences, was a personal and non-transferable responsibility, the result of his free will, not always following the upbringing that he received.

INTRODUCTION

The story of Samson's family takes place in a context of social pressure, poverty and suffering imposed by the Philistines on the Israelites, around the eleventh century BC. Manoah's son was born by God's plan in the time

of the judges, being the 12th and last judge in Israel. Although he was born to fulfill a divine purpose in the defense of Israel, he had an irascible and rebellious temper. You can see this throughout his personal life, according to the Bible. In this lesson, we will see that Samson's parents were diligent about his upbringing, but their son became rebellious.

I - SANSON'S PARENTS

1. A spiritually deplorable situation.

Chapter 13 of Judges shows that “the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD” (v.1). Therefore, God delivered Israel into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years (Judg. 13:1). It was a context where the people lived practicing sin, where few families feared God and tried to keep his commandments. However, there was a couple faithful to the Almighty, who received a visit from the Angel of the Lord.

2. The blessed woman.

The couple was made up of a man named Manoah, from the tribe of Dan, and his wife, who was barren (Judges 13:2). It was to this woman that the Angel of the Lord appeared, saying: “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son” (Judg. 13:3). Thus, Manoah’s wife shows up in the Book of Judges, chosen by the Lord to be the mother of the “redeemer of Israel”. Her story is similar to that of Sarah, Rebekah and Hannah, who had their sterility reversed to bring forth lives that would play an important role for the glory of God. Under unwavering faith, Manoah's wife, due to God's gracious favor, would bear a son who would free the Jewish people from the yoke of the Philistines.

3. Receiving divine guidance.

The Angel of the Lord gave very precise instructions regarding the child that would be born. This is because Samson would be a Nazirite from his mother's womb (Judg. 13:5), that is, he would be a separate and consecrated man to fulfill God's plan (Num. 6:13-21). It was up to his parents to teach and guide him as to the requirements of the Naziriteship. Samson could not drink wine or any other fermented drink; he could not eat anything considered unclean (Judg. 13:4); he could not have his hair cut and, finally, he could not touch a corpse or any other things that would represent a breach of Nazirite vow.

II - THE BIRTH OF SAMSON AND HIS UPBRINGING

1. The birth and development of Samson. As promised, Samson was born of a barren woman. He grew up under the blessing of the Lord (Judg. 13:24). So much so that the Holy Spirit led him to the field of Dan (Judges 13:25). There was no doubt that Samson's life was under the sovereign will of God. It came from a great miracle performed by Almighty God in his mother's life.

2. Samson's family.

The boy Samson, on the earthly plane, was under the responsibility of his parents. Although the biblical text does not provide many details of the relationship between Samson's parents, we can infer that Manoah and his wife had a married life of trust and deep piety:

- a) Manoah's wife directly shared the angel's message with him;
- b) Manoah prayed insistently, asking for guidance on how to raise the child;
- c) The two were together and saw the vision of the angel rising amid the flames of the altar (Judg. 13:6, 8, 9, 11, 20). In this regard, we can see that the relationship between husband and wife has a direct impact on the upbringing of children. Certainly, Samson grew up in a home whose relationship was based on love, fellowship and piety to God.

3. Samson's upbringing.

By citing the trajectory of faith of his parents, we can infer that Manoah and his wife raised Samson according to the guidelines received from the Angel of the Lord. We can see that Samson, in his adult life, observed the Nazirite protocol (Num. 6:1-7), coming to progressively violate it later. But his parents did their part, bringing him up according to the divine guidance received. In addition, they fulfilled the expected roles of parents in that context. Unfortunately, we will see that Samson had weakness of character and did not honor the Nazirite vow to the Lord. This shows that there are diligent parents who teach their children in the way they should go, but unfortunately, sometimes, children choose a different path. Therefore, at a certain age, responsibility before God is individual (Ez. 18:20; Rom. 2:6). For example, Cain and Abel also received the same upbringing, but they behaved in a completely different way (Gen 4:1-5).

III - SANSON'S CHARACTER FLAW

1. Samson underestimated the enemy's power.

Samson knew about the anointing that was on his life to overcome his enemies. Once, he was surrounded by more than a thousand armed Philistine soldiers, but Samson killed them with the jawbone of a donkey

(Judg. 15:15, 16). Among many feats, he found a lion in the vineyards of Timnah, which he tore apart as one might have torn a young goat, because the Spirit of the Lord came upon the judge of Israel to kill that young lion (Judg. 14:5,6).

Thus, Samson got used to the victory over the enemies until he would later become the victim of this belittling (Judg. 16:18-22). No wonder, the apostle Peter warns the church about the Devil's tricks: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Unfortunately, many children underestimate the circumstances surrounding their lives and ignore their parents' experience.

2. Samson's arrogance.

Since the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to perform great feats that the ordinary man could not, Samson did not realize that he had a terrible enemy: his own ego. That led him to take the presence of God in his life for granted. His strength came from God, but he acted as if it had come from himself, and because of that, he began to nullify the glory of God. His rebellious and arrogant attitude led him not to put God first, starting to seek pleasure, idleness and lust (Judg. 14:1; Judg. 16:1). It is very sad when children can no longer see the benevolence of the Lord. However, parents must remain faithful to Him, being like lighthouses that encourage rebellious children to reconcile with God (Luke 15:11-32).

3. Manipulating the power of God and playing with sin. In Judges 16:16-18, the Bible describes how Samson dealt with spiritual things. He entered a dangerous territory, "playing" with holy things. He got a false idea of the power of God. Deluded, he thought he could live his own way, because he was certain that divine power would not fail him. Generally, those who play with spiritual things also start playing with sin (Judg. 16:1).

He defied his parents' advice and got involved with a foreign woman (Judg. 16:4). He allowed himself to be dominated by carnal and fleeting passions. Unfortunately, some children of our *camps* start to make the same choices as Samson. In this case, parents must do what they are expected to do: Bring their children up in the way of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). However, know that your children's choices will be entirely their responsibility, whether it is to justify them or condemn them (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

CONCLUSION

This lesson was not intended to explore the entire story of Samson, but

to emphasize his divine calling, his upbringing, and his character deviation. We have seen that, many times, parents are diligent as to raise their children in the way of the Lord, but, unfortunately, when some of them reach a certain age, they become rebellious against the Lord and their parents. Our purpose is for parents to continue to be lighthouses that reveal to rebellious children how spiritually misguided they are; praying always, that they return to the Most High God's path of justice.