

SAMSON'S PARENTS

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In Judges 13:1-7, the Lord prepared to bring Samson into the world to accomplish His work during one of the spiritual low points in Israel's history under the judges: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death." Although this is not the usual way that a married couple find out that they are going to have their first child, there is much to learn from Samson's godly parents. Manoah and his wife are excellent examples of what parents should be, from before their child was even conceived, until after he was a grown man.

Preparing for parenthood

The time to begin preparing for parenthood should begin *prior* to actually having children. When Manoah found out from his wife that they were going to have a son, Manoah "*entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born*" (Judg 13:8). When God sent the angel back, Manoah asked him, "*How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him* (Judg 13:12)?" Samson's parents had sought God's guidance for raising their son even before he was conceived (Judg 13:8,12). But this wisdom was displayed many centuries before by Abraham, who was part of what was possibly the greatest set of parents that ever existed. The Lord testified of Abraham in Genesis 18:19: "*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*" The Lord said this about Abraham *before* Isaac was even born! All Christians should be praying and preparing for the time they become parents, and seek the Lord's wisdom beforehand for this great task.

Raising the children

Proverbs 22:6 commands parents, "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and*

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(continued)

when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Likewise, Ephesians 6:4 says, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” After Samson was born, Samson’s parents obviously taught him both his duties as a Nazarite, and the purpose that God had ordained for him, to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judg 13:3-14; 16:17). In the Law of Moses, God had given very specific commandments for those who were under the vow of a Nazarite (Num 6). Samson’s situation was unique in that God had determined he would be a Nazarite from the womb, and bound him to the applicable commandments for the duration of his life. The Lord’s angel impressed upon Samson’s mother the necessity for her to observe those commandments while she was carrying the child in her womb (Judg 13:7). We know that these instructions were ingrained in Samson, because he followed them throughout his adult life, and only lost his strength when Delilah vexed Samson’s soul and he finally told her his secret. Even after having his hair cut and being blinded, Samson continued to abide by what had been instilled in him from his childhood to his dying moment. Like Samson’s parents, all parents should be diligent to teach their children the word of God and the purpose God has for them in this life to serve Him (Deut 7:4-7; 11:18-19; Psa 78:1-8; Prov 22:6; Eccl 11:9-12:1; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 2:15; 5:14; 2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-17; Titus 2:3-5).

When the children are grown

Finally, Samson’s parents continued to guide their son and seek his spiritual welfare even after he was grown. When he desired to marry a Philistine woman, “his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines (Judg 14:3)?” They were determined that Samson would marry a righteous woman. All parents should follow their good example and seek the spiritual good for their children at all times. Again, this pattern was established by righteous Abraham. Isaac was 40 years old (Gen 25:20) when his father Abraham sent his eldest servant to the city of his grandfather Nahor to find him a wife, determined that he would not marry one of the daughters of the Canaanites. Isaac himself had the same desire for his sons. However, Isaac’s son Esau married daughters of Heth, Canaanites, and they were a “grief of mind” to his parents (Gen 26:35; 27:46). Isaac then instructed Jacob not to marry any of the daughters of Canaan, but sent him to Padan-aram to find a wife among the daughters of Laban, his maternal uncle (Gen 28:1-4). Of course, providing spiritual guidance to grown children applies to an array of issues, not just the selection of a mate. As with Manoah and his wife, godly parents today have an important role in the lives of their children, and the necessary preparation and execution of God’s will needs to be done as with their excellent example.