

MB Liar Liar

Before we dig into today's Metaphysical Bible Interpretation I need to remind you that you ask for this. You said you wanted interpretation in the topic survey done in June. So keep that in mind because today's story is a doozy! I picked pairs of characters for the series and today's pair is Samson and Delilah. How many of you sort of know the story? Samson gets his hair cut and loses his super-strength and it's all Delilah's fault. Simple to interpret, right?

Well, we need to go back to the 13th chapter of the book of Judges to begin Samson's story. And that chapter begins, "The Israelites *again* did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." This is really a pattern in the Old Testament so initially we want to consider this story is about our early development in consciousness. Unity teaches that the bible is the metaphorical and metaphysical telling of the path of spiritual unfoldment and the Old Testament is the beginning and the New Testament is the refining. So let's start today by looking at what the Philistines represent. This is the same group Jonathan and David battled and the perpetual enemies and captors of the Hebrew people. In the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore says the Philistines "symbolize states of consciousness established in the senses." These thoughts "are constantly inducing us to trust our outer senses for guidance and understanding; they lead us away from spiritual Truth." So here is **a** fundamental struggle on our spiritual journey-to live in our humanity without letting that worldly, material, sense consciousness rule our thoughts, beliefs and actions. This is the constant battle between Israel (Truth) and Philistines (Sense).

In this chapter, a boy is born to a childless couple. We talked about Abraham and Sarah. This time we only get the name of the father, Manoah. Fillmore says Manoah represents an "inner waiting upon the Lord, or resting in the consciousness of our oneness with Jehovah within us. By this inner worship something of the limited in thought and belief is put away and a great increase in strength and might is experienced." But the angel appears to the mother and directs her to take no intoxicating drink or impure food and her son will be named Samson and will be a Nazirite. So what is a Nazirite you might wonder? "One consecrated to God by a vow" and the vow metaphysically represents "the thoughts consecrated to Truth, to life, holy sanctified, free from all worldliness and belief in destruction and death."

The vow of a Nazirite includes not cutting your hair, not drinking intoxicating drink and not touching dead bodies. An odd set of rules but there you have it.

Now although it is clear Samson represents strength, I don't get the idea that was foretold or recognized early on. At the beginning of chapter 14, Samson heads down to Timnah and picks the daughter of a Philistine for his wife. You can imagine how happy his folks were. Fillmore's metaphysical interpretation of the meaning of Timnah gives us a hint as to where he's taking the whole Samson and Delilah story. He says Timnah represents, "the error race belief that a share of the life forces in man rightly belongs to the use of the purely animal, physical, and sense phase of his being." Hear this "error race belief" as Fillmore's judgment against sensuality in humanity. I haven't found in his writings space for sensuality that isn't characterized as "purely animal and sense phase of being." I clearly believe this exists but I have trouble finding it in Charles' writings. This is interesting in that he and Myrtle had three children. It is also interesting in reading his interpretations that occasionally he will use the word "individual" but most often he refers to "man". Fillmore consistently seems to be an advocate for celibacy as a means to "conserve your life force". I will **not** comment on how this might have affected Myrtle.

Metaphysically, Fillmore says Samson represents "physical strength under **spiritual discipline** or consciousness of spiritual strength. The root of this strength is understanding." For me, this understanding represents an aspiration of Samson more than an embodiment. Remember last week, if you were here, I mentioned that I was observing a patriarchal influence in Charles Fillmore's interpretation; a bias that valued the male characteristics over female and intellect over intuition. So let me read you what Fillmore says in the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary about the doing-in of Samson. "Samson did all kinds of athletic stunts, but was finally **robbed** of his strength by Delilah. Eve **took away** the strength of Adam in like manner, and **every man** who gives up the vital essence of his body for the pleasure of sensation commits suicide, as did Samson." Whoa buddy! Somehow this feels like first of all, this is not gender neutral and second it feels way more literal than metaphysical. "Commits suicide" doesn't sound like a shift in consciousness.

At first this just made me mad. I understand this was the thinking of Fillmore's generation and the gender relationships at that time. But hey, it is not always the female's fault! As I thought about sensuality mistakes I thought about when David forces himself on Bathsheba, gets her pregnant and then kills her husband. That seems kind of problematic but there is

absolutely no metaphysical interpretation that David has either committed suicide NOR robbed Bathsheba of her vital essence. You know what Fillmore says about David? “As David united with Bathsheba and brought forth Solomon, so love in its fulfillment and completion establishes peace.” Well that’s a convenient skipping over a portion of the story.

In one passage of today’s story, Samson gets angry and it just sinks him deeper into sense consciousness. I pondered this as I wrote in anger and then rewrote the sermon from a more reflective place. What really is the significance of Fillmore’s portrayal of masculine and feminine characteristics in metaphysical interpretation? For me, part of the interpretation message from this lesson speaks to me about being vigilant to see the hidden bias in the way I see things. It asks me to question and examine so much of what I take for granted in the opinions I form and the beliefs I rely upon. Our world is full of “isms” and “phobias”—racism, sexism, nationalism, homo-phobia and able-ism. To some extent these are fully intentional. And to some extent, these “isms” are due to the ways *we refuse* to examine the unconscious ways we act out our bias **because it is so deeply ingrained**. Generations have read Fillmore’s words that Delilah robbed Samson and Eve took life away from Adam. Patriarchy is embedded even in our Unity theology and so women keep reading this and men keep reading this and our system of imbalance gets reinforced. We have to be willing to look at this. I keep getting reminded of my own hidden bias and want to stay aware of the many ways it’s influencing how I interpret my life and world events. So I am hoping to bring some of that “uncovered” awareness to this interpretation.

So let’s start with Samson representing a consciousness committed to God. Immediately we are also faced with the idea that while there are outward actions associated with the vow of a Nazirite, it is also a committed *consciousness*. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks to committing to the *spirit* of the law, not just the letter of the law and he frequently found himself violating letters and technicalities of the Hebrew law to fulfill the spirit. Samson represents drawing our strength from our committed **spiritual** consciousness, and we can’t pretend there are only outer actions involved.

Samson has a first wife, the daughter of a Philistine. As the book of Judges lays out his parents opposition it says, “But they did not know it was from the Lord.” Apparently he was just looking for an opening to act against the Philistines and destroy them, which is portrayed as God’s plan.

Samson poses a riddle and offers a reward if the people can answer before the end of the 7 days of wedding feast. The wife tries to get him to tell her the answer to the riddle because her own people have threatened to burn her family if she doesn't hand over Samson. Samson resists telling her until the 7th day—completion. He tells her the answer. She immediately tells the village people, who answer correctly to Samson. Now Samson says, “if you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not know the answer” and “the Spirit of the Lord rushed on him”, he promptly kills 30 villagers, gives the reward to those who gave the answer and goes home angry to his parents. Is he really angry they got it correct? Or is he angry the wife betrayed him? And why was he testing them anyway? This feels like a dilemma of “can you do a right thing the wrong way”. Samson's job was to destroy the Philistines. Spiritual strength overcoming sense thoughts. Yet if we allow our emotions to move into anger and revenge, is this a spiritual victory? Can we use our emotions, Samson said he loved the woman, to accomplish a spiritual outcome in a destructive way? This just all seems odd to me. A key element here though is his anger. He moves more deeply into sense consciousness.

Next Samson sleeps with a harlot and leaves at midnight, escaping the Philistine ambush. Here is where I get suspicious about Samson's Nazirite vow. It's as if he found a loophole in the outer activities and the loophole doesn't align with the spirit of the vow. He hasn't cut his hair or drunk intoxicating liquors. Maybe he avoided touching any of the bodies he rendered dead. But is allowing a sense consciousness to rule his behavior in alignment with committing his consciousness to God? Samson's sensuality has no foundation in even human love. Delilah is his final sexual conquest. Fillmore says that Delilah, metaphysically represents sensuality. Period. Three times Samson lies to Delilah about what will destroy his strength. And three times Delilah binds him up and calls the Philistines. And three times Samson wakes up to find himself in the very situation he had disclosed to Delilah and yet he stays. At this point, Samson does not seem like the brightest bulb in the pack. Seriously, doesn't that seem odd buddy? Would it appear that sense consciousness has blinded spiritual insight and spiritual strength is already lost? If you lie and test someone three times and each time they fail the test, you have to be blind not to understand what that means. Finally scripture says Delilah kept begging and begging to know until Samson was “tired to death”. Animal appetites wore him down until it says “he told her his whole secret”. My interpretation of this disclosure is to abandon all that is holy and sacred to sense consciousness. He has left the secret place within.

Samson is captured and his eyes gouged out. Gory. Remember I said his insight was already blinded by his sense consciousness? This is just the outer manifestation.

But Samson isn't done. Our Spirit self remains intact and resilient and able to act no matter how grave our errors and how far we have strayed. This is one of my disagreements with Fillmore and maybe I don't understand his interpretation. Delilah did not take anything from Samson's essence. My understanding of our spiritual essence is it remains untouched by outer activity, ready to be called upon. In captivity his hair once more begins to grow. He returns to his commitment to God in a renewed purification without sensual distractions. In one last effort he places himself within reach of two primary pillars and brings down the building, not only on himself but destroying more Philistines that he had killed in his lifetime. Destruction of sense consciousness and returning to the strength of spiritual truth is possible in every moment of physical life, even to the end. That would be my gender neutral interpretation of the end of the story. It is a testament to the indestructability of our spiritual essence and a story of redemption in the final moments of human expression.

How often do we let our spiritual strength be drained by indulging in the appetites of the material world? It's not just sexuality—it's workaholics and shopaholics and people who gamble and even jog to the point it interferes with maintaining a balanced life. It's believing we need worldly success to be spiritually strong. While Samson's undoing was portrayed as succumbing to sensual pleasure, I strongly feel Fillmore's interpretation reflects a danger I see out-picturing in the world. We are human and divine. When we reject all of our human sensuality, we reject the sacred part of us that delights in the sunrise and the mystery of deep forests and the majesty of mountains and the awe of millions of stars in a clear, black night and the diversity of every kind of living thing. Part of gun violence is the devaluing of human life by so many. Part of climate change is the issue of not valuing the air and water and forest and wild life over short term material gratification. Do I think irresponsible indulgence is ok? No. We have to be responsible and accountable for our human acts but to reject sensuality and sense consciousness totally eliminates the excess but also the sacred, balanced part of it in our lives.

I think Samson and Delilah is also about fooling ourselves into believing we are keeping our spiritual vows by doing outer things and neglecting the inner work. To refrain from cutting his hair was not the source of his strength.

In the end, I found Samson demonstrating a commitment to the Divine that was fading throughout his adult life. In the very beginning, before he gets involved with his first wife, Samson kills a lion and no one knows about it. Charles Fillmore says that lions in the book of Daniel represent savage thoughts. When Samson kills the lion maybe it represents his ability to overcome savage thoughts in the purity of his more innocent spiritual strength, just as David killed Goliath when he was young. There is a weird story that Samson discovers a hive of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion he killed and he eats the honey. This is the source of the riddle he poses to the village of his first wife. Initially, perhaps the honey represents the sweet reward of using our spiritual strength to overcome those more savage thoughts of sense consciousness. As he ages he loses this understanding of his spiritual strength. He gets angry with the villagers when they manage to get the riddle—no longer mastering the less than spiritual impulses. Is he successfully keeping his vow to be consecrated to Spirit at this point or has the slide away from commitment already begun? Does Samson lie to Delilah or is Samson lying to himself-pretending he is living a life consecrated to God?

In Unity, just as in any faith tradition, we must continually examine our beliefs and the words we use in articulating a theology. We can and we must evolve and change and grow. Women are spiritually strong and committed to living their divine potential just as surely as men. Our divine nature does not have a gender. When we feel separation from Spirit or lose touch with our divine nature, it is not the fault of others. While sense consciousness must stay in balance, it is not the enemy of my divinity. In my opinion and interpretation, no outer activity, no errors or thoughts can diminish or destroy the true essence of my being. I retain the potential of spiritual strength throughout my human experience. I will not give my power away, seeing myself as a victim or trying to release myself from accountability.

Next week we will examine the tricky behavior of Jacob and his love for Rachel.