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Haftarat Naso: Like Father Like Son: Shimshon and Manoach

Why would a *sefer* in *Tanakh* devote most of a *perek* to contextualizing the next central figure discussed in the book by introducing the reader to his parents? Such an unusual *perek* (ch. 13) is read from *Sefer Shoftim* as the *haftarah* for *Parashat Naso*. In this chapter, Shimshon's parents are told they are going to have a son who will begin to save the Jewish people from their arch enemy, the *Pelishtim* (13:5). This story thus stands out in *Sefer Shoftim* because in the entire book there is no other *shofet* who is introduced by a *perek*-long narrative involving his parents.

While this does seem peculiar for *Sefer Shoftim*, when reading chapter 13, we have the sense that we've heard this story elsewhere. After all, it is the story of a barren woman who is visited by an angel and told that she is going to have a child who will save the Jewish people. This story calls to mind the stories of the *Avot*, and also seems to foreshadow the story of the birth of Shmuel. Why would Shimshon have an introduction (the parent story) that reminds us of such tremendous figures?

Understanding Shimshon

In order to understand the role of this *perek's* description of Shimshon's parents, let's skip ahead to the *navi's* presentation of Shimshon's own life and experiences. Shimshon is probably one of the most confusing figures in *Tanakh*. Unlike most central figures in *Tanakh*, who are easily identifiable as heroes (such as David and Moshe) or villains (such as Esav and Pharaoh), as we will see, Shimshon is neither all-good nor all-evil. He is complex.

Shimshon as a Positive Figure

There is, of course, much reason to look at Shimshon as a positive figure in *Tanakh*. First and foremost, he protects the Jewish people by killing thousands of *Pelishtim* in battle. Secondly, the *navi* uses a positive epithet for Shimshon – twice referring to him as *shofet* (15:20; 16:31). Furthermore, throughout his life, God accords him incredible strength, enabling him to kill a lion with his bare hands and later to kill thousands of *Pelishtim*. This super-strength culminates when God gives him the ability to bring down an entire building. This act kills thousands of *Pelishtim*, but leads to Shimshon's death, as well.¹

It is clear that Shimshon's strength is a direct gift from God because of the repeated phrase "And the spirit of God came upon him" (14:6; 14:19; 15:4). Having "*ruach Hashem*" – "the spirit of God," guide his actions, reminds us of four great figures in *Tanakh* who also have this type of spiritual guidance: Otniel (*Shoftim* 3:10), Yiftach (*Shoftim* 11:29), Shaul (*Shmuel Aleph* 10:1, when he is not consumed by the "*ruach ha-ra'ah*" – "evil spirit"), and David (*Shmuel Aleph* 16:13).

Further evidence of Shimshon's close relationship with God are the two incidences when God listens to his prayers and grants his requests. The first time this occurs is when he prays for water, and

¹. This type of strength is not otherwise exhibited in *Tanakh*, and is only slightly resembled by David, who is able to kill a lion and a bear with his bare hands (*Shmuel Aleph* 17:36) and bring down the giant Goliath (17:48–51).

water miraculously appears out of a cheek bone (*Shoftim* 15:18–19).² Second, Shimshon prays to have his strength restored (after losing it when the *Pelishtim* cut off his hair) so that he can bring the building down. God grants this request to him, as well (16:28). Both of those stories also show how Shimshon clearly believes in God and understands that He controls what occurs, as twice when Shimshon needs something, the *pasuk* tells us “and he called out to God” (15:18; 16:28).³ In sum, there is clearly evidence that Shimshon is involved in good deeds and that God relates to him with benevolence.

Shimshon as a Troubled Man

However, it is just as clear that Shimshon has flaws. He is involved with various *Pelishti* women, including his wife (ch. 14), a *zonah* (16:1), and later Delilah (16:4). More remarkably, though, amongst all of the stories of him killing *Pelishtim*, it is never an altruistic act of killing to defend or save the Jewish people. Rather, it always seems like revenge for something that they did to him. He kills thirty *Pelishtim* out of revenge against the men who ruined his wedding party by forcing his new wife to reveal the answer to his riddle (14:19). Later, after his father-in-law marries his wife off to another man, he takes revenge (by knotting together foxes by their tails and connecting them to a torch) by burning *Pelishti* land (15:1–5).⁴ This episode provokes the *Pelishtim*, who are upset because of all the damage Shimshon has caused. They therefore burn to death his wife and father-in-law. This, in turn, compels Shimshon to go on a killing spree, causing a “great slaughter” (15:6–8).⁵ At this point in the story, the *Pelishtim* demand from *Shevet Yehudah* that Shimshon be handed over to them. When the tribal leaders oblige, Shimshon breaks through the rope that binds him and uses a cheek bone to kill a thousand *Pelishtim* (15:15). At the end of the story, when Shimshon reveals to Delilah the source of his strength and the *Pelishtim* capture him, poke out his eyes, tie him up, and put him on display in a building, while partying all around him. At this point, Shimshon executes his final act of revenge by pulling down the building, consequently killing all the *Pelishtim* in the building who are celebrating his capture (16:29–30). Thus concludes Shimshon’s personal battle with the *Pelishtim*.

What’s remarkable about this narrative is that there is no evidence that Shimshon ever interacts with the Jewish people. The only time Jews appear in the Shimshon stories is *Shevet Yehudah*’s reprimanding him for making trouble with the *Pelishtim*, when the tribesmen tie him up and give him to the *Pelishtim* (15:11–13). It is hard to imagine the Jewish people doing this to someone whom they viewed as their leader and *shofet*. Thus, to summarize, it’s clear Shimshon’s actions are, at times, personally motivated, and they appear to isolate him from the Jewish people.

². This story takes us back in history to the stories of Moshe getting water to come out of a rock (*Shemot* 17:6; *Bemidbar* 20:11), and the stories of Shmuel (*Shmuel Aleph* 12:17–18) and Eliyahu (*Melakhim Aleph* 18:44–45), who pray for rain to come at that second, and God responds immediately.

³. Additionally, Shimshon is instructed to be a *nazir* (13:4–5). As detailed in *Parashat Naso* (*Bemidbar* 6:8), this signifies that he was designated to have a special relationship with *Hashem* (as all *nezirim* are considered *kadosh*). It seems clear that the connection between *Parashat Naso* and the *haftarah*, the story of Shimshon’s parents, is the topic of the *nazir*. *Parashat Naso* affirms the status of a *nazir*. In this context, the *haftarah* selected relates to Shimshon, presumably to identify him as a model of the *nazir*. However, there is conflicting evidence regarding his success as a *nazir*, since he regularly violates the prohibition for a *nazir* to be near a dead body (*Bemidbar* 6:6). Of course, all of this must be evaluated within the broad context of the status of a *nazir*, something which is complex and beyond the scope of this paper. For more on this topic, see the *gemara* on *Nazir* 4b.

⁴. This story is another reminder of David, who is supposed to marry Meirav, Shaul’s eldest daughter, as a reward for killing Goliath. However, Shaul gives her to another man, and instead offers David to marry his younger daughter, Michal. Similarly, Shimshon’s father-in-law offers Shimshon to replace his wife with her younger sister.

⁵. The *pesukim* do not clarify how many *Pelishtim* he killed during this rampage.

Shimshon is “Grey”

The stories of Shimshon create a very confusing picture of how to view this Biblical character. Is he good or bad? To even ask the question is to misunderstand Shimshon’s life-story. He’s not just a hero, nor just a rogue; neither good nor bad. He is both! He is “grey.”

His persona is consistent with the times he lived in. Life in the time of the *Shoftim* is not simple. There is confusion; the Jewish people don’t know whom they can trust and to whom they should turn. This is the challenge of *Sefer Shoftim*: “וַעֲשֶׂה בְּעֵינָיו, הַיָּשָׁר אִישׁ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: מֶלֶךְ אֵין הָהֶם, בְּיָמִים” – “In those days there was no king amongst the Jewish people, and every person was doing what was good in his own eyes.”⁶ Shimshon’s life is a model of the confusion that existed during those generations.

Remarkably, this “grey” attribute of Shimshon begins even before he is born,⁷ as is evidenced in our *haftarah*. At first glance, the story is a simple one of a *malakh* coming to a barren woman (Shimshon’s mother) to tell her that she will have a baby and he will begin to save the Jewish people. Again, as we noted at the outset, this story appears straightforward enough to remind of other famous barren women who are promised a baby. However, when we look at the details of the story and compare it with similar stories in *Tanakh*, the confusion surrounding this story will certainly differentiate it.

Barren Women in *Tanakh*

Tanakh famously presents multiple instances of “the barren woman” who is blessed with a child: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Chanah.⁸ Of course, our *haftarah* has a similar episode, where Shimshon’s previously barren mother is blessed with his birth. Presuming that Shimshon’s mother belongs on this prestigious list presupposes she is very righteous. Ironically, though, we never learn her name. Nameless people in *Tanakh* typically remain nameless because they are not sufficiently significant for their name to be recorded.⁹

⁶. This exact verse is cited twice in the end of *Sefer Shoftim* and a shortened version of it is repeated another two times (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). In fact, the ending of the *sefer* is a series of confusing stories; you don’t know who is good and who is bad. Is the villain Michah, who builds a *pesel*, or the people from Dan, who are stealing it from him? Is the villain the man who throws his *pilegash* out the door to be raped by the men from Binyamin, or is it the men from Binyamin who rape and torture her? Are the villains the Jewish people who go out to fight Binyamin, and lose the first two battles, or are the villains the people of Binyamin, who win the first two battles, but lose the third?

⁷. As noted at the outset of this essay, Manoach and his wife are told that they will bear a child who would save the Jewish people. This type of designation before birth is unique to only three people: Shimshon, Yitzchak, and Yirmiyahu. Before Yitzchak is born, Avraham is told that his new son would be the chosen child, and through him the *berit* would be fulfilled (*Bereishit* 17:19). Similarly, Yirmiyahu tells us how he was set aside to be a *navi* before he was born (*Yirmiyahu* 1:4–5). However, Shimshon’s parents were never told that he would lead the Jewish people to complete salvation; rather, he would **begin** to save the people (13:5). During Shimshon’s lifetime, the *Pelishtim* are our arch nemeses, as they had been since the time of Yiftach, and they aren’t destroyed until the time of David (*Shmuel Bet* 8:1). Shimshon’s success against them was limited; he did kill many *Pelishtim*, but doesn’t save the Jewish people or provide a time of peace. Textually, this is evident by the pattern of how each *shofet* is summarized. Typically, each *shofet*’s years are summarized both with respect to how long they led the people, and with regards to how many years of peace the Jewish people experienced before they were enslaved by the next enemy. Otniel had forty years of peace, Ehud had eighty, Devorah had forty, and Gidon had forty. The language of the *pesukim* used to convey this is “הארץ...שנים ותשקט” However, starting in the time of Avimelech and continuing into the times of Tolah, Yair, Yiftach, Ivsan, Eilon, and Avdon, the years of peace are no longer recorded. Similarly, Shimshon does not accomplish peace for the Jewish people as they are enslaved under the *Pelishtim* for all twenty years that he is *shofet*.

⁸. The language used in our story is very similar to the language used in those other stories:

שופטים יג ב וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצְרָעָה מִמְּשַׁפַּחַת הַדְּבִי וְשָׁמוֹ מְנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עֵקֶרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָה: אִמָּא שֶׁל שִׁמְשׁוֹן
בראשית יא:ל וַתְּהִי שְׂרַי עֵקֶרָה אֵין לָהּ וָלֶד: שְׂרָה)
בראשית כה:כא וַיַּעֲבֵר יַצְחָק לִיהוָה לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֵקֶרָה הוּא וַיַּעֲבֵר לוֹ יְהוָה וַתְּהִי רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: רִבְקָה)
בראשית כט:לא וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי־שָׁנְאָהּ לָאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמָהּ וַרְחַל עֵקֶרָה: רַחֵל)
שמואל א א:ב וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים שֵׁם אַחַת חַנָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פִּנְגָּה וַיְהִי לַפְּנֵהָ יְלָדִים וְלַחַנָּה אֵין יְלָדִים: חַנָּה אִמָּא שֶׁל שְׁמוּאֵל)

⁹. Examples of this in *Sefer Shoftim* are both men in the story of *Pilegash Be-Givah* (the man from Yehudah and the old man from Binyamin).

Further, our story has many differences from the stories of the *Avot* and of Shmuel's parents, which underscore how different this child will be from the *Avot*, the *Shevatim*, and Shmuel. Amongst the "barren woman" stories, two of the women are informed of their expectant child from a messenger of God. Sarah overhears the *malakhim* tell the news to Avraham. Similarly, Eli the *shofet* states that Chanah's prayers will be answered within a year. Our story, in contrast, has a comical twist to this pattern. The *malakh* comes to Shimshon's mother to tell her that she is going to have a baby. Excited, she runs back to tell her husband Manoach, but he doesn't believe her. He seems suspicious. After all, all he knows is that his wife, with whom he can't have children, met a strange man in the field and was told she will become pregnant! In denial, he claims he won't believe the message unless the angel "comes again to us and tells us" what will happen to this child (13:8). God hears this and sends another *malakh*, but again sends him "*el ha-ishah*," to Shimshon's mother and not to Manoach. The *pasuk* stresses this point by emphasizing "Manoach her husband was not with her" (13:9). She leaves the angel and runs to get her husband to bring him to the angel, thus proving to him that she was telling the truth. Manoach approaches the angel suspiciously, saying "Are you the man who spoke to my wife"? And he answers simply "I am" (13:11). Manoach asks the angel about the future of the child, and the *malakh* responds "what I told your wife, you should do" (13:13). This whole conversation is full of irony. In contrast to the stories of the Sarah and Chanah, where the presence of a *malakh* with the information about their anticipated child is meant to show how worthy those families are, the angel in our story seems to be trying his best not to tell anything to Manoach directly (only through his wife). This highlights the low level of Manoach, even lower than his wife, who doesn't get a name in the text!

III. Reacting to a *malakh*

Returning to our narrative, there emerges an additional layer to how Manoach reacts to the *malakh*. It appears that Manoach does not realize – or does not believe – that his interlocutor is an angel (13:16). This interaction reminds us of two other stories in *Tanakh* of people interacting with an angel: Yaakov (*Bereishit* ch. 32) and Gidon (*Shoftim* 6:11–23).

Yaakov fights with an "אִישׁ" before his meeting with Esav. After they wrestle, he asks "הַגִּידְהָנָא שְׁמֶךָ" – "tell me your name." Similarly, Manoach asks "שְׁמֶךָ מִי" – "what is your name." In both cases, the angel answers with the exact same words: "לְשָׁמִי תִשְׁאַל זֶה לָמָּה" – "why do you ask for my name." Next, the angel blesses Yaakov and changes his name to Yisrael, and Yaakov names the place פְּנִיָאֵל, "כִּי־רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי" – "because I saw God face to face and survived." Manoach on the other hand, continues to make food to give to the angel, not believing he is an angel, and watches in disbelief as the angel jumps into the fire and disappears. Only after the angel does not return does Manoach finally concede that it is, in fact, an angel (13:21). Then Manoach goes into a panic that he and his wife are going to die "כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ" – "because we saw God." It is his wife who then calms him down.

This story, in many ways, is the opposite of Yaakov's experience, in that Yaakov knows he is dealing with an angel, and understands that he has "seen the face of God," but remains calm. Manoach, on the other hand, insists on viewing the angel as a man and not a messenger of God. Once he finally can't deny it anymore, he panics. He relies on his wife once again to reveal the truth to him. Again, Manoach and his wife are superficially comparable to the story of the *Avot*, but when looking at the details of the stories, it's evident how dissimilar Manoach and his wife are to the *Avot* and *Emahot*.

Potentially, a more comparable character to Manoach is Gidon.¹⁰ Gidon, an earlier *shofet*, is also a mix of positive and negative behavior (although, admittedly, more positive than negative). On the one hand, he saves the Jewish people from *Midyan*. On the other hand, (a) he needs multiple signs

¹⁰. The comparable content of these stories is exemplified when realizing that there are only three stories with *malakhim* in the entire time period of *Shoftim*, and two of them are these two stories, with strikingly similar language:

שופטים יג:ג וַיִּרְא מְלָאכִי־יְהוָה אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה־נָא אֶת־עֵקֶרְךָ וְלֹא יִלְדָּתְךָ וְהָרִיתְךָ וְיִלְדָּתְךָ בֵּן: אַמָּא שֶׁל שְׁמִשׁוֹן
(שופטים יג:ג וַיִּרְא מְלָאכִי־יְהוָה אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה־נָא אֶת־עֵקֶרְךָ וְלֹא יִלְדָּתְךָ וְהָרִיתְךָ וְיִלְדָּתְךָ בֵּן: אַמָּא שֶׁל שְׁמִשׁוֹן)

to be convinced to fight and (b) near the end of his life, Gidon builds an *ephod* that the Jews worship as *avodah zarah*. Similar to Manoach, he is visited by an angel who tells him that he would be the next *shofet*. He, too, does not believe that the individual is an angel (6:17). The angel then proves that he is an angel and disappears. At that point, Gidon gets nervous because he saw God “פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים” – “face to face” (the same language as with Yaakov), and God tells him not to worry because he won’t die. Thus, the stories of Gidon and Manoach are incredibly similar with slight, yet critical, differences. Gidon is not in denial; he is searching for confirmation that it is an angel who has spoken with him. In contrast, Manoach prepares a meal for the angel, hoping he will eat (thereby disproving that the man is an angel). In contrast to Manoach’s shock, Gidon’s reaction is not shock, but the slow realization that he is chosen. Gidon is reassured by God, while Manoach’s reassurance comes from his nameless wife. In sum, the comparison between Manoach and Gidon shows Manoach to be on a much lower level, not just from the *Avot*, but from Gidon as well.

Parental Role in Finding a Mate

The final comparison between Shimshon, with his parents, and the *Avot*, is the importance in *Bereishit* of parental involvement in finding a life-mate. Avraham is very precise in his instruction to his servant as to where to find a wife for Yitzchak (*Bereishit* 22:2–4). The culmination of Yishmael’s rejection from *Am Yisrael* is marrying someone from *Mitzrayim* (*Bereishit* 21:21). So too, Yaakov is told not to marry a woman from *Kena’an* and is told who to marry (*Bereishit* 28:1–2). Even Esav realizes that he hurt his father by marrying a woman from *Kena’an* and tries to please him by marrying a daughter of Yishmael (28:34–35; 28:8). The *Avot* understood the significance of marrying from within the family and listening to their parents about whom to marry. On the other hand, Shimshon’s experience tells a different story. He falls in love with a non-Jewish woman. His parents beg him to marry someone Jewish, and Shimshon completely ignores them and marries the *Pelishti* woman (*Shoftim* 14:3). In comparison, Shimshon seems to resemble Yishmael and Esav more than Yitzchak and Yaakov.

In summation, all of these resemblances between Shimshon and his parents and the *Avot* (and other heroes in *Tanakh*) are intended to draw a comparison between him and the *Avot*. On the one hand, just to be compared to the *Avot* is an honor; however, when analyzing the comparisons, he and his family consistently under-perform the standard established by the *Avot*. They are similar, but in reality, so far apart!¹¹ Thus, the stories of Shimshon’s parents are included in *Shoftim* to reinforce this image of Shimshon. The additional narrative of our *perek* is instrumental in showing the false comparison between Shimshon and the *Avot*!

Shmuel Wrote *Sefer Shoftim*

As noted at the outset, Shimshon’s anticipated birth reminds us of not just the *Avot*’s stories of parenthood, but also the story of Shmuel’s parents, Elkanah and Chanah. This is particularly striking because, as the *Gemara* documents, Shmuel authored both *sefarim*: *Shoftim* and *Shmuel*.¹² Clearly, any similarities between the two narratives would have been intentionally orchestrated by Shmuel.

In fact, the similarities between the two narratives begin with the very first *pasuk* in both stories. The story of Manoach and the story of Elkanah are both stories of introduction. Both are the fathers of future leaders, and are only mentioned to teach us about the beginnings of Shmuel and Shimshon.¹³ The language of the first *pesukim* in both are almost identical:

¹¹. That Manoach is an unremarkable person and not a *tzadik* is confirmed by the *Gemara*:

גמרא ערובין יח: ברכות סא. מנוח עם הארץ היה.

Radak, commenting on *Shoftim* 13:19, actually goes farther than the *Gemara*. He suggests that Manoach was a sinner like his son, as he built a *bamah* during a time where we had the *Mishkan*.

¹². As stated in the *gemara* in *Bava Batra* 14b, Shmuel wrote *Sefer Shmuel*, *Shoftim*, and *Rut*.

¹³. While it is true that no other *Shofet* in *Sefer Shoftim* besides Shimshon has an introduction that spends so much time introducing the reader to his parents, the story of Shmuel and his parents is found in the first *perek* of *Sefer Shmuel*.

שופטים יג:ב וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצָּרָעָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי וְשֵׁמוֹ מָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עָקְרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָה:

And there was a certain man of Tzara, of the family of Dan, whose name was Manoach; *and his wife was barren and did not bear children.*

שמואל א א:ב-א וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן־הַרְמַתִּים צוֹפִים מֵהַר אֶפְרַיִם וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה בֶּן־יֶרֶחַם בֶּן־אֵלִיהוּא בֶּן־תְּחוּ בֶּן־צוּף אֶפְרַתִּי: ב וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים שֵׁם אַחַת חָנָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פְּנִינָה וַיְהִי לְפְנִינָה יְלָדִים וְלִחְנָה אֵין יְלָדִים:

And there was a certain man of Ramatayim-Tzofim, in Mt. Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Yerocham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tochu, the son of Tzuf, an Ephratite. And he had two wives; one was named Chanah and the second was named Peninah. Peninah had children, and *Chanah did not have children.*

We are introduced to both of them, by reading “there was a man who lived in place X,” and we are informed of their names. Next, we are told about each one’s wife who is barren. Both stories continue with a *shofet*/angel telling the **wife** that she will have a special child. In the case of Shimshon, the angel tells the wife of Manoach to designate this child to *Hashem* and not cut his hair. Regarding Shmuel, when davening for a child, Chanah promises to designate her child to *Hashem* and not cut his hair, using the same language “עַל־רָאשׁוֹ לֹא־יַעֲלֶה וּמוֹרָה”¹⁴

It seems unlikely that Shmuel chose to repeat the same language used to describe Shimshon’s birth to describe his own birth if it would denigrate his parents!¹⁵ In other words, if Shimshon and his parents are a “false comparison to the *Avot*,” why would Shmuel want to compare his birth experience with that of Shimshon? Potentially, Shmuel chose the comparative language precisely to refocus our understanding of the Shimshon narrative in a more positive light. Shmuel intended to remind the reader of Shimshon’s, and his mother’s, positive characteristics.¹⁶

Thus, our *haftarah*, the story of Manoach and his wife, furthers the complicated and multi-leveled understanding of the story of Shimshon. Even before he was born, it was obvious he would have a complex life story. He was born during a bad time for the Jews; they were sinning so much that in the time of Yiftach (who preceded Shimshon), that God said He was not going to save the Jewish people anymore, and instead *Benei Yisrael* should ask for help from the *avodah zarah* that they were serving at the time (*Shoftim* 10:11–14). The truth is that God never gave up on us. He sent us a partial savior. He did not leave us to suffer on our own. Even with all of Shimshon’s flaws, he was still better than no one. And his story showed us the powerful lesson that God never gives up on his people, and will always be there for them. Sometimes, God’s help will come by way of a major savior and with big

¹⁴. Compare the language of *Shmuel Aleph* 1:11 to *Shoftim* 13:4.

¹⁵. Chanah, his mother, would bring Shmuel a coat every year (*Shmuel Aleph* 2:19). Shmuel always wore a specific type of coat. (This is evident when Shaul went to a witch who brought Shmuel up from the dead and was able to recognize him by the woman’s description of him as “wearing a coat.”). It seems that Shmuel always wore a specific coat that he was known for. Just like Yosef wore his *ketnet pסים*, specially given to him by his father, so too, Shmuel proudly wore his mother’s coat that was made out of love for him.

¹⁶. Of course, in the story of Shimshon’s parents, his mother may also end up looking righteous. The *malakh* appears to her twice, she has a baby even though she is barren, she recognizes right away that it is an angel who is visiting her, she stays calm about seeing the angel (without fearing death), and calms her husband down, as well. [This may suggest that Shmuel’s textual comparison makes his mother look good and makes his father, Elkanah (who is being compared to Manoach) look bad. Interestingly, there is no evidence in the *pesukim* that Shmuel had a relationship with his father. Rather, at times it sounds like Eli became his “adopted” father.]

This theme would fit with the *midrashim* which assert that Shimshon’s mother was a *tzadeket*, and which include her in a list of twenty-three righteous women:

אוצר המדרשים עמוד תעד(כ”א) כ”ג נשים ישרות גדולות בצדקות היו בישראל, ואלו הן: שרה רבקה רחל וזאה, יוכבד מרים, ה’ בנות צלפחד, דבורה, אשת מנוח, חנה, אביגיל, אשה התקועית היא אשה חכמה, האלמנה של אליהו, השונמית, יהושבע, חולדה, נעמי, ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים) מ”ב ד, (’ ואסתר המלכה.

miracles. But sometimes, it will be with someone who doesn't "look like" a savior. Someone who doesn't fit the mold. But still, in his or her own way, helps the Jewish people.