

Question: As we approach Mother's Day, can you tell us what tribute does the Bible give to the influence of mothers on our world?

The Bible tells us of many women who had a powerful impact upon their children and the world through their role as mothers. Examples would include the worthy woman of Proverbs 31 and the grandmother and mother of the young man Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5 & 3:15ff). However, two of the most memorable testimonies to the influence of mothers are in the Old Testament accounts of Jochebed and Jezebel.

Jochebed was the mother of Moses, the man to whom God spoke directly and who was chosen to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt. When Jochebed gave birth to Moses, the king of Egypt had given an order that all males born to Hebrew women should be put to death. After the birth of Moses, Jochebed and her husband risked their own lives to hide him for three months. When they could no longer hide him, she came up with another plan. She made a basket of reeds and set it in the Nile River near where the Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. Although this princess of Egypt realized the child was a Hebrew, she decided to adopt him as her own. Moses' older sister was standing nearby and offered to find a nurse for the baby. As a result, Moses' own mother nursed him and taught him until he was old enough to be taken to the royal palace.

Moses became a prince in Egypt, in line to become a ruler in Egypt, one of the greatest empires of the ancient world. Instead, he chose to identify with the Israelite slave people, even attacking and killing an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave. He fled Egypt and lived in Midian until God called him to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of slavery. The New Testament Hebrew writer said: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:24-25; cf. Acts 7:20ff). What enabled Moses to make this kind of decision? The only real explanation is his mother, Jochebed. At her knees, he learned about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses was what he was because of the influence of his mother.

Four centuries later, Jehoram, king in Jerusalem, married Athaliah. Athaliah influenced this son of a good king and the people of Judah to prostitute themselves in worship of the false god Baal. After reigning for eight years, Jehoram was so wicked that he “passed away with no one’s regret” (2 Chronicles 21:20). When Jehoram and Athaliah’s son Ahaziah became king, Athaliah served as his advisor and “encouraged him to act wickedly.” As a result, “he did evil in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 22:3-5). Why was Athaliah so evil that she was able to corrupt the life of an entire nation? You will understand when I tell you that her mother was the infamous Jezebel. Although not many specific wicked deeds of Jezebel are known today, her name is recognized as the most evil name of any woman who has ever lived. Read 1 Kings 18-21.

Mothers can have profound influence on the lives of the children who play at their feet. Their influence can shape the values, mold the faith and form the character of their sons and daughters. Then, through those children, they just may determine the destiny of nations. Mothers, your child may not become a Moses and we pray not an Athaliah. But we also pray that you will become a Jochobed to your children and not a Jezebel. God bless you on this Mother’s Day.

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