The Myth: The Aged Truth

Samson the Tale, and Sisyphus the Human

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The myth, as I see it, in genesis, biography, and becoming, is an action that undoubtedly occurred. Time witnessed its birth, and the collective consciousness of people preserved its continuity throughout the ages. There was no written record at the time of the event, so people's tongues leapt forward to preserve it from the ravages of time. Everyone approached it as they desired. They loved an aspect of it, so they favored it with expansion and polishing. They denied its other aspects, so they obscured them and diminished their space in their narration.

As tongues passed it down through generations, a lock of magic was draped over the brow of the original event, and tresses of imagination were let loose upon its body. Embellishments multiplied, and fabricated details increased, until the authentic core was buried beneath a heap of additions. People were lost, unable to distinguish between a lived history and a comedy of fantasy. Despite the antiquity of both the event and its telling, the narrative pleasure remained the guarantee of its permanence and its everlasting immunity from the voracity of oblivion. Upon this, the myth-story was built, and through this, it will endure until the far ends of time.

Samson the Tale

For the giant Samson, there is no doubt that he once was. Among his people, he was great and possessed authority. He was awe-inspiring, abundant in strength, sound in body and stature. A woman of beauty and coquetry caught him off guard in a calamity of fate. She was not deprived of abundant cunning and guile, which she hid in a bundle and three baskets. She found fault with his glory and revealed his hidden

secret to the people. She stripped him of the dignity he was long known for and shook the foundation of a kingdom that previously belonged to few others. So, the poor man became a steed for her seduction, and the valiant hero turned compliant to her whims. The result was degradation after degradation, and after it came the bitter death.

And there is also no doubt that an observing witness was saddened by this outcome. He pitied the noble man for his fall into degradation and profound humiliation. So, he directed his tongue to the ominous event. He mourned the afflicted hero, describing his state and circumstances to the people. The primary narrator might have been one who maintained neutrality as much as he could. He described the incident without expressing an opinion, showing bias, or passing judgment.

Then after him came one whose soul refused to accept the defeat of a man at the hands of a captivating conqueror. And perhaps he found himself in the man's misfortune. So, he wanted revenge for both of them and to gather what could be salvaged of lost honor. And since death was an act that had already occurred, he applied his fevered imagination to the very event of death. For his man could not die like this, alone and humiliated; he must, therefore, have company. Thus, his blood would be in exchange for a flood of evil blood. And this death ceremony would be a fitting reckoning for a stouthearted hero and, at the same time, soothe the wounds of a pained narrator.

And this is what happened. The thousands upon thousands of mockers were leveled with him under the rubble of the temple. And here is their scream deafening the ear of death, and their souls jostling on the slippery paths to Hell. As for his hero, he remained defiant against the machinery of death.

He planted his head firmly on the ground, his eyes gazing at the sky. He whispered two words into the hearing of the ether. Then he waited a moment, and departed. Your words still resonate in the expanses of existence, Samson! And the echo still casts them into our ears to this day ⁽¹⁾.

And the narrator was not satisfied with that; he went to the extreme of heroism. He wanted death to be captive to the man's will. For it was Samson who summoned his death at the moment of ultimate revelation. He called it, and death came to him, submissive. He wanted the finale with his hero vanquishing his enemies, as well as vanquishing death itself. Such is the mark of the archetypal hero; he never ceases to

amaze us with his strength and power. And perhaps our friend was possessed by the hero at that moment, so he wanted glory and laurels for both of them, even if on a painful lever, which is death.

And not long after that time, appeared one who attacked the woman, loading her with the sin of the catastrophic event. He elaborated on describing the cunning of this foreign intruder in his hero's life. He borrowed from Satan and clothed her with it. He borrowed from the Creator the ability to act and fulfill desires, and he bestowed it upon her lavishly. Here she is, being cunning, and her hope is never disappointed. She schemes, and her plot becomes a reality that accepts no exception. Until this woman became an everlasting symbol, and throughout the ages, a guide that never lacks influence.

Delilah... they named her. And from the fertility of their imagination, they colored and described her. They woven stories and tales around her. In guile, she became the headline, and in captivating hearts as well as minds, they made her the proof. She casts a piercing glance, and those she targets become prisoners of her love. She unleashes abundant cunning, and minds and souls become spoils for her deceit. Women desired her before men. They loved in her the embodiment of beauty and power, and men were infatuated with her, desiring proximity and intimacy.

And this Delilah perhaps possessed a share of beauty in her creation, and two shares of sweetness of spirit and company. No more than that, and no less. Without denying her a little of the cunning and coquetry that no female, however great, is without. For they are the legacy of Eve in her daughters, an inevitable part of a project and an aim. So, the man was infatuated with her and wanted with her, and with her, to seclude himself from the world of endeavors. He ascended a mountain with her and built for her a retreat from the wood of poplars. He planted for her a garden of roses and basil, and crowned her head and feet with wreaths of jasmine.

And as always, there were those troubled by the beautiful woman's winning over the master of the people, Samson. And others whose interests were not safe from harm that had occurred. So they all gathered to disparage and mock the two lovers. "The master of the people has lost his mind," "The seductress has destroyed what remained of his honor and prestige," "This mighty giant has fallen at the hands of a

playful schemer," and many other things that the minds of the envious losers produce. And the crux of the matter is two lovers racing on the paths of jasmine, playful, frolicking, happy. They wanted life, they wanted love... nothing more. But alas, alas! For whom do you read your psalms, O David?!

At the same time, or a little or much later, I don't know, came one who read in the story of the two lovers, Samson and Delilah, solace for himself and salvation from a shame that had befallen him. For he had fallen one evening into the sin of love. Another Delilah had captivated him, seizing the very core of his heart. She stripped him of his mind and all its accessories and left him not a shred of honor. So, the millstone of the people ground him, and kneaded him in the mire of seasoned folly. Then, on a fortunate day, he happened upon a narrative relic; he happened upon the tale of Samson.

Samson, the noble of his people, is pelted with the pebbles and tongues of his people. He is the master of his people and a banner of his time. Nay, he is a superhuman hero, of great stature. The beast slumbers on his shoulders, and death hides behind curtains of long, braided hair... This way the story is better! Let Samson be a god, or the son of a god at the very least, so the share of wonder is greater. And let us keep Delilah as people described her, full of cunning and guile, no harm in that. Then, the fall of Samson, son of the gods, on the threshold of beauty becomes resounding and clamorous. Perhaps its fragments will one day reach the ears of the people where my love was cursed, and the pride of a broken lover was shattered. Yes, this narrative suits the purpose more; straying far in glorifying the lover-victim. He is the son of a god, yet he fell, and the archer was merely the glance of a beautiful woman. Could there be a greater tragedy than that?!

And Sisyphus the Human

And in a place other than the place, and in a time other than time, a sage sat on a hillock facing a larger sister hill. He watches a wretch rolling a heavy stone, ascending with it to the summit of the hill ⁽²⁾. And in a moment of his inattention, the rock slips from his firm grip, and the depths of the valley receive it, mocking and defiant. Then our fellow repeats the cycle twice or thrice, but fails in his frantic endeavor to place it where he wanted. And our sage watches the scene from his near-

yet-far seat. He smiled compassionately, then let his gaze go far into the sky of existence.

"How similar this wretch is to many wretches, for they are in the same state of misery and toil. Their paths have varied, but the essence is one and the action is one. This cycle of misery is repeated upon them over the days, months, years, and perhaps epochs. It varies in guise, but the name is one; the cycle of human misery. They are as numerous as the sequences of night and day, the dualities of human oppression, and the cycles of life and death. Active and effective, as long as there is a pulsating artery in a human. It knows no rest, and allows no other to rest. It squeezes everyone; no one escapes it, be it human, animal, or plant.

"So here they are, rising in the morning from their rough beds. They plunge into their day in the arena of labors they themselves perform. After that comes their black, sad night. It devours them and their pains, then spews them out in the morning on the threshold of a new cycle. A cycle similar to its predecessor, and its successor is no better. And so it goes on, in a periodicity of human misery that does not end as long as the sun rises upon this human.

"That is not all, for a human does not spend his day, or his life, on a constant emotional or mood-related horizon. Were that the case, perhaps the pain of his daily life would be lighter, and his coping with living conditions would be better. However, reality does not suggest such constancy. For a human is constantly oscillating, fluctuating between the two covers of existential dualities whose stream is unending: health and sickness, fear and security, joy and sorrow, etc.

"They are the dualities of man's perpetual anxiety. They toss him mercilessly between their palms, and the poor human staggers between the two banks, going back and forth. They do not tire, nor do they want rest for the inhabitant of this expanse. They give with one hand, while the other rummages in his corners and secrets for spoils to plunder. They make him happy for a while, and sadden him many times. They soothe one wound, while the other is busily engaged in reopening wounds for him. They make him happy with a lover who has come, then sadden him over a dear one who has passed away. Joy does not last in his heart for long, while sorrow has laid the foundations and raised the edifice everywhere. The sweet does

not stay in his feeling, while the bitter, foul-taste, clings. How I pity you, O human! For they are the constants of your anxiety, the tools of your ordeal and your test. You carry them under your arm wherever you are, in whatever guise you appear. There is no escape from them; they are your fate, your companions as long as you remain.

"And in the cycle of life and death, you toil, O human! Beginnings and endings, an unwearying stream and unending sequences. No sooner does one end than it begins anew. A naïve childhood, then a playful youth, then a responsible middle age, then incapacity and frantic waiting, and an inevitable, falling finale. And between that beginning and its end, the cycles of night and day succeed upon your wounded soul. Competing for your weary head are the dualities of your anxiety and your test. Each is responsible, each is an agent of your misery. The test of permanence and worthiness is harsh, with no leniency. And salvation is only for a fortunate one who works for it night and day.

"One cycle after another, they succeed as long as time turns. They pass the torch of torment among themselves. The preceding one bequeaths to her succeeding sister the misery of this human. She whispers in her ear, mockingly, that misery is vowed upon this creature. He is disobedient; he dared to defy the gods and ventured shamelessly into forbidden prohibitions. His test is arduous, and the ascent to salvation is stubborn. So blessed is every striving, steadfast one who refused anything but liberation and deliverance from the cycles of misery."

It is a set of visions that the wise narrator willed when he narrated. He saw the event, but he saw beyond that. He saw the human toiling, and what he saw exhausted him from unceasing cycles of misery. Many saw Sisyphus striving, but he was the only one who narrated. He narrated it when he saw it in the misery of man since eternity, and in the fluctuation of his conditions throughout the course until the appointed time. He narrated it when he saw the misery of man when he exists, having done to him what the Almighty willed for him to be.

He narrated it when thought awoke from a long slumber, so it set out searching for purposes and anticipating ends. He narrated it when the darkness lifted from the eye, so it invaded the horizon, searching and probing for the alphabets of existence.

He narrated it when he became certain that human life on this earth is an act of punishment. Uncovering the sinful act eluded him, but he ascertained the act of retribution.

The Result: The Vision

The myth, as I see it, is a tale raised in the lap of time. Reality wrote a line or two in it, and imagination completed the weaving of the rest of the story. The myth is a solid ball of rock and iron. It slipped from the grasp of fate, so it slid down the pathways of time and roamed the terrain of space and its twists. It picked up a minute detail from every era, and a particular from every valley. Then it reached us as a ball, or nearly so, adorned with numerous minutiae, buzzing with great details.

And the myth, as I always like to describe it, is a beautiful child who saw the light of truth one morning. Time came upon it and robbed it of its truth. It tailored it to its own measure and according to its desires. It wrote on the tin of its body what imagination wished, and stamped its face with the marks of passage. Then it spat it out to us as a decrepit old woman, from whom freshness had deserted the cheeks and features. An old woman, whose truthful speech is mixed with the conjectures of the aged. But how impossible it is for a listener to extract the truth of the narrative from the ornamentation of the new! And how utterly impossible for a discerning person to discern in the features of the old woman that child she was in bygone eras and past ages.

The essential truth was lost in the crowd of desires. Everyone wanted the narrative for themselves, so they applied the tongue of imagination to it. They loaded it with what they wished of condensed thought and dense wisdom. Time passed over it, so its visitors and disciples multiplied, while it is the compliant midwife. So the poor thing became pregnant with various meanings. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the listener, if he ever approaches a myth, to comprehend this multitude of partnerships, and to attribute the multitude of meanings and implications to the multitude of founding fathers.

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- (1) "Upon me and upon my enemies" were the last words Samson uttered into the ear of the ether, and then he departed. And the echo of these words still deafens ears to this day.
- (2) The reference here is to the legend of Sisyphus for anyone who missed the meaning.

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