

Judges

Chapter 13

The Birth of Samson

And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. 2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. 3 And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, 5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name, 7 but he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’” 8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.” 9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.” 11 And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to this woman?” And he said, “I am.” 12 And Manoah said, “Now when your words come true, what is to be the child’s manner of life, and what is his mission?” 13 And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. 14 She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe.” 15 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you.” 16 And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.) 17 And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?” 18 And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” 19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. 20 And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.” 23 But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.” 24 And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahanehdan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

13:1–16:31 Samson (from the tribe of Dan), like Ehud (from the tribe of Benjamin), was a loner, whose heroic exploits involved single-handed triumphs over powerful enemies. His story therefore balances that of Ehud (3:12–30). He typifies the nation of Israel—born by special divine provision, consecrated to the Lord from birth and endowed with unique power among his fellowmen. The likeness is even more remarkable in light of his foolish chasing of foreign women, some of ill repute, until he was cleverly

subdued by one of them. In this he exemplified Israel, who during the period of the judges constantly prostituted herself to Canaanite gods to her own destruction. (CSB)

13:2 *Zorah*. A town first assigned to Judah (Jos 15:33), but later given to Dan (Jos 19:41). It became the point of departure for the Danite migration northward (18:2, 8, 11). (CSB)

Small town 14 mi W of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

barren. The same condition, before divine intervention, as that of Sarah, the mother of Isaac (Ge 11:30; 16:1); Rebekah, the mother of Jacob (Ge 25:21); Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1Sa 1:2); and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist (Lk 1:7). (CSB)

Repetition underscores her physical inability to bear children. (TLSB)

13:3 *you are ... bear a son*. Cf. the announcements of the births of Ishmael (Ge 16:11), Isaac (Ge 18:10), Immanuel (Isa 7:14), John the Baptist (Lk 1:13) and Jesus (Lk 1:31). (CSB)

Sarah (Gn 17:15–16), Hannah (1Sm 1:12–20), and Elizabeth (Lk 1:8–24) were other barren women in the Bible who were visited by the Lord (through an angel or a priest) and then conceived a child who became an important agent of God (Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist). (TLSB)

13:5 *No razor*. Israelite men wore their hair at different lengths, as artistic inscriptions and biblical texts attest. The head was shaved as a sign of mourning. (TLSB)

Nazirite. From the Hebrew word meaning “separated” or “dedicated.” Samson’s vow was not voluntary, and it applied to his whole lifetime (v. 7). The same was true of Samuel (1Sa 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15). (CSB)

From a word meaning “dedication”—by which an Israelite consecrated himself to God. (TLSB)

begin to save Israel ... from ... the Philistines. The deliverance was continued in the time of Samuel (1Sa 7:10–14) and completed under David (2Sa 5:17–25; 8:1). (CSB)

Israel’s struggle against the Philistines continued with Samuel (1Sm 7), Saul (1Sm 13–14), David (1Sm 17; 2Sm 5:17–25), and on through the kings. (TLSB)

13:6 *man of God*. An expression often used of prophets (see Dt 33:1; 1Sa 2:27; 9:6–10; 1Ki 12:22), though it is clear from vv. 3, 21 that this messenger was not a prophet but the angel of the Lord. (CSB)

She assumed he was a human prophet, but she was overwhelmed by his majestic appearance, to the point of neglecting to ask him his name and where he was from. (TLSB)

13:7 Nazirite vow was usually temporary, as that taken by St Paul (Ac 21:23–24). Only two others are recorded in Scripture as being Nazirites from birth: Samuel (1Sm 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:14–15). (TLSB)

13:8 *teach us*. Not the usual parental concern, but a special concern based on the boy’s special calling. (CSB)

Manoah may have believed his wife, but he prayed to know more about how he should raise this special child. May the Lord place such a prayer on the lips of parents today and likewise place the Scriptures in their hands. (TLSB)

13:9 *God listened.* God heard the prayer offered in such faith. (TLSB)

13:10 The woman was alone the first time the angel appeared (vv 3–5). This time, she brought her husband to see the angel so that he, too, as the father, would be involved in the revelation about their son (vv 13–14). (TLSB)

13:12–14 Manoah wanted to know more, but the angel simply repeated what he first told Manoah’s wife. God’s Word does not always tell us everything we would like to know. Our part is simply to trust what God has revealed. See note, 2Ch 35:22. (TLSB)

13:12 *When your words come true.* A declaration of faith. To Manoah it was not a matter of whether these events would occur, but of when (v. 17). (CSB)

13:15 *stay until we prepare a young goat.* Such food was considered a special delicacy. Hospitality of this kind was common in the ancient Near East (see 6:18–19; Ge 18:1–8). (CSB)

13:16 *I will not eat.* Angel rejected Manoah’s attempt to manipulate God through the obligations of hospitality and use of His name (v 17). (TLSB)

to the LORD. Angel transformed into a divine sacrifice what Manoah regarded as an ordinary meal. In a similar situation with Abraham and Sarah, the Angel of the Lord did share a human meal, in light of their faith (Gn 18:3–8), but Manoah’s motives were not as pure as Abraham’s. (TLSB)

did not know. Manoah may not have completely accepted his wife’s account. (TLSB)

13:17 *What is your name ... ?* A messenger’s identity was considered very important. (CSB)

when your words comes true. Fulfilled prophecy was a sign of the authenticity of a prophet (Dt 18:21–22; 1Sa 9:6). (CSB)

honor. Many ancient people believed that one could manipulate people and spiritual beings through their names. The Angel of the Lord rejected Manoah’s attempt to exercise power over God. (TLSB)

13:18 *beyond understanding.* In Isa 9:6 the Hebrew for this phrase (translated “Wonderful”) applies to One who would come as “Mighty God.” (CSB)

Far beyond what Manoah could grasp (see title for Christ, Is 9:6). (TLSB)

13:19 *offered it on the rock.* Though sacrifices were not to be offered except at the tabernacle (cf Lv 17:8–9), here the Lord sanctified the offering by His presence and His command. Cf 1Tm 4:5. (TLSB)

13:20 *altar.* The rock became an altar when the Lord (TLSB)

13:22 *doomed to die.* The holiness of God consumes sinners who come into His presence (Ex 33:3). (TLSB)

God. With the offering, the angel revealed His true nature, and Manoah and his wife experienced a “theophany,” a direct revelation of God. (TLSB)

13:23 Manoah’s wife showed greater faith and insight than her husband as she recognized that the Lord had accepted the sacrifice and covered their sinfulness. Also, the Lord had promised to work through them and their son. (TLSB)

13:24 *Samson.* The name is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “sun” or “brightness,” and is used here either as an expression of joy over the birth of the child or as a reference to the nearby town of Beth Shemesh, “house of the sun(-god).” (CSB)

Similar to term “sun” (Hbr *shemesh*). Some scholars see a connection with pagan solar deities, but Josephus says that the word means “the strong one” or “the daring one.” (TLSB)

He grew and the LORD blessed him. Cf. 1Sa 2:26 (Samuel) and Lk 2:52 (Jesus). (CSB)

13:25 *began to stir him.* The Holy Spirit made Samson begin his work of deliverance, equipping him with supernatural strength. (TLSB)

Mahaneh Dan. Means “Dan’s camp.” (CSB)

Lit, “the camp of Dan,” possibly a temporary settlement for displaced refugees from the tribe of Dan. The location may be less than a mile from Samson’s birthplace. (TLSB)

Ch 13 The Lord’s messenger appears to a barren woman, promising that she will bear a son who must live as a Nazirite and who will save Israel from the Philistines. This special experience anticipates the special life the woman’s son will lead. God’s Word comes to us with special purpose too. In the humble forms of the pages of the Bible; the water, bread, and wine of the Sacraments; and the preaching of a pastor, the Lord strengthens us for our special mission of serving Him in a hostile world. • O Lord, we thank You for Your Word, which You have graciously communicated to us in human language. Forgive us for being blind to Your wonderful Word, and lead us to trust it. For You reveal to us that You have provided a Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)