

# CHAPTER 13

## INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES 13

This chapter relates the birth of Samson, another of the judges of Israel, which was foretold by an angel to his mother, who told her husband of it, (<sup><0710></sup>Judges 13:1-7) upon whose entreaty the angel appeared again, and related the same to them both, (<sup><0718></sup>Judges 13:8-14) and who was very, respectfully treated by the man, and by the wonderful things he did was known by him to be an angel of the Lord, which greatly surprised him, (<sup><0715></sup>Judges 13:15-23) and the chapter is closed with an account of the birth of Samson, and of his being early endowed with the Spirit of God, (<sup><0719></sup>Judges 13:24,25).

**Ver. 1.** *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord*, etc.] Committed idolatry, which was the evil they were prone unto, and were frequently guilty of:

*and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years:* which according to Josephus <sup>f262</sup> are to be reckoned from the death of the last judge, and the time of Samson's birth; or rather from some time after the death of Jephthah, particularly taking in the two last years of Ibzan, when the Ephraimites having been weakened through the slaughter of them by Jephthah, might encourage the Philistines to break in upon them; from which time to the birth of Samson were twenty years, and twenty more may be allowed before he could begin to deliver Israel out of their hands; so that the oppression lasted forty years. According to others, it began at the same time as the oppression of the Ammonites did, though it lasted longer, (<sup><0707></sup>Judges 10:7).

**Ver. 2.** *And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites*, etc.] Of the tribe of Dan, in which tribe Zorah was, and seems to have lain both on the borders of Judah and Dan, (<sup><0653></sup>Joshua 15:33 19:41); (see Gill on "<sup><0653></sup>Joshua 15:33"), (see Gill on "<sup><0694></sup>Joshua 19:41"), and this man was not a mean man, but of rank and figure, a principal man in the country, according to Josephus <sup>f263</sup>; though the Talmudists <sup>f264</sup> say he was a plebeian:

*whose name was Manoah*; which signifies “rest”, and has much the same signification as Noah; and by this name he was well known in those times, and among his people:

*and his wife was barren, and bare not*; had no child, as the Targum; and it is observed by many, that several eminent persons were born of women that had been barren, as Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, and John the Baptist; and it is remarkable, that the strongest man that ever was born of such a woman, as the following account relates. The name of this woman, the mother of Samson, is said <sup>f265</sup> to be Zalalpnith; see (<sup>430B</sup>1 Chronicles 4:3).

**Ver. 3.** *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman*, etc.]

According to Josephus <sup>f266</sup>, it was in a plain without the city; and that he appeared in the form of a man is certain from (<sup>473B</sup>Judges 13:6) but was not a mere man, a prophet of the Lord, nor a created angel, but the uncreated one, the Angel of the covenant, the Son and Word of God, who often appeared in an human form; since his name is said to be “Wonderful”, and he to do wonderful things, and is called “Jehovah”, (<sup>473B</sup>Judges 13:18,23),

*and said unto her, behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not*; barren at that time, and so she had been ever since she was married to that time; and this is observed, that it might appear the more wonderful that she should after this have a child:

*but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son*; which to do, must be ascribed to divine power, that one in her circumstances should bear a son; as the prediction of it was owing to divine omniscience, and a proof of it.

**Ver. 4.** *Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink*, etc.] Any liquor inebriating and intoxicating, neither new wine nor old wine, as the Targum, and so Jarchi; the reason of this appears in the next verse, because the child she should conceive and bear was to be a Nazarite, and to be one from his mother’s womb; and from all such liquors, Nazarites, according to the law, were to abstain, (<sup>408B</sup>Numbers 6:3)

*and eat not any unclean thing*; meaning not so much such sort of food as was forbidden by the law to be eaten, which every Israelite was to abstain from, but such as were particularly forbidden to Nazarites, as moist and dried grapes, or anything made of the vine tree, from the kernel to the husk, (<sup>408B</sup>Numbers 6:3,4). The reason of this is, because the child in the womb is nourished with the same the mother is; and as this child was to be

a Nazarite from the womb, and even in it, his mother was to abstain both from eatables and drinkables forbidden a Nazarite by the law.

**Ver. 5.** *For, lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son*, etc.] Which is not only repeated for the confirmation of it, but that she might take notice that he was to be a Nazarite, and therefore must conform to everything agreeable to the law of the Nazarites, and take care that it was observed in him:

*and no razor shall come on his head*; to cut off the hair of it, not from the time of his birth to his death; for he was to be a perpetual Nazarite: other Nazarites during the time of their Nazariteship were not to suffer a razor to come upon them, but afterwards might; but for such an one as Samson, it was not lawful ever to suffer his hair to be cut off; (see <sup>4005</sup>Numbers 6:5)

*for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb*; in which he was a type of Christ, who was sanctified by the Lord, separated from sinners, and called a “Nazarene”: was born of a virgin, as Samson was of a barren woman, and his birth foretold by an angel as this:

*and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*; for the salvation he wrought for Israel was not complete and perfect; it was only begun by him, and carried on in the times of Eli, Samuel, and Saul, and perfected by David. In this his antitype exceeds him, who is the author of the complete salvation of his people out of the hands of all their enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; though in this there is a great resemblance between Samson and our Lord Jesus, in that what he did he did himself alone; not at the head of an army, and with forces under him, as other judges; so Christ with his own arm, and of himself, and without others, wrought salvation for his people; (see <sup>265</sup>Isaiah 63:5).

**Ver. 6.** *Then the woman came and told her husband*, etc.] To whom it would be joyful news, as it was to her:

*saying, a man of God came unto me*; he appeared in an human form, and therefore she calls him a man; and by his mien and deportment, and the message he brought, she concluded he was a man of God, that is, a prophet; by which name such persons went in those days; and so the Targum calls him a prophet of the Lord: but it is a mere conceit of Ben Gersom that it was Phinehas, who in all probability was not living; besides what is after related shows that this was a divine Person, and no other than the Son of God:

*and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible*; for though she might never have seen an angel, yet it being a common notion that angels were very illustrious, of a beautiful form and of a shining countenance, and very majestic, she compares the man she saw to one; for by being “very terrible”, is not meant that he was frightful, and struck her with horror, but venerable and majestic, which filled her with admiration:

*but I asked him not whence he [was], neither told he me his name*; this she added to prevent her husband’s inquiring about his name and place of abode; and perhaps, as she came along, she reflected on herself that she did not ask those questions; which might be owing to the surprise she was in, partly at the awful and venerable appearance of the person, and partly at the joyful news he brought her; though it seems as if she did ask his name, but he did not tell her what it was.

**Ver. 7.** *But he said unto me, behold, thou shalt conceive and bear a son,* etc.] She says nothing of her barrenness, which the angel took notice of to her, that having been to her reproach:

*and now drink no wine nor strong drink*; neither new wine nor old wine; so the Targum as before:

*neither eat any unclean thing*; which was so in a ceremonial sense; otherwise every creature of God is good, and not to be called common or unclean; it here respects what was forbidden Nazarites to eat; (see ~~4713~~Judges 13:4)

*for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb*; it is here added, what is not before expressed,

*unto his death*; for he was to be a perpetual Nazarite; some were only Nazarites for a time, for so many days or months, according to their vow; but this son was to be a Nazarite all his days, by the appointment of God; nor is it any objection to what is here said, that his hair was cut off before his death, which caused his Nazariteship to cease; since these words are not a prophecy, but a precept; and besides, that affair happened but a little before his death, he died quickly afterwards.

**Ver. 8.** *Then Manoah entreated the Lord,* etc.] Josephus <sup>f267</sup> makes the woman to entreat the Lord; but the text is clear for it that it was Manoah that prayed:

*and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send unto us;* he believed that the man that came to his wife was a man of God, and that he was of his sending; nor was he incredulous of the message he brought, as appears by what follows:

*and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born;* he believed there would be a child born, and he knew what was to be done to a Nazarite in common, according to the law of God respecting such, and the angel had mentioned somewhat to the woman; yet this being an extraordinary case, a Nazarite from his birth to his death, he was desirous of knowing what was further to be done; or if there was any thing more special and particular to be observed concerning him; which showed his readiness and cheerfulness to obey the will of God in all things.

**Ver. 9.** *And God hearkened unto the voice of Manoah,* etc.] Heard his prayer and answered it:

*and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field;* who very likely returned to the same place where she was before, in hope her husband's prayers would be heard, and the man return and come to her where he had before met her; as well as she might be here retired for meditation and prayer; unless it can be supposed that she had business here to do, as keeping a flock of sheep, which women, and those great personages too, were wont to do in those times and countries, as Rebekah the sister of Laban, and the daughters of Jethro, prince of Midian:

*but Manoah her husband was not with her;* the angel appeared to the woman again, because she would know him to be the same; whereas had he appeared to Manoah, especially alone, he could not have known whether he was the same or not. This clause is observed for the sake of what follows.

**Ver. 10.** *And the woman made haste, and ran,* etc.] It is not improbable what Josephus says <sup>f268</sup>, that she entreated the angel to stay a little till she fetched her husband, which he assented to, and then made all the haste she could to him, partly through eagerness to acquaint him with it, and partly that she might not make the prophet she took him to be wait too long:

*and showed her husband;* that his prayer was heard:

*and said unto him, behold, the man hath appeared unto me that came unto me the [other] day;* or, as the Targum, "this day"; so Kimchi and Ben

Melech; for the word “other” is not in the text. It is very probable it was the same day he came again he had appeared to her; perhaps it was in the former part of the day he first came to her, when she went home to her husband, and acquainted him with it, who prayed to the Lord that he might be sent again; and then she returned to her place in the field, and in the latter part of the day the angel appeared again.

**Ver. 11.** *And Manoah arose and went after his wife*, etc.] As soon as she had delivered the above, she made all the haste she could to the man again, lest he should think her too long, and depart; and it was proper enough she should go first, to direct her husband where the man was; Jarchi interprets it, after her counsel and advice:

*and came to the man, and said unto him, art thou the man that spakest unto the woman?* meaning his wife then present:

*and he said, I am*; the very same person; for though he was not a man, yet appearing in an human form was taken for one; and therefore makes answer according to the supposition of him, and was the selfsame person, and in the same form he had appeared before.

**Ver. 12.** *And Manoah said, now let thy words come to pass*, etc.] Which was not only a wish that they might, but a prayer of faith that they would come pass:

*how shall we order the child? and how shall we do unto him?* he believed a child would be born, and as he was to be a Nazarite, he knew what were the rules and orders to be observed concerning one in common; but as he was to be an extraordinary one, he was desirous of knowing what particular laws and rules were to be observed with respect to him, or what more was to be done to him than to another: the words may be rendered, as in the margin of our Bibles, “what shall be the judgment of the child, and his work?” and seems to relate not to what should be done to it, but what that should do; for being an extraordinary Nazarite, he supposed that some extraordinary work would be done by him, and he was curious to know it; and so Abarbinel interprets it of his request to know things future and wonderful, that should be done after the child was grown up; but this the angel chose not to inform him of, since it might have been prejudicial to them, should the Philistines get knowledge that this child would be a judge and saviour of Israel, and do such and such things to them as he did, they would have sought to have slain his wife while she bare him, or the child

when born; and it may be observed, that though the angel told the woman at first, that he should “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”, (<sup>4713B</sup>Judges 13:5), yet she said nothing of it to her husband, nor did the angel repeat it.

**Ver. 13.** *And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah*, etc.] Giving him no direct answer to his question, either what should be done to the child, or what that should do; only reminds of and repeats what he had said to his wife, which she should be careful to observe and would, and that was enough for him to know:

*of all that I said to the woman, let her beware*; take to abstain from everything in eating and drinking during the time of her going with child, he had joined, which are particularly repeated in the next verse.

**Ver. 14.** *She may not eat of anything that cometh from the vine*, etc.] Grapes moist or dried, kernels, or husks, or anything made of them:

*neither let her drink wine, or strong drink*; as she was to be careful to abstain from such liquors, so her husband also is enjoined not to suffer her to drink any:

*nor eat any unclean thing*; which was so by the law of Moses, and particularly by the law of the Nazarites:

*all that I commanded her, let her observe*; both with respect to herself and the child.

**Ver. 15.** *And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord*, etc.] Being satisfied with what he had said, and perceiving that he chose to say no more, and was about to depart:

*I pray thee let me detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee*; to eat a meal with them, in token of gratitude for the trouble he had been at in bringing these messages to them, taking him to be a man, a prophet of the Lord, for whom they were wont to make entertainments; and Abarbinel thinks Manoah proposed this, on purpose to detain him, in hope that while they were eating together he would reveal some secrets unto him.

**Ver. 16.** *And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah*, etc.] In answer to his request:

*though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread*; that is, should he be prevailed upon to stay awhile with him, until an entertainment should be got ready, he would not eat of any of his provisions; for “bread” is put for all eatables, or whatsoever he might provide for the entertainment:

*and if*, or “but if” <sup>f269</sup>

*thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord*; if he meant to provide not a festival entertainment, but a sacrifice, then he should take care that he did not offer it to strange gods, as was now very much the custom with Israel in this their time of apostasy, (<sup><07130></sup>Judges 13:1) but to the true Jehovah, and not to a servant of his, a prophet or an angel, but to himself:

*for Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord*; he took him to be a man, a prophet sent of God, and not an angel; and much less the uncreated one, to whom as such only the sacrifice could be offered.

**Ver. 17.** *And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, what is thy name*, etc.] Who art thou, and by what name art thou called? for since he could not prevail upon him to stay and eat a meal with him, he desired to know his name, and where he lived, that when he heard his name mentioned he might speak well of him, or send to him upon occasion; or if any message was sent from him, as Jarchi suggests, that he might show a respect to him, and observe it: and particularly,

*that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour?* say that such a prophet, whose name is such, and lives in such a place, foretold these things; or that they might send him a present, in gratitude for, and as a reward of his service and trouble; so the reward of a labourer, and the maintenance of a Gospel minister, is called “honour”, (<sup><5487></sup>1 Timothy 5:17) and thus Josephus <sup>f270</sup> understood it, that they might give him thanks, and send him a present.

**Ver. 18.** *And the angel of the Lord said unto him*, etc.] Being so importunate, and pressing upon him;

*why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?* and not to be known; as his nature and essence as a divine Person, which may be meant by his name, is what passes knowledge, is infinite and incomprehensible; (see <sup><3804></sup>Proverbs 30:4) or “wonderful” <sup>f271</sup>; which is one of the names of Christ, and fitly agrees with him, who is wonderful in his person, as God



and man; in his incarnation, in his offices and relations, in his love to his people, and in all he is unto them, and has done for them; (see Gill on <sup><-2096></sup>Isaiah 9:6”).

**Ver. 19.** *So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering*, etc.] The kid which he proposed to make an entertainment with, for the man of God, he took him to be, he fetched and brought for a burnt offering, at the hint which the angel had given him, and joined to it a meat offering, as was usual whenever burnt offerings were made; (see <sup><0453></sup>Numbers 15:3,4),

*and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord*; for though Manoah was not a priest, nor was this a proper place for sacrifice; high places were now forbidden, and only at the tabernacle in Shiloh were offerings to be brought; yet all this was dispensed with, and Manoah was justified in what he did by the warrant of the angel, (<sup><0731></sup>Judges 13:16). The rock was probably near the place where this meeting of Manoah and his wife with the angel was, and where the discourse between them passed; and which served instead of an altar, and on which Manoah sacrificed, not to idols, but to the true Jehovah, as the angel directed:

*and the angel did wondrously*; agreeably to his name, which was “Wonderful”, (<sup><0738></sup>Judges 13:18) or “he, Jehovah, did wondrously” for this angel was no other than Jehovah the Son. The instance in which he did wondrously was, as Kimchi observes, by bringing fire out of the rock, which consumed the flesh of the kid, and the meat offering; and so Josephus <sup>f272</sup> says, that he touched the flesh with a rod he had, and fire sparkled out, and consumed it with the bread, or meat offering; just in the same manner as the angel did with the kid and cakes that Gideon brought, (<sup><0621></sup>Judges 6:21)

*and Manoah and his wife looked on*; to see either fire come down from heaven, or spring up out of the rock, which consumed the sacrifice, and showed the Lord’s acceptance of it, and also the angel’s ascending in it, as follows.

**Ver. 20.** *For it came to pass, when the flame went up towards heaven from off the altar*, etc.] That is, from the rock, which served instead of an altar, and from whence perhaps the fire sprung which consumed both the burnt offering and the meat offering, the flame of which went up to heaven; this rock or altar having no covering, but was “sub dio”, open to the heavens:

*that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar*; making use of the smoke, as Josephus<sup>t273</sup> says, as a vehicle in which he openly went up to heaven:

*and Manoah and his wife looked on it*; on the flame and smoke, and the angel in it as he ascended; just as the disciples of Christ looked steadfastly on him as he went up to heaven, when a cloud received him out of their sight, (~~4009~~Acts 1:9,10)

*and fell on their faces to the ground*; with astonishment and surprise at what they saw, through fear and reverence of the divine Being, of whose presence they were now sensible, and as worshipping of him, and praying to him.

**Ver. 21.** *But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife*, etc.] As the flame and smoke ascended, he disappeared therewith, and was seen no more:

*then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord*; by the wondrous things he did, causing fire to come down from heaven, or out of the rock, ascending in the midst of the flame, without being hurt by it, and going up to heaven in it.

**Ver. 22.** *And Manoah said unto his wife*, etc.] Being risen from the ground, where they fell on their faces:

*we shall surely die, because we have seen God*; by which it appears that he not only believed him to be an angel, and not a man, but a divine Person; for though angels are sometimes called “Elohim”, the word here used, yet good men were not wont to fear death, or conclude they should die on sight of an angel; but their notion was, that an appearance of God to them was death, and were surprised when it did not follow, (~~01320~~Genesis 32:30 ~~0062~~Judges 6:22,23 ~~0230~~Exodus 33:20).

**Ver. 23.** *But his wife said unto him*, etc.] Who was less fearful, and the strongest believer of the two, seeing her husband so very much intimidated, endeavoured to comfort and strengthen him by the three following arguments:

*if the Lord was pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands*; for it was at the direction of this illustrious Person that they offered these offerings, and who testified

the divine acceptance of them, by causing fire in an extraordinary manner to consume them, which was always reckoned a token of God's acceptance of them; and besides, the angel went up in the flame, as being well pleased with them, and, as it were, carrying up the sacrifice to heaven with him, as a sweetsmelling savour to God. Here the angel is called Jehovah by the woman, and shows this was the uncreated angel:

*neither would he have showed us all these things*; which they saw as the appearance of a divine Person to them in an human form, the consuming of the sacrifice by fire in so strange a manner, and the ascent of the angel heavenwards in the flame of it:

*nor would, as at this time, have told us [such things] as these*; as that they should have a son; how the woman was to manage herself, while with child of him; and how when born he was to be brought up, and what things God would do by him, and begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Now all this would not have been told at such a time of distress, as the nation was now in, but to comfort them, or he would never have told them of a son to be born of them, if they were to be destroyed immediately. So an enlightened soul may reason from the sight and sense he has had of his sinful, lost, and undone state by nature; from the revelation of Christ to him as the only way of salvation; from the views he has had of the glories of his person, and the riches of his grace; and from that communion with God he has sometimes enjoyed; from all this he may reason, that if God had a design to damn him for his sins, he would never have made such discoveries of love, grace, and mercy to him; as well as from the sacrifice of Christ, God has provided and accepted of, on the foot of which justice is engaged to save; and besides, grace and glory are inseparable.

**Ver. 24.** *And the woman bare a son, and called name Samson*, etc.] After these appearances were over, Manoah and his wife returned to their habitation, and she soon became pregnant, and at the usual course of time brought forth a son, and she gave him the name of Samson; for what reason it is not easy to determine. Josephus says <sup>f274</sup> the word signifies "strong"; perhaps he was born a strong robust child, which is not unlikely, or the woman might have some prophetic hint of his future strength, and so gave him this name; but the word has not the signification of strength in it; it rather signifies the sun, which is indeed a strong body, and is compared to a strong man running his race, and so a strong man may be compared to

that; but rather, with respect to the sun, this name might be given him, because of the splendour of his countenance with which he might be born, or in memory of the shining countenance of the angel which brought the tidings of his birth, or because he was to be the instrument of dispelling the darkness of calamity and distress Israel were now in: but the word more properly signifies a minister or servant, from whence the sun has its name; for Samson was to be, and was, a minister and servant of God, and of his people Israel. There is an agreement between the type and the antitype in this name in either sense. Christ is the mighty God, and mighty Saviour, the sun of righteousness, the light of the world, and the deliverer of his people from darkness of calamity and distress; and who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and perform the great service of redemption and salvation:

*and the child grew in bodily strength and stature*, and grew up to man's estate, (<sup><4124></sup>Luke 2:40,52)

*and the Lord blessed him*; not only with extraordinary strength of body, but with great endowments of mind, with the Spirit and graces of the Spirit; with grace, and blessings of it, and with his gracious presence; with this compare (<sup><4320></sup>Psalm 21:3,6 <sup><4010></sup>Ephesians 1:3).

**Ver. 25.** *And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan*, etc.] To go out into it, in order to be trained up in and inured to military exercises; or it began to "strike" his mind, inject thoughts into it, and impress it with them concerning doing great things for the people of God in time to come; and for the present put him upon doing strange and wonderful exploits, which were omens of what was to be done by him hereafter; and these were done by him now and then, not always, but as the Spirit of God came upon him, under the impulse of which he did them, and by the strength he gave him; so the Targum,

"and the Spirit of strength from the Lord began to strengthen him."

This camp of Dan was either a camp formed in that tribe, to prevent the incursions of the Philistines; or rather, since it does not seem that Israel had strength enough to resist them, they having got the power over them, this was the name of a place called Mahanehdan near Kirjathjearim, from the Danites encamping in it, when they went to besiege Laish, (<sup><4718></sup>Judges 18:11,12) for the fact was done before this time, though related afterwards:

*between Zorah and Eshtaol*; which were two cities in the tribe of Dan, and upon the borders of the tribe of Judah; of which see (~~1653~~Joshua 15:33 19:41). It may be observed, that as the tribe of Dan lay near to the Philistines, and so liable to their ravages, and might be most oppressed by them, so a deliverer of Israel was raised up in this tribe.