

Judges 13 - Cycle 7: Samson; Philistine Oppression; Angel of the Lord; The Birth of Samson

II. Failure in rescue of Israel through the seven cycles (Judges 3:7—16:31)

(13) Samson defeats the Philistines (Judges 13:1—16:31)

(A) Sin (13:1a)

(B) Suppression (13:1b)

(C) Salvation (13:2—16:31)

(a) Angelic announcement of Samson's birth (13:2-14)

(b) Angelic miraculous validation (13:15-23)

(c) Samson's birth and growth (13:24-25)

Introduction to Samson

We have been dealing with the Ammonites in the east. Now we will be dealing with the Philistines in the west—along the southern coast. We will also be dealing with the colorful—but enigmatic—exploits of Samson, who, unfortunately, was bold before men but weak with regards to women. He exemplifies what James emphasized: James 1:8: A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Empowered by the Spirit of God, he yielded his body to the appetites of the flesh. Called to declare war on the Philistines, he fraternized with the enemy; he even tried to marry a Philistine woman. He fought the Lord's battles by day and disobeyed the Lord's commandments by night. Given the name Samson (which means "sunny"), he ended up in darkness, blinded by the enemy he was supposed to conquer. A sad end to a promising life.

Judges 13

(13) Samson defeats the Philistines (Judges 13:1—16:31)

(A) Sin (13:1a)

(B) Suppression (13:1b)

1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.

1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.

1 Some time later, the Israelis again practiced what the LORD considered to be evil, so the LORD handed them over into the domination of the Philistines for 40 years.

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

- The 40 years of Philistine oppression included the prediction of Samson's judgeship, the birth and life of Samson, and the 20 years of Samson's judgeship (15:20; 16:31)

— This means that Samson began his judgeship at a very young age, likely before he was 20 years old

Chronology

Twenty years before Samuel's defeat of the Philistines (1 Sam 7), the enemy had sent back the Ark of the Covenant after keeping it for seven months. Most of Samson's activities took place during these following 20 years. His marriage to a Philistine woman took place a year or two before the Philistine victory at Shiloh. This means that Eli, another judge and contemporary of Samson, died shortly after the first of Samson's wars on the Philistines. All Samson's activities accrued within the 40-year period mentioned. The 40 years of Philistine oppression ended when Israel defeated the Philistines under Samuel in 1 Sam 7.

About the Philistines...

The Philistines were not a Semitic or Canaanite group, but originated from the Aegean area and arrived in Canaan from two directions: overland through Anatolia (Turkey), on down the coast; and by sea, via Crete and Cyprus. They were advancing toward Egypt until they were engaged in battle by Ramses III in 1194 BC in what is now Turkey. It was an indecisive victory, however. While Ramses III kept them from entering Egypt, the Philistines did settle on the coast between the Sorek River in the north and the Egyptian border at Raphia in the south. They would play a major role in Israel's history and become the main reason that Israel would start asking for a king (1 Sam 8).

Now for the third time in the Book of Judges, the Philistines become a problem for Israel (3:31; 10:7).

The Samson Cycle

The Samson Cycle is unique within the Book of Judges in 16 different ways:

(1) The period of subjection is twice as long as the longest previous oppression, 40 rather than 20 years.

(2) Whereas Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, and Jephthah all delivered Israel from the oppression of their enemies, Samson did not deliver them from the Philistines. His 20 years of judgeship was during their period of servitude, not after.

- (3) While other judges were raised up at a time of crisis to rescue Israel, Samson was called to do so before his birth.
- (4) Of the seven references to the Holy Spirit in this book, four of these are in connection with Samson.
- (5) Of the 23 references to the Angel of Jehovah, 13 of these are in connection with Samson.
- (6) Only Samson was a Nazirite.
- (7) Only of Samson is it said, "The Lord departed from him."
- (8) Samson alone, among the judges, entered into a fateful and fatal relationship with the enemy.
- (9) Only Samson died in captivity, and, upon death, still left Israel in servitude.
- (10) Samson's history connects directly with the judgeship of Eli and the story of Samuel.
- (11) The wars of deliverance give way to a series of episodes in the deliverer's private life, and there is no record of Israel's response to the oppression of v1 nor a record of Samson's issuing a call to arms to defeat the Philistines. The focus is not on national deliverance but on the personal deliverance of Samson individually for the difficulties he gets himself into because of his escapades.
- (12) Israel's attitude toward the oppression has changed; and in place of crying out because of the burden of oppression, they co-exist with the Philistines. Samson, the deliverer, freely fraternizes with the enemy. Judah resists any action that might upset the status quo, and God must be the One who creates the disturbances and causes the deliverer to act; otherwise he would not.
- (13) The role of the Judge changes in that Samson fully becomes part of the problem rather than part of the problem's lasting solution.
- (14) There are more acts of moral and spiritual weakness ascribed to Samson than to any other judge.
- (15) Women play a major role in Samson's life—four specifically: his mother, his unnamed first wife, the unnamed prostitute of Gaza, and the Philistine woman Delilah.
- (16) What is missing from the Samson Cycle is Israel's cry for help. On the contrary, as the Tribe of Judah shows, Israel seemed to be content living with Philistine oppression.

(C) Salvation (13:2—16:31)

(a) Angelic announcement of Samson's birth (13:2-14)

2 And there was a man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was infertile and had not given birth *to any children*.

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no *children*.

2 There was one man from Zorah, from the family of the descendants of Dan, whose name was Manoah. Since his wife was infertile, she hadn't borne children.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

- Zorah was a city 15 miles from Jerusalem, near the Philistine border, at the highest point on the Shephelah. Samson would often cross that border to satisfy his whims.

- The tribe of Dan was originally assigned to the land adjacent to Judah and Benjamin extending to the Mediterranean (Joshua 19:40-48), but since the Danites were unable to dislodge the coastal inhabitants, most of the tribe relocated to the north (Judges 18-19).

— Some of them remained in their original location

3 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are infertile and have not given birth; but you will conceive and give birth to a son.

3 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.

3 One day the angel of the LORD presented himself to the woman. "Hello!" he greeted her. "Though you are infertile at this time and haven't borne a child, you're about to conceive and give birth to a son.

3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

- Most expositors see the "Angel of the Lord" as a preincarnate appearance (Theophany) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Cf. Gen 22:1-8; 31:11-13; Ex 3:1-6; Judges 6:11-24)

- Infertility was a common problem among wives throughout Scripture:

— Abraham and Sarah: Isaac (Gen 17)

— Amram and Jochebed: Moses (Ex 6:20)

— Elkanah and Hannah: Samuel (1 Sam 1)

- Other servants of God chosen before birth include: Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-5); Paul (Gal 1:15)

— Ps 139:15-16 teaches that God is involved in the conception of every child

— Each baby is a gift from God; a new beginning, with tremendous potential. How tragic that we live in a society which sees an unborn baby as a menace instead of a miracle, and intruder rather than an inheritance...

4 And now, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.

4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.

4 So be sure that you don't drink wine or anything intoxicating, and don't eat anything unclean

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

- Like John the Baptist, Samson would be a Nazirite from his mother's womb (Luke 1:13-15)

Nazirite (Num 6)

- A "Nazirite": to separate, to consecrate; for a period of time, they consecrated themselves to the Lord in a special way:
 - They abstained from drinking wine and strong drink
 - They avoided touching dead bodies
 - As a mark of identification, they allowed their hair to grow
- "Nazirites for days" was the norm. Only Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were perpetual Nazirites ("Nazirites forever" as the Mishnah classifies them)
 - Don't confuse Nazirite with Nazarene. Jesus was not a Nazirite: He drank wine (Matt 11:19; Mark 11:25) and He touched dead bodies (Luke 7:14; 8:54)

5 For behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he will **begin** to save Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

5 because—surprise!—you're going to conceive and give birth to a son! Don't put a razor to his head, because the young man will be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from inside the womb. He will begin to deliver Israel from domination by the Philistines."

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

- "...begin" - Samson's 20 years in office were during the 40 years of Philistine rule: 1095–1055 BC, ending with Israel's victory at Mizpeh (1 Sam 7)

— It was about the middle of this period—and the beginning of Samson's period—that the ignominious defeat at the battle of Aphek resulted in the Ark being lost (1 Sam 4)

— It was the end of this period that probably coincided with the judgeship of Samuel

- The Philistines had disarmed the Jews (1 Sam 13:19-23) and had little fear of rebellion

— In fact, 15:9-13 highlights that many were ostensibly content with their bondage, and didn't want Samson to "rock the boat." Nowhere does the text indicate that Israel cried out to God for deliverance during this period.

— Samson didn't deliver them from foreign domination, he simply began the work others would finish (13:5): it would take the prayer of Samuel (1 Sam 7:10-14) and the conquests of David (2 Sam 5:17-25) to finish the job.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. So I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name.

6 Then the woman went to tell her husband. She said, "A man of God appeared to me. He looked like what an angel of God would look like—very frightening. I didn't ask him where he had come from and he didn't tell me his name.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'

7 But he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'

7 He told me, 'Surprise!—you're going to conceive and give birth to a son!' and as for you, 'Be sure that you don't drink wine or anything intoxicating, and don't eat anything unclean,' 'because the young man will be a Nazirite dedicated to God from inside the womb' until the day he dies."

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

- In the re-telling of the angel's message, she left out the prohibition of a razor to pass over his head

8 Then Manoah pleaded with the LORD and said, "Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again so that he may teach us what we are to do for the boy who is to be born."

8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born."

8 So Manoah prayed to the LORD, "Please, Lord, have the man of God whom you sent before come again so he can instruct us what to do on behalf of the child who is to be born."

8 Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.

9 God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.

9 God listened to Manoah's request, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting out in the pasture. But her husband Manoah wasn't with her,

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

10 So the woman hurried and ran, and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came the *other* day has appeared to me!"

10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came the *other* day has appeared to me."

10 so the woman ran quickly to tell her husband, "Look! The man who came the other day appeared to me!"

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

11 So Manoah got up and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" And he said, "I am."

11 Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" And he said, "I am."

11 So Manoah got up quickly and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he told him, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?"

He replied, "I am."

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.

12 Then Manoah said, "Now *when* your words are fulfilled, **what shall be the boy's way of life and his vocation?**"

12 Manoah said, "Now when your words come *to pass*, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?"

12 Manoah asked, "Now, when what you've said occurs, what is to be the young man's way of life and work?"

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

- "...what shall be the boy's way of life and his vocation?" - in Hebrew he was asking, "How shall we act toward him?" and "How shall we raise him?"

— The Torah already gave them instructions as to how to raise their children (Deut 6)

13 And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "The woman shall pay attention to all that I said.

13 So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Let the woman pay attention to all that I said.

13 The angel of the LORD replied to Manoah, "Just have your wife be careful to carry out everything that I told her.

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She shall not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; she shall keep all that I commanded."

14 She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded."

14 She must not consume anything extracted from grape vines, including wine or anything intoxicating, and she must not eat anything unclean, doing everything that I commissioned her to do."

14 She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

- The angel did not actually answer the question concerning how the child was to be raised because for now the primary concern was that the mother obey all the rules that were already given to her (v3-5)

(b) Angelic miraculous validation (13:15-23)

15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you."

15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you."

15 Manoah responded to the angel of the LORD, "Please, let us detain you while we prepare a young goat for you."

15 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

16 But the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD." For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.

16 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat 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.

16 The angel of the LORD answered Manoah, "If you detain me, I won't be eating your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, you'll be making a sacrifice to the LORD." The angel of the LORD said this because Manoah didn't know that he was the angel of the LORD.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.

- He will stay, but He will not eat; and in place of preparing a meal, it should be a burnt offering, and it should be offered to Jehovah, not to a foreign god

17 And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that when your words are fulfilled, we may honor you?"

17 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that when your words come *to pass*, we may honor you?"

17 Manoah asked the angel of the LORD, "What's your name, because when what you've said happens, we'll glorify you?"

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

18 But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, for it is **wonderful**?"

18 But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"

18 The angel of the LORD answered him, "Why are you asking this about my name? It's 'Wonderful.'"

18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

- "...wonderful" - *pele*, incomprehensible, an extraordinarily hard to understand thing

— The word is rendered "wonderful" in the ASV, LXX English Translation, NASB, NKJV, RSV, YLT, ESV and ISV

— It is an adjectival form, not the proper name of the Angel of Jehovah, but expresses the character of His Name

— The root means “to be extraordinary” or “marvelous”; it is only used of God in the Hebrew Bible

— The only other place it is used in Scripture is Ps 139:6, in the feminine form describing the marvelous knowledge of God. Included in the context of Ps 139:13-16, *pele* is an expression of wonder at God’s skill and skillful creation of a baby in its mother’s womb.

19 So Manoah took the young goat along with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD; and He **performed wonders** while Manoah and his wife looked on.

19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on.

19 So Manoah prepared a young goat and a grain offering and offered it on a boulder to the LORD, who kept on performing miracles while Manoah and his wife watched continually.

19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

- “...performed wonders” - *maphli*, from the same root as *pele* in v18: amazing, extraordinary things

20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.

20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.

20 When the burnt offering was engulfed in flames that sprang up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame that came from the altar. When Manoah and his wife observed this, they collapsed on their faces to the ground.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.

21 Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.

21 Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord.

21 The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah or to his wife, and then Manoah knew confidently that the visitor had been the angel of the LORD.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.

22 So Manoah said to his wife, "We will certainly die, for we have seen God."

22 So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."

22 Then Manoah told his wife, "We're going to die for sure, because we've seen God!"

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

- This shows again that Manoah knew Who he was talking to, and knew that the Angel of Jehovah was God Himself

- Frightened just as Gideon was (6:19-23) because of Ex 33:20, Deut 18:16, et al. (Cf. Gen 32:30; Is 6:5)

23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear *things* like this at this time."

23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear *things* like this at this time."

23 But his wife replied to him, "If the LORD had intended to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from us, he wouldn't have shown us all these things, and he wouldn't have permitted us to hear things like this, now would he?"

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

- Common sense logic, indeed. [Evidence of an accepted sacrifice: just as His resurrection and ascension is for us!]

(c) Samson's birth and growth (13:24-25)

24 So the woman gave birth to a son, and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him.

24 Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the Lord blessed him.

24 Later on, the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The child grew strong and the LORD blessed him.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

- Samson means "sunny" or "brightness" (from *shemesh*, like the sun)

- While other "judges" were said to be clothed with God's Spirit (3:10; 6:34; 11:29), only of Samson is it said "the Lord blessed him"

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to **stir him** *when he was* in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and **Eshtaol**.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

25 Then the Spirit of the LORD began to rouse him where the tribe of Dan was encamped, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

- Note that God took the initiative to rouse Samson...

— Left to himself, Samson would not have become involved in God's program against the Philistines; and left to themselves, the Israelites would have been satisfied to continue co-existing with the Philistines and would not have tried to free themselves from them.

— Because of Samson's and Israel's reluctance, it was necessary for God to start taking the initiative

- "...stir him" - a ministry of the Holy Spirit in the OT: Othniel (3:9-10); Gideon (6:34); Jephthah (11:29); Samson (13:24-25; 14:6,19; 15:14); Saul (1 Sam 10:9-10); and David (1 Sam 16:13)

- "...Eshtaol" - a town about 1-1/2 miles E-NE of Zorah. Samson would later be buried between those two towns (16:31)

- The secret of Samson's strength was his Nazirite vow, symbolized by his unshorn hair, and the source of his strength was the Holy Spirit (13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14)

- Only a few of his feats are recorded in the Book of Judges (16:24):

- Killing a lion bare-handed (14:5-6)
- Slaying 30 Philistines (14:19)
- Catching 300 foxes (15:3-5)
- Breaking bonds (15:14; 16:9,12,14)
- Slaying 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey (15:15)
- Carrying away the Gaza city gate (38 miles!) (16:3)
- Destroying the temple of the Philistines (16:30)

A fun loving guy with a sense of humor; but he didn't take his gifts—or his work—seriously. His strength was a weapon to fight with and a tool to build with, not a toy to play with. He was a loner; he never "rallied his troops" to unite Israel to throw off the Philistine yoke. For 20 years he played the champion, but not the leader.