

Everything

Judges 13:1-5;24-25; 14:1-4

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I. Perfect Timing (vs. 1-3)

a. Again did Evil

- i. Israel's monotonous downward spiral climaxed with the seventh recorded apostasy in the Book of Judges (cf. 3:5-7, 12-14; 4:1-3; 6:1-2; 8:33-35; 10:6-9). This apostasy appears to have been a phase of the idolatrous worship previously described in 10:6 (which included "the gods of the Philistines"), because a resulting oppression by the Philistines (in the west) is mentioned in 10:7 to complement that by the Ammonites (in the east).
- ii. The depths of Israelite apostasy and the greatness of Philistine strength were causes for the unprecedented length of oppression—**40 years**—though **the Philistines** continued as a threat until the early years of David's reign (cf. 2 Sam. 5:17-25). Though earlier Philistine settlements had been present in Palestine (cf. Gen. 21:32-34; 26:1-18; Jud. 1:18-19),
- iii. When the Philistine aggression moved eastward into the land of Benjamin and Judah, the Israelites accepted that domination without resistance (cf. 14:4; 15:11) till the time of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 7:10-14).

1. This is probably intentional. In this cycle the Israelites display little discomfort or evidence of even wanting to be delivered.

b. Lord gave them to the Philistines

- i. Forty Years- This is the third time the Philistines have been identified as Israel's oppressors.
 1. Since Samson judged Israel 20 years (15:20; 16:31), beginning apparently at about age 20, his entire life span must have approximated the 40-year Philistine oppression which began before his birth (cf. 13:5). He was thus a contemporary of Samuel who with God's help subdued the Philistines after Samson's death (cf. 1 Sam. 7:10-14).
- ii. The Samson cycle reflects the tensions that existed between these two groups in the centuries leading up to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. Indeed, 1 Samuel 8 suggests that their continued pressure was the catalyst that moved the Israelites to demand a king to lead them in battle.
- iii. Manoah and his family try simply to avoid the Philistines (14:3; 16:31); Samson fraternizes with them; Judah has lost its crusading spirit (cf. 1:1-2) and is content to maintain the status quo (15:9-13). It seems that for this reason Yahweh is driven to stir Samson (13:25) and to provoke

discontent between Israel and the oppressor (14:4). On the other hand, the notion of crying out is not totally lost, but the motif is completely individualized. At two critical junctures Samson calls out to God for his own personal deliverance (*qārā*, 15:1; 16:28).

iv. Manoah's and his wife's futures are cut off at the front end because the woman was barren. This small note indicates that the oppression at the hands of foreign enemies was not the only covenant curse that was being fulfilled in Israel because of their apostasy

c. Wife was Barren

i. Certain Man

1. The order is intentional, reflecting the fact that within the context of Samson's life as a whole his geographic setting and tribal identity were more important
2. The narrator's ascription of this naming event to Manoah's wife serves to highlight the woman's role (and the feminine element in the Samson narrative as a whole) and also to marginalize Manoah even more.

ii. Wife-

1. A significant element in Manoah's identity is the fact that he had a barren wife. Ironically, although she turns out to be the most important human character in this chapter, she remains unnamed
2. Throughout she is referred to simply as "the woman," or "Manoah's wife." The notice of her barrenness echoes Gen 11:30 both in its vocabulary and its redundancy, not only inviting a comparison with the earlier birth narrative, but especially highlighting what happens in this chapter as a work of God. God is at work on Israel's behalf miraculously raising up a deliverer for his people.
3. Indeed, as several have observed, while the namelessness of Manoah's wife might suggest a marginalized character, Manoah is the one the narrator deliberately minimizes by (1) introducing him with the seemingly superfluous expression, "a certain man" (*ʾiš ʿeḥād*) (13:2); (2) referring to his tribe, Dan, as a "clan" (*mišpāḥā*) rather than a "tribe" (*šēbeṭ*); (3) leaving his identification by name to the end of the note in 13:2; (4) noting that the divine messenger appears not once but twice to his wife, even after Manoah had summoned him; (5) characterizing Manoah as a skeptical person throughout, unlike his wife, who takes matters at face value; (6) keeping the focus on Manoah's wife and emphasizing particularly how *she*, the woman, is to act, even though Manoah seeks to control the actions and the conversations; (7) describing how, in the end, Manoah's reaction to the visitation is fear of death, while his wife reassures him with a reasoned explanation of what has transpired (v. 22); (8) noting

that Manoah's wife, not Manoah, names Samson (v. 24).

Meanwhile, as Manoah is being marginalized, the narrator skillfully enhances the image and importance of his wife.

4. Baren - The woman's barrenness should not be interpreted in light of modern day views of childbearing and family but against ancient Israelite values. In the ancient world barrenness was reckoned as punishment for an offense against the gods whose special domain was that of reproduction. In Israel children were a mark of the blessing of God, and barrenness was the sign of divine reproach, displeasure, his curse
 5. In keeping with the centrality of the (unnamed!) woman in the account, the envoy from the court of heaven comes to the woman, not Manoah
 6. In so doing she joins the ranks of other noble women of the Bible, like Sarah, Ruth, Hannah, and to an even greater degree Mary in the New Testament. Though nameless, the woman is portrayed as a beautiful person, unquestioning in her faith and logical in her thinking—a model of Israelite womanhood. She is a special woman, called by God to be the bearer of the deliverer of Israel
- iii. Angel of the Lord
1. You will conceive a son
 - a. Because she will bear the one predestined to be the agent of divine grace, God retains the right to control both hers and the child's lives. Reflective of the biblical conviction that a child is a special creation of God from the moment of conception, the same standards that will govern his postnatal life will apply to his prenatal condition as well. Accordingly, she must watch her diet, abstaining from wine (*yayin*), alcoholic drinks of any kind, and food that Israelite laws forbade as defiled (ritually unclean) and defiling
 2. than the identity of his parents.

II. I'll Do Anything (vs. 4-5; 24-25)

- a. Careful - to **be on one's guard**, be attentive, often with ethic
- b. Do not drink Wine
- c. Not eat Unclean
 - i. The flesh of tabooed animal kinds, carrion, and the like, is probably meant. The consecrated child must be kept *in utero* from defilement. The rules for the Nazirite, Nu. 6:1ff., contain no special prescription on this head, which was covered by the general law (Dt. 14; Lev. 11)
- d. No razor to his head
- e. Nazarite to God v. 24-25

- i. Child Grew Up
 1. Nazirite vows were normally for a limited period of time but Samson was to be a Nazirite of God all his life (Jud. 13:7). His mother was to share for a time in part of the Nazirite vow (vv. 4, 7, 14). Besides being set apart as a Nazirite, Samson was chosen by God to **begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines**. The completion of this task would be left to Samuel (1 Sam. 7:10–14) and David (2 Sam. 5:17–25)
 2. As with most vows in the ancient Near East, the Nazirite vow typically represented a conditional agreement with deity that was concluded with offertory gifts in response to a favorable answer to a petition. What distinguished the Nazirite vow was the period of abstinence preceding the offerings. Samson’s situation is even more notable in that the period of abstinence is not the usual days or weeks, but his entire lifetime. For more information on the details of the Nazirite vow, see the comments on Numbers 6:1–21
- ii. Lord Blessed
 1. In light of the accounts that follow it probably involved the gift of exceptional health and the development of an extraordinary strength, which may have been recognized early by his peers
- iii. Spirit of the Lord began to Stir
 1. the Spirit of Yahweh began “stirring” him to action (13:25). Because this (*qal*) form of the verb “to stir, impel” (*pā`am*) is unattested elsewhere, its meaning here is uncertain. The significance of this verse becomes evident, however, if we disregard the chapter division and relate it to 14:4–7. From the following narratives one concludes that, left to himself, Samson would never have become involved in God’s or even Israel’s agenda; and, left to themselves, the Israelites would have been satisfied to continue to coexist with the Philistines. But Yahweh has other plans. He must preserve his people as a separate entity. Therefore, through his Spirit, God intervenes in Samson’s life so that the agenda set for him in 13:5–7 may begin to be fulfilled

III. So Will They (Judges 14:1-4)

- a. Samson went to Timnah
 - i. Saw a daughter of the Philistines
 1. In chap. 14 the author paints a literary picture of a self-centered and rebellious child. Outwardly he appears respectful of his parents, but at heart he is utterly calloused and corrupted. Inwardly he looks spiritual (the Spirit of Yahweh stirs him), but in his actions he brazenly violates his Nazirite status

2. Like the rest of his compatriots, Samson, the typical Israelite, operates exclusively on the basis of his senses. [This is not lost to the narrator, who will note later \(17:6; 21:25\) that in this period the Israelites generally did what was right in their own eyes](#)

b. Tell his Parents

- i. Get her for me as a wife - The negotiations for a bride were the business of the bridegroom's father; cf. Gen. 34:4ff.—**3.** His parents object to his marrying a Philistine; he should take a wife of his own people.
- ii. Samson is insensitive and disrespectful toward his parents and their grief over the matter and totally calloused toward the theological implications of his demand, let alone the implications for his mission

c. Parents Redirect

i. Is there another woman

1. Among Daughters of Relatives

- a. Are there no women among his own kinsmen or of his own race, that he must needs go take a Philistine wife? Cf. Gen. 24:3f; 26:34f; 28:1f, 8f.—*The uncircumcised Philistines*] *uncircumcised* is an opprobrious word which is applied almost exclusively to the Philistines among the neighbours of Israel; cf. 15:18; 1 S. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 2 S. 1:20; see Jer. 13:25, 26
- b. The response of Samson's parents to his demand expresses pain and disappointment, as if his own tribes or country women are not good enough for him. The reference to the woman as from "the uncircumcised Philistines" is intentionally pejorative

2. Not the Philistines

- a. **Samson** insisted that his parents **get her for him as his wife**. Since marriage with a non-Israelite was expressly forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3), his parents objected to his marrying a Philistine (cf. Jud. 14:3). Other peoples around Israel, whether Egyptians or Semites, practiced circumcision, but the Philistines did not.
- b. It is not explicitly said that Manoah adhered to his position and declined to abet his son in his perverse course, but it is distinctly enough implied in v. 4a, and to be inferred with certainty from v. 5–7, where Samson takes the business into his own hands, as well as from the nature of the marriage which he contracts. It is evident there that he has no intention of taking his bride to his father's home, as he proposes in v. 1, 3;

ii. Samson Demanded

1. Samson goes down to Timnah, sees a woman, returns to his parents, demands they arrange for his marriage to her, and

defends his demand on purely personal grounds—she meets his definition of “Miss Right.”

2. Samson’s rejoinder is emphatic with the object coming first in the clause. The sense is “She is the one you must get for me!” His rationale is crass (lit.): “Because she is right in my eyes.”
3. Because the Philistines did not adhere to this practice, culturally they were considered at the bottom rung. Within marriage this poses a special problem since sexual union brings an Israelite into direct physical contact with an uncircumcised heathen—a shocking thought. On the other hand, what Samson’s parents do not say is as significant as the words they utter. They do not say, “Intermarriage with non-Israelites is forbidden by the LORD” (cf. Deut 7:1–5).

d. God’s Sovereign Plan

i. Parents Did not Know

1. It was the Lord

- a. Seeking an Occasion- In this seeming perversity there was a divine purpose of which his parents were not aware; cf. Gen. 24:50.—*For he (Yahweh) was seeking an opportunity of the Philistines]* an opportunity for Samson to do them a mischief; cf. 2 K. 5:7, which suggests that the rare word may have the by-sense, ‘opportunity, occasion for a fight
- b. It is not explicitly said that Manoah adhered to his position and declined to abet his son in his perverse course, but it is distinctly enough implied in v. 4a, and to be inferred with certainty from v. 5–7, where Samson takes the business into his own hands, as well as from the nature of the marriage which he contracts. It is evident there that he has no intention of taking his bride to his father’s home, as he proposes in v. 1, 3;
- c. This marriage arises out of and reflects Israel’s willingness to coexist peacefully with the Philistines. But Yahweh is determined to shatter the status quo. Samson is his tool chosen to rile up the Philistines, and this woman offers the opportunity to make it happen. Samson’s sense of calling may have been eclipsed in the minds of the man and his parents, but with God it had not.
- d. They **did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines**. This does not mean that breaking the Law was desired by God but that Samson’s decision was overruled by God for His own purpose and glory.