

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

3. How many men of Ephraim were killed?
4. What was the name of the judge who succeeded Jephthah?
5. In what city was his home?
6. Of what tribe was he a member?
7. Who was the next judge?
8. Of what tribe was he a member?
9. Who was the next judge?
10. How long did he judge?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 13

- Vv. 1-7 *Announcement of Samson's birth to his mother.* Israel turned away from God again. During this period of apostasy an angel of the Lord came to the wife of a man who was a member of the tribe of Dan. This woman was told the nature of the son who was to be born to her. He was to be a Nazarite from the time of his birth.
- Vv. 8-14 *Announcement of Samson's birth to his father.* Manoah asked the angel of the Lord to appear to him also in order for him to be assured of the truth of the message which his wife related to him. His request was granted and the angel of the Lord appeared to the two together. There was no question about God's intention of working great deliverance from the Philistine oppressors at the hands of the son to be born to the God-fearing couple in Dan.
- Vv. 15-25 *The birth of Samson.* Manoah thought he and his wife had seen God face to face. He knew no man could see God and live. He, therefore, thought they would be smitten and die. His

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wife, however, reasoned more logically than he. She believed their offering would not have been accepted if they were to be slain. She was right. They lived and became parents of Samson, the twelfth of Israel's judges.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.* The first announcement of the coming of the deliverer in the days when the Philistines were oppressing Israel was made to his mother. God blessed the nation through the giving of a son in the home of a righteous mother. God had done this before. Such was the case of His sending Moses to Israel in the home of a righteous woman, Jochebed. Such was the case in the days of Samuel when God heard the prayer of his mother, Hannah. So, it was in the days of the sending of the Son of God to be cradled in the arms of the virgin Mary. The world never really fully appreciates the blessing of righteous mother love.
2. *God is long-suffering.* Manoah wanted reassurance of the announcement made to his wife. He asked for a second appearance of the angel of God. God granted his request. In similar fashion, God has given man undeniable evidence of His love. Little by little—here a line, there a line; here a precept, there a precept—God has made clear the path which leads to eternal life. God has been patient through the centuries. He is not willing for any to perish, but He waits for all to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).
3. *Man wants to see God.* Moses wanted to see God. He was allowed to see the passing by of God's glory (Exodus 33:17-23). God told Moses that no man could see Him

and live. Manoah knew this, still he wanted to know God's will for his life. When the Angel of the Lord appeared, he thought he had seen God. He had seen one aspect of God's being, but his wife knew that they were not to die since God had accepted their sacrifice. Although man cannot see God in the flesh, one day without his flesh he shall see God, if he is faithful to God.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Samson of Dan 13:1—16:31

*The Birth of Samson 13:1-25*

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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 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 Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 Then Manoah entreated 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 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 And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

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

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

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.

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 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.

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 honor?

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

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.

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

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 showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

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

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

1. *Where was Zorah?* 13:2

Zorah was a city on the border of Dan. It lay between Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh (Joshua 19:41). It is best known as the birthplace of Samson. He was buried near here also (Judges 16:31). From this point some Danites went to look for additional land as is recorded in one of the appendices of the book of Judges (18:2, 11). Zorah was allotted to the tribe of Judah when Joshua parceled out the land to the twelve tribes (Joshua 15:33). After the captivity, it was occupied again by the children of

Judah (Nehemiah 11:29). Rehoboam fortified this city (II Chronicles 11:10), and the modern *Sur'a* near the summit of a lofty hill on the north side of the *Wady es-surar* has been identified as the location of ancient Zorah. A striking stone altar nearby is pointed out as the altar from which the angel ascended.

2. *Who was the Angel of the Lord?* 13:3

The Angel of the Lord was the special messenger by whom God chose to reveal Himself at many different times in the days of the patriarchs and the other leaders of Israel of Old Testament times. He does not identify himself by name as did Gabriel, the angel who announced the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19). Other angels are also known by name, but this special representative of the Lord refused to give his name (vv. 17, 18). Manoah's wife told him she had failed to ask him about his name (v. 6); but when he was asked at a later time, the angel refused to give further identification of himself.

3. *Why was Samson's mother to drink no wine?* 13:4

Samson was to be a Nazarite from the time of his birth. A Nazarite was not allowed to drink wine (Numbers 6), and even Samson's mother was to live a similarly devoted life in preparation for the birth of this champion of God. Her model of abstinence is profitably followed by many conscientious mothers of modern times who refuse to weaken their constitutions by the use of alcoholic beverages. The abstinence of Samson's mother, however, was more than just a personal preference on her part. She was to drink no wine because she was given this commandment by the angel who appeared to her.

4. *Why was Samson to be a Nazarite?* 13:5

Samson was to be set aside for the service of God in a special way. The vows taken by a Nazarite are some of the most exacting and specific on record in the Old

Testament. A Nazarite could not drink any vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink. He was not allowed to drink any juice of grapes nor to eat fresh grapes or dried (Numbers 6:3). In addition, he was to allow no razor to come upon his head, but he was to let the locks of the hair of his head grow long. Furthermore he was not to come near a dead body, not even making himself unclean at the time of the death of his father, his mother, his brother, or sister (Numbers 6:5, 6). Some Nazarites took these vows for a specific length of time, but Samson was to live this kind of life throughout all his days, even from the time of his birth.

5. *Why did Manoah want the angel to come again? 13:8*

Manoah was not with his wife when the angel first appeared to her. He wanted confirmation of the instructions which had been given to his wife, and he asked God to allow the angel to appear again. The angel appeared to Manoah's wife the second time, but she ran and fetched Manoah so that he might hear the instructions which were given to them. All his questions were answered, and he was thoroughly convinced of the special nature of Samson's life.

6. *Why did Manoah's wife refer to the angel as a man? 13:10*

The Angel of the Lord appeared to be a man. This was the normal way in which he made these appearances, beginning with the times when he appeared to Abraham and Hagar. Joshua thought he might be one of the soldiers and asked him whether he was for Israel or against them. Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord as a man would wrestle with another man. Nonetheless, those who saw the Angel of the Lord knew that they had seen a theophany. God was revealing Himself in this visible manifestation.

7. *What additional demand was made of Samson? 13:14*

When the Angel of the Lord first appeared to Manoah's wife, he instructed her not to drink wine or strong drink. She was not to eat any unclean thing. At the time of the second appearance the Angel of the Lord told her not to eat anything which came from the vine. This additional demand was made on her and indicated that she was to live a life very similar to the clean and holy life demanded of a Nazarite. Such a prohibition was given to prevent a person from imbibing in anything which would cause him to lose any of the keenness of his natural senses. Such a person was holy and completely dedicated to God.

8. *Why did Manoah wish to make ready a kid? 13:15*

It is not stated that Manoah intended to prepare a kid for sacrifice. The Angel of the Lord did not know whether he was intending to sacrifice or to prepare a meal. Manoah may have been intending to show hospitality such as the hospitality extended by Abraham when the three men appeared to him (Genesis 18). As a result, the angel said that if he were preparing something for them to eat he would not be allowed to stay or to partake. He said also for Manoah to make his sacrifice to the Lord and not to him, a manifestation of one aspect of God's being.

9. *What miraculous feat did the angel perform? 13:19, 20*

As Manoah and his wife looked on, the angel ascended through the flames of the sacrifice on the altar. God has chosen to reveal Himself on many occasions through such phenomena as fires and flames. It was a burning bush through which Moses came to learn God's will for his life (Exodus 3). It was a fire which came from heaven to burn up the sacrifice on Mount Carmel and convince Israel of her apostasy (I Kings 18). God's final judgment

will be meted out as the heavens and the earth are destroyed with the fervent heat (II Peter 3). Such an ascension as the one demonstrated by the Angel of the Lord to Manoah and his wife impressed them with the holiness of God, whom they served.

10. *Why did Manoah think they would die?* 13:22

Manoah knew it was not possible for a man to see God and live (Exodus 33:17 ff.). When he saw the angel do his wondrous deed, he knew he was standing in the presence of the angel who appeared in God's stead on many occasions throughout the history of the Old Testament. He was like Jacob, who thought he had seen God face to face. As a result, he expected to be smitten and to die.

11. *What was the conclusion of Manoah's wife?* 13:23

Manoah's wife reasoned more logically than he did. God had accepted the sacrifice of this humble, God-fearing couple. She said God would not receive their sacrifice if He were intending to destroy them. When her husband became fearful at the appearance of the Angel of the Lord, his wife comforted him with this conviction which she expressed.

12. *Where was Eshtaol?* 13:25

Eshtaol was in the hill country leading up from the Mediterranean seacoast to the mountains of Judah. It is named next after Zorah in Joshua 15:33 and again in Joshua 19:41. The camp of Dan lay between these two cities, and here the Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson as we read in this passage. He was buried here also as is recorded in Judges 16:31. Later a contingent from Eshtaol formed part of the force of the Danites who captured Lachish in the northern part of Israel's territory (Judges 18:2, 11). Some believe it is represented by the modern *Asbu'a* about a mile and a half east of Zorah.

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### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 13

1. Who were the oppressors of Israel in the days of Samson?
2. How long did they oppress Israel?
3. Of what tribe was Samson a member?
4. What kind of vow was Samson to keep throughout his life?
5. What was the name of Samson's father?
6. Could Samson keep his vow and drink wine?
7. Could Samson have his hair cut and keep his vow?
8. Could Samson eat of unclean animals and keep his vow?
9. Could Samson eat grapes and still keep his vow?
10. What kind of animal did Samson's father offer to the angel?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 14

- Vv. 1-11 *Preparations for Samson's marriage in Philistia.* Samson saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. He asked his father and mother to arrange for marriage. They hesitated but were not firm in opposing the marriage. Consequently, arrangements were made for the marriage; and Samson, his mother, and his father went down to Philistia for the wedding feast.
- Vv. 12-18 *Samson's riddle.* The famous riddle of Samson—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweet"—arose out of his experience with the lion. He had killed the lion and later had found bees with honey in the carcase. He had taken this honey and