



Lesson 84

Samson's Birth

Story Elements

- **Text:** Judges 12:1-13:25
- **Setting:** circa 1160 B.C. in Gilead
- **Main Characters:** God, an unnamed angel, Manoah, and Manoah's wife
- **Plot:** A childless couple is promised a son that will grow up to deliver Israel from the Philistines.
- **Key word(s):** " _____ " (13:5, 7)
- **Climax:** **Judges 11:35** *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?*

Background

1. (12:1-7) After Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites, the Ephraimites were angry that they were not called to the battle and threatened to burn Jephthah's house down with him inside. Unlike Gideon, Jephthah was unable to diffuse the hot-tempered Ephraimites.
 - a. The Ephraimites refused to listen to reason, and when they called the Gileadites "fugitives" of Ephraim and Manasseh, the battle of words escalated to a battle of _____.
 - b. The Ephraimites were no match for the battle-hardened Gileadites. The latter quickly gained control of the passages across the river Jordan and forced the fleeing Ephraimites into chokepoints.
 - c. When Ephraimites tried to cross over the Jordan, the Gileadites would ask them to say " _____." The Ephraimites, whose local accents inhibited them from saying the *sh* sound, were easily identified and quickly dispatched by their offended countrymen. In all, 42,000 Ephraimites were killed.

APPLICATION → It is a tragic irony that the Ephraimites started a civil war because of words, and they were killed by the thousands because of a _____. Matthew Henry notes, "what a mischievous thing an abusive tongue is, that calls ill names, and gives scurrilous language: it *sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell* (Jam. 3:6), and many a time cuts the throat of him that uses it, as it did here."¹

2. (13:1) Into this climate of Israeli infighting, idolatry, and Philistine oppression, the next major judge, Samson, would be born.

Angelic Prophecy

3. (13:2-5) A Danite man named Manoah lived with his wife in a town called Zorah. They were a childless couple, but one day the angel of the LORD visited the woman and announced that, despite her barrenness, she would soon have a son.
 - a. The angel explained to Manoah's wife that the child should be raised as a Nazarite from the womb, which meant that she must obey the Nazarite food restrictions while she is pregnant, and her son would be brought up as a lifelong Nazarite.²
 - b. The angel also mentioned the divine mission of her son: *and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.*
4. (13:6-7) The woman went to her husband and relayed all that the angel had said to her. Like Gideon, she believed her visitor was some itinerant _____, but she described his face as being like an angel's: "very terrible," or "awe-inspiring."

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 355.

² On the particulars of the Nazarite vow, see Num. 6:1-21. It was typically a religious vow taken for a limited time and involved the abstinence from any product of the grape vine, cutting one's hair, and coming in contact with a dead body.

Answered Prayer

5. (13:8) Amazed at his wife's announcement, Manoah prayed unto the LORD.

APPLICATION → Manoah's prayer is an example of praying in faith for two reasons:

(1) "He does not go or send his servants abroad, to find out this man of God, but seeks him upon his knees, _____ to God to send him, and, thus seeking, finds him."³

(2) He did not doubt his wife's word, nor the power of God to give them a child. Instead, he desired for the man of God (as he thought) to return and _____ them how to raise the child "that shall be born." *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* (John 20:29)

6. (13:9-12) In answer to Manoah's prayer, the angel returned to Manoah's wife, who went and fetched her husband.

a. (13:13-15) The angel reiterated his original instructions for the child's Nazarite commitment.

b. (13:16) As Gideon did when he was visited by an angel, Manoah wanted to express his gratitude and hospitality by making a meal for his divine guest.

i. The angel said that, though he would stay, he would not eat. Instead, the meal should be offered as a _____ unto the LORD (cf. 6:20, 21).

ii. (13:17-18) When Manoah inquired about the angel's name, he was told *Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is _____?*

APPLICATION → When Moses asked for God's name, he was told it is *I AM THAT I AM* (Exo 3:14). The fact that the name is *secret* (or also translated as *wonderful*) suggests what is said of _____ in Revelation 19:12 - *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

iii. (13:19-20) When Manoah brought the meal offering to the angel, fire rose up from the altar, and the angel of the LORD ascended to heaven in the _____. It was then that Manoah realized he had not been talking with a prophet but a divine being.

iv. (13:21-23) Manoah feared for their lives because they had seen God, but his wife assured him that they were safe because of the _____ they were given.

APPLICATION → Likewise, we Christians need not fear the wrath of God if we rest in the truth that he gave us his son. *Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us _____?*

7. (13:24) As promised, Manoah and his wife had a son, and they named him _____. The child grew with the LORD's blessing on his life.

Answer Key: Key word(s): Nazarite • 1. a. swords; c. Shibboleth → word • 4. prophet • →(1) prays, (2) teach • 6. b. i. sacrifice; ii. secret → Jesus; iii. flame; iv. promise → all things • 7. Samson

³Henry, 356.