

Judges

Lesson 25

Chapter 13

As we ended our study in the last lesson, we had discovered that time markers were in place to determine exactly where we were to this point in the story of Judges. Because we have all the Old Testament in hand, we can look ahead and draw from time markers to look back into Judges to justify the often disputed and debated flow of the stories in this book. Let us take time to do that now.

First, in 1st Kings 6:1 we are told the following.

Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. (1st Kings 6:1)

With that verse, we can start the calendar of all that transpired from the time Moses left Egypt with the Nation of Israel until the start of the Temple. 480 years

Moses served as leader of Israel for 40 years. We must subtract
40 years from the 480 years. - 40 years

The subtotal to now justify is 440 years. = 440 years

In cycle five, Jephthah told us that 300 years had transpired since the time Joshua had taken over as head of the Nation of Israel. *To be exact, Jephthah made this statement 307 years after the Amorites were defeated, Moses died, and Joshua became the leader.* - 307 years

The new subtotal to now justify is 133 years. = 133 years

Looking ahead in the Scripture, we learned that King Saul ruled for 40 years. -40 years

We also learned that King David ruled for 40 years. -40 years

And, we learned that King Solomon ruled for 4 years to the point to start the 480-year time marker that was given. - 4 years

Our new subtotal to justify is now just 49 years. = 49 years

As we begin cycle six of Israel's sin against the LORD, the LORD Allowed the Philistine takeover for 40 years. -40 years

Our new subtotal is now 9 years. = 9 years

(Special Note: The prophet Samuel, King Saul, and Samson will be born during this cycle.)

After the death of Samson, Samuel will be the sole surviving God called judge of Israel for a few years during which time the nation will beg for a king and Saul will be anointed King. You might be asking at this point, why did I not include Samson's twenty years as judge to save Israel in the chart above? Let me tell you the end of Samson's story now and we will justify it as we study on. Samson never delivered Israel from the Philistines rule during his life. He toiled with them for the last twenty years of their forty-year oppression but did not rule after defeating them. He defeated them on the day he died. Therefore, his time as judge did not extend cycle six from forty to sixty years; instead, his time as judge ended the oppression on the day he killed himself and all the leaders of the Philistines. Cycle six lasted only forty years.

As a side note, Samuel, the last judge will be born while Samson is still struggling with the Philistines. In fact, he will be a full-grown adult by the time of Samson's death although, because of how Samuel is recording the details of the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and parts of 1 Samuel, that point is often missed. We will discuss all those details as we continue our study. As for now, let us study cycle six, the Philistine takeover and the life of Samson.

1. Cycle Six – The Philistine Takeover

a) Enter Philistines - Forty Years (13:1)

Chapter 13 in the book of Judges and verse 1 introduces us to cycle six, the Philistine takeover for forty years. Verse 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.” (13:1)

No doubt, after Jephthah ousted the Ammonites, and began to judge in Gilead, while Ibzan judges in Judah, Elon judges in Zebulun, and Abdon judges in Ephraim, the nation of Israel fell back into the sin of Baal and Ashtoreth idolatry. More than likely, as soon as all four were dead, or near their deaths, the seventh sabbatical year came and the law was read but the people of the nation did not care about the word of the LORD and did not change their ways and turn from their worship of idols. Thus, the LORD sent the Philistines, who were part of the problem in cycle five, to oppress Israel for forty years in cycle six.

b) Enter Samson – Israel's Judge - Twenty Years

(1) The Story of Samson's Birth and Youth (13:2-25)

(a) The Angel of the LORD Appears to Samson's Mother (13:2-7)

Enter Samson, Israel's judge for twenty years. The writer starts with the story of Samson's birth and a short statement about his youth. The writer tells us that the *Angel of the LORD* appears to Samson's mother first. Verse 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. 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. ⁴ Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. 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.’” 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. 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.’” (13:2-7)

As the story of Samson begins, we want to look at four bits of information in this passage and break them down. First, it tells us that *“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." The village of Zorah is in the tribal area of Dan. It was mentioned in the book of Joshua twice (Joshua 15:33; 19:41). It will be mentioned in 2nd Chronicles 11:10, and long after this story in Nehemiah 11:29. Here in Judges, it will be mentioned six times (Judges 13:2, 25; 16:31; 18:2, 8, 11). We will find it spelled three ways. Here as *Zorah* and later as *Zareah* and *Zoreah*. They are all the same location in the original tribal area gifted by Joshua to the tribe of Dan. This tribal area is in the central section of the Promised Land, west of the tribal areas of Ephraim and Benjamin and its western border is the Great Sea, which is the Greek name for the body of water. The Egyptians called it the *Green Sea*, the Romans called it the *Mediterranean Sea* which means *Interanal Sea*, the Iranians called it the *Roman Sea*, the Carthaginians called it the *Syrian Sea*, the Turks called it the *White Sea*. So you see, it has been known through the ages by many names. We are not quite sure what the Hebrews called the sea.

We want to make a note here. The tribe of Dan will take by force a portion of land in the far northern part of the Promised Land soon and we will learn of that in Judges chapter 18, but as of this point in the story, the tribe of Dan controls only its original portion of land gifted in the original division of the Promised Land. In this passage, we are introduced to Manoah and his wife. Manoah's name means *rest*. The couple does not have children at this time.

Second, we are told that the Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife. We met the Angel of the LORD for the first time in Genesis 16:7 when the LORD appeared to Hagar after Abraham had sent her and Ishmael away from the camp. In other versions of the Bible, as well as in this version in other places, the same Person of God is known as the Angel of God or the Angel of Jehovah. It is the special form in which the LORD God appears to humans from time to time. The Angel of the LORD is the LORD Jesus Christ in visible form prior to His incarnation as a baby in Bethlehem. We will meet the Angel of the LORD many times through the Old Testament. We will meet the Angel of the LORD as He announces the birth of John the Baptist in Luke chapter 1 and in the announcement to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus in Luke chapter 1. Beginning in Luke chapter 2, the wording changes from *the angel of the LORD* to *an angel of the LORD*. Do not be confused with this change in wording. It is purposeful. *The angel of the LORD* is Jesus. *An angel of the LORD* is not Jesus but he is a special messenger sent from the LORD God to speak to humans. We see shepherds in the field in Luke 2:9 when *an angel of the LORD suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the LORD shone around them, and they were terribly frightened*. This angel was not the LORD Jesus but a designated angel sent to give the shepherds the message of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. When Manoah's wife reports to Manoah concerning the appearance of the Angel of the LORD to her and that He looked like the *angel of God*, she is not giving the LORD a new name; instead, her words mean that a *messenger from God* spoke to her. She did not know that it was the pre-incarnate LORD Jesus. In addition, she admitted to Manoah that she did not know the name of this *messenger of God*.

The Angel of the LORD gave Manoah's wife specific instructions for her and the baby she was about to conceive and give birth. "*Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.*" ⁴ *Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.*" 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...* *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.*" The boy is to be a Nazirite from conception to death. As such, he is not to touch or drink "*wine, or strong drink, or any unclean thing*" nor should a razor ever touch his head. What is a Nazirite, or as sometimes spelled, a Nazarite? It is the name given to a person who dedicates himself to the LORD. The LORD, through Moses, gave the instruction for the Nazirite in Numbers chapter 6:1-21. Let us read the full passage in the book of Numbers.

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, ³ he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall not eat anything that is produced by the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin. ⁵ ‘All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long. ⁶ ‘All the days of his separation to the LORD he shall not go near to a dead person. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he is holy to the LORD. ⁹ But if a man dies very suddenly beside him and he defiles his dedicated head of hair, then he shall shave his head on the day when he becomes clean; he shall shave it on the seventh day. ¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting. ¹¹ The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him concerning his sin because of the dead person. And that same day he shall consecrate his head, ¹² and shall dedicate to the LORD his days as a Nazirite, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering; but the former days will be void because his separation was defiled. ¹³ Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the tent of meeting. ¹⁴ He shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb a year old without defect for a burnt offering and one ewe-lamb a year old without defect for a sin offering and one ram without defect for a peace offering, ¹⁵ and a basket of unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering. ¹⁶ Then the priest shall present them before the LORD and shall offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. ¹⁷ He shall also offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened cakes; the priest shall likewise offer its grain offering and its drink offering. ¹⁸ The Nazirite shall then shave his dedicated head of hair at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings. ¹⁹ The priest shall take the ram’s shoulder when it has been boiled, and one unleavened cake out of the basket and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his dedicated hair. ²⁰ Then the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. It is holy for the priest, together with the breast offered by waving and the thigh offered by lifting up; and afterward the Nazirite may drink wine.’ ²¹ “This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD according to his separation, in addition to what else he can afford; according to his vow which he takes, so he shall do according to the law of his separation.” (Numbers 6:1-21)

This instruction was for when a person decided to dedicate himself to the LORD and the Nazirite vow would be temporary or until a specific task or time had passed. But in the case of Manoah’s child, the Nazirite vow would be permanent. He would never need to make the offering to bring an end to the vow because he was to be a Nazirite from conception to death. No wine, no strong drink, no unclean thing, no dead bodies, no razor to the head. As we will see in the story as it continues, the boy, when he is still a young man, will break all these instructions, but not without consequences.