

Judges

Lesson 26

We are picking up where we left off last week where we discovered four important things in the visit that the *Angel of the LORD* had with Mrs. Manaoh. We cover three of those things. Now let us move on to the last point.

Fourth, the writer tells us that the boy “*shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.*” Notice that the boy “*shall begin to deliver.*” It does not say he will “*deliver*” the nation from the Philistines, at least not in his life as did all the judges before. And, because of the continuation of the story after the death of Samson, he will only hamper the Philistine efforts, but not totally remove the oppression from Israel when he kills many of the Philistine elites at the time of his death. With Samson’s death the required tributes of Israel to the Philistines will stop, but as the rest of the story in the book of 1st Samuel tells us, the Philistines will continue to try to oppress Israel again and again for many years. This means that the years that the grown Samson spends attempting to deliver the Nation of Israel will coincide with the last years of the full oppression of the Philistines. We will learn that the Philistine oppression will last for forty years. We will also learn that Samson will attempt to judge for twenty years. Some of that time he will be captured in the hands of the Philistines. Be that as it may, Samson will be judging during the second half of the Philistine oppression. Furthermore, because Samson is born after the Philistine oppression begins, and he dies at the end of the oppression, he will be no older than thirty-nine years of age at the time of his death and the end of the Philistine oppression, if, and only if, Manoah’s wife conceived the boy in the first year of the Philistine oppression. Tracing the time markers in the Bible, we discover that this Philistine oppression began 3042 years after the creation of Adam and ended 3081 years after the creation of Adam. The time markers also tell us that the future King Saul was born during the oppression (3055 years after the creation of Adam).

Let us stop and talk about the High Priest during this period. The High Priest was endowed by the Levitical Law to act as a judge over the nation of Israel. If you will remember, when a regular judge in the magistrate system could not make a decision, the judge was to take the matter to the High Priest who had the ultimate authority to render a verdict. The High Priest during the days of Samson and this time of Philistine oppression was Eli. He was born three years before Gideon died. In the third years of Jephthah’s service as judge, Eli turned twenty-five and began training for the priesthood. Because he was of the line of Aaron, that training was probably at Shiloh where the Tabernacle complex was located. The year after Jephthah died, Eli turned thirty years of age and began his work as a priest. In the normal order of the priesthood, a priest was to become a full-fledged priest at the age of thirty and retire from the daily physical work of the priesthood at the age of fifty (Numbers 8:24-46). However, the retired priests were allowed to continue to assist the active priests in the work of the priesthood. Nevertheless, looking into the rest of Israel’s story in the Bible, it seems clear that the High Priest was exempt from the required retirement at the age of fifty. That was the case with Aaron who was still the High Priest at the age of one-hundred and twenty-three when he died. We know that Eli was ninety-eight years old when he died and he had served as the High Priest for forty years (1st Samuel 4:15-18). He fell off his stool and died of a broken neck when he heard the news that the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. We know that was twenty years and seven months before King David moved the Ark of the Covenant to a tent in Jerusalem in his eighth years as King of Israel. We know the years David served as king. From that, we can calculate the birth year of Eli. We can also calculate the year he became High Priest at the age of fifty-eight years old. Eli was the High Priest when King Saul was anointed King. Samuel will also

be born early in the years of this cycle of the Philistine oppression and placed in the care of Eli at Shiloh where he will see the life and deeds of Samson.

It is now time for Manoah to meet the Angel of the LORD.

(b) The Angel of the LORD Appears to Samson's Father (13:8-25)

(i) God Listens (13:8-10)

Mrs. Manoah had told Mr. Manoah about her encounter with the LORD in the field. No doubt she was both thrilled and filled with wonderment. In verse 3, the writer told us that Mrs. Manoah had not been able to give birth for the whole time she was married. She was barren. This must have meant that Mr. and Mrs. Manoah were well into their years at this time. Perhaps Mrs. Manoah was past the time of child bearing, or at least near that time. We have already seen this same description in the Holy Writ with Abraham and Sarah. It fits here too. Surely, she was excited to have a child, but to be told such facts by a stranger may have brought even more wonderment in her heart and mind. But the added detail that the child was to be a Nazirite from birth must have been startling. Mr. Manoah wanted to confirm that the whole story was true. We see him call for the strange man to return to answer his questions. Reading on, Manoah calls. Then the angel of the LORD appears to Samson's father, Manoah. When he calls, God listens. Verse 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.'"*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.*¹⁰ *So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, 'Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me.'* (13:8-10)

It may seem strange to us that God listened to Mr. Manoah, but appeared again to Mrs. Manoah in the field. But when you think about it, the LORD did what was best. He wanted to speak to both of them and He wanted to meet them where they were. Mrs. Manoah was in the field doing her daily business. She was already acquainted with the LORD from His appearance a few days before. How would Mr. Manoah have known it was the same man if the LORD appeared to him alone, without Mrs. Manoah? She recognized Him quickly and ran to get Mr. Manoah to join her with the man. Notice that the LORD waited on her to return with her husband. He did not follow her. He stayed right where He was, waiting patiently. So it is with the LORD! Once we know where He is, we can always return to Him. We are the ones who run away from Him. Many times, we have our good reasons. Some times our reasons are bad. Nevertheless, the LORD waits for us to return just as he waited for Mr. and Mrs. Manoah. As we will see, after the LORD answers Manoah, a time of worship will follow.

(ii) God Answers (13:11-14)

Well, Mr. Manoah had asked for a meeting with the man, not knowing He was the LORD God Almighty. God does not disappoint. After all, He is the one who started this excitement in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Manoah. Reading on we see that God answers. Verse 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.'"*¹² *Manoah said, 'Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?'"*¹³ *So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. 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.'* (13:11-14)

When the two arrived back with the LORD, Manoah asked the LORD the perfect leading question, *"Are you the man ...?"* And the LORD's answer was *"I am."* It is the Hebrew word *ani*. It is a primary pronoun and it means *alone*. It is used in the Old Testament eight hundred and seventy-four times. One of my favorite verses with this word is found in Genesis 35:11 where the LORD says, *"I am God Almighty."* He said to Jacob in that verse. *"I am, (alone) God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you."* The same

small Hebrew word is used in the book of Exodus when the LORD says to Moses *“before Pharaoh I (alone) will harden his heart.”* (Exodus 4:21). Then He says to Moses, *“you shall know that I (alone) am the LORD our God.”* (Exodus 6:7). Here to Mr. Manoah, the LORD is saying, “I, alone, am the man.”

To answer Manoah’s question about the *“mode of life and his vocation,”* the LORD emphasized what He had already told Mrs. Manoah in the first meeting. Mrs. Manoah must be careful from this time and on through the pregnancy that she must live a Nazirite life, because the life within her will be required to do the same for his entire life.

(iii) God Directs (13:15-16)

As usual, humans sometime try to run ahead of God with their own plans. But, with us, as well as with Manoah in this story, God directs to get us to do what He wants us to do. Verse 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.’”*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.”* (13:15-16)

Mr. Manoah was no different from all the rest of the humans that have lived on this earth in every nation, in every culture, in every family, and in every home. When good news comes, we want to celebrate. What better way to celebrate good news than with a meal? Oh, but that is not always the LORD’s will. As God directs Manoah, He is not looking for a celebration, He is looking for a time of worship. *“... I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering ...,”* the LORD said to Manoah. In the presence of the LORD, we should know that He is looking for a time of worship, a time where He can communicate with His creation, a time where He can display His Almighty wonders. But Manoah was not expecting that response because he did not know that he was speaking with the LORD Almighty.

(iv) God Corrects (13:17-18)

And so, Manoah wanted to know with Whom he was speaking. He probably wanted to know Who this man was who was giving this prophecy so he could return and thank Him later. But rather, God corrected Manoah’s thought. Verse 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?’”*¹⁸ *But the angel of the LORD said to him, ‘Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?’”* (13:17-18)

“Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” “Wonderful.” It is an adjective, not an actual name. The Hebrew word is *pele*, and it is used to reveal the essential nature and attributes of the person with whom it is connected. Many years later, the prophet Isaiah will use the same word when he writes, *“And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor...”* (Isaiah 9:6). The word “wonderful” tells us the divine action of the Person of the LORD. It expresses the active character of the name of the LORD. In the next few moments in Mr. and Mrs. Manoah’s lives, they will see firsthand the “wonderful” actions of the LORD in worship.

(v) God Works (13:19-20)

The LORD will not disappoint Manoah and his wife. In a time of worship through an offering, the two will see how God works. Verse 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.”*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.”* (13:19-20)

This is not the first time a person has seen the LORD do wonders with an offering on a rock. It happened with Gideon also. He offered a meal to this same *angel of the LORD* and this is what is recorded in Judges 6:20-21.

*Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so.
21 Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. (Judges 6:20–21).*

We must wonder if the LORD had the same staff in His hand when Manoah presented the burnt offering of the goat and grain. The writer does not tell us of the wonders the LORD did with this offering, but, in like manor, the offering of Gideon, and the offering of Manoah end the same way with the vanishing of the LORD in the smoke as it ascended from the fire on the rock.

Look at what Mr. and Mrs. Manoah did when they realized they were in the presence of the LORD God Almighty. *“When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.”* I do not know about you, but I would do the same thing. My knees would bend and my face would bow to the ground in worship. The offering on the rock had made it an altar. Then the LORD performed His works on the altar in the sight of the two. He did what only God can do. Then they knew they were in the presence of the Divine LORD of creation. It was the most unequivocal proof of the divine nature of the LORD. The flame of the fire, the consumption of the offering, and the smoke rising, signified the acceptance of the couple’s offering.