

Exegetical Notes – Judges 12:8-13:25
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Background: When Joshua died, the conquest of The Promised Land was only partially completed. In large part, Israel had followed the instructions of YHWH regarding the taking of the land and the destruction of the indigenous population who lived there, but Israel had not followed God completely. Large sections of the indigenous population remained and were not under Israeli control.

From the time of the occupation (around 1380 BC) until the beginning of the Monarchs (1050 BC) Israel was a THEOCRACY, a nation whose king was God. Israel was supposed to listen to and follow the word of the Lord, but as we have already seen, Israel was not good at following the instructions of YHWH. Her failure to do so left her in trouble time and again. Partial obedience to the word of the Lord is disobedience to the word of the Lord and always leads to disaster. “Judges provides many examples of the principle that OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW BRINGS PEACE, WHEREAS DISOBEDIENCE MEANS OPPRESSION AND DEATH” (Charles Ryrie). This is the constantly repeated lesson of the Book of Judges. Judges is the story of the time in Israel’s early history when “Every man did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6 and 21:25). This always results in chaos and disaster.

In the Book of Judges a recurrent theme emerges: Step one - The people are following the will of YHWH; Step two - The people stop obeying the word of the Lord; Step three - An enemy arises that oppresses the people of God; Step four - The people cry out to God for help; Step five - God answers Israel’s prayer by sending them a deliverer (a judge to lead her, a Messiah); Step six - The people repent and return to the Lord. Then, the process begins again. Judges simply repeats this pattern over and over again. God’s people are “stiff necked and disobedient.” God is forever faithful. If God’s people would follow God’s word, they could save themselves hardship, worry, pain, etc. But they choose to do what seems right in their own eyes.

Judges 12:8-13:25

Verses 12:8-15

After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters away in marriage to those outside his clan, and for his sons he brought in thirty young women as wives from outside his clan. Ibzan led Israel seven years. ¹⁰ Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

¹¹ After him, Elon the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. ¹² Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

¹³ After him, Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, led Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. ¹⁵ Then Abdon son of Hillel died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

- After the death of Jephthah Israel is ruled by three judges of whom we know very little.
- First was Ibzan. He was from Bethlehem. He used his children's marriages to secure relationships with the other tribes of Israel. He ruled for seven years.
- Next was Elon. He was from the tribe of Zebulun. He ruled Israel for ten years.
- Then came Abdon. He was from the city of Pirathon. He had a large family, forty sons and thirty grandsons. They all rode their own donkeys. This indicates that Abdon was very wealthy. He ruled Israel for eight years.

Verse 13:1

13 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

- At the end of Abdon's rule, Israel again slipped into evil practices which displeased YHWH. The cycle of judges begins again (see the introductory notes and the diagram at the end of these notes). Again, the Israelites begin to worship gods other than YHWH. God gave Israel into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

Verses 2-5

² A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. ³ The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become

pregnant and give birth to a son. ⁴ Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. ⁵ You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

- While Israel was in the hands of the Philistines in Zorah, an angel of YHWH visited the wife of Manoah. She was childless. The angel told her that she would give birth to a son. The angel said that she was to avoid wine and other fermented beverages and to eat nothing considered unclean while she was pregnant because her son was to be under a Nazirite vow. The boy was to be set apart, dedicated to God from birth. When he was born, his hair was not to be cut. The child was to be set apart as belonging to God.
- The angel explained that this boy would be used to deliver Israel from their bondage.

Verses 6-8

⁶ Then the woman went to her husband and told him, “A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn’t ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name. ⁷ But he said to me, ‘You will become pregnant and have a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from the womb until the day of his death.’”

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: “Pardon your servant, Lord. I beg you to let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.”

- Manoah was a man of God. When his wife told him what had happened to her and what the angel had said, he asked God to send the angel again with more detailed information about raising this child who was to be dedicated to God’s service.

Verses 9-16

⁹ God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰ The woman hurried to tell her husband, “He’s here! The man who appeared to me the other day!”

***¹¹ Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, “Are you the man who talked to my wife?”
“I am,” he said.***

¹² So Manoah asked him, “When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule that governs the boy’s life and work?”

¹³ The angel of the LORD answered, “Your wife must do all that I have told her. ¹⁴ She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.”

¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you.”

¹⁶ The angel of the LORD replied, “Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.” (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.)

- God answered Manoah’s prayer. The angel came again. A conversation between the angel and Manoah follows in which the initial instructions to Manoah’s wife are confirmed. She must do what God has commanded.
- Manoah offers to prepare a meal for the angel to eat. But the angel refuses the meal and tells Manoah to offer the goat to YHWH instead as a burnt offering.
- To this point Manoah thinks that the stranger to whom he speaks is a man. He does not realize that he is speaking to an angel.

Verses 17-21

¹⁷ Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?”

¹⁸ He replied, “Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.” ¹⁹ Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: ²⁰ As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. ²¹ When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.

- Assuming that he is speaking with another human, Manoah asks the angel to tell him his name. The angel explained, somewhat pointedly, that even if he told Manoah his name he would not know him.
- Then Manoah sacrificed the goat as the angel had instructed. As the smoke and flame rose from the offering, the angel ascended in the flame and disappeared.

- Then Manoah realized that they had been speaking with a heavenly being, an angel.

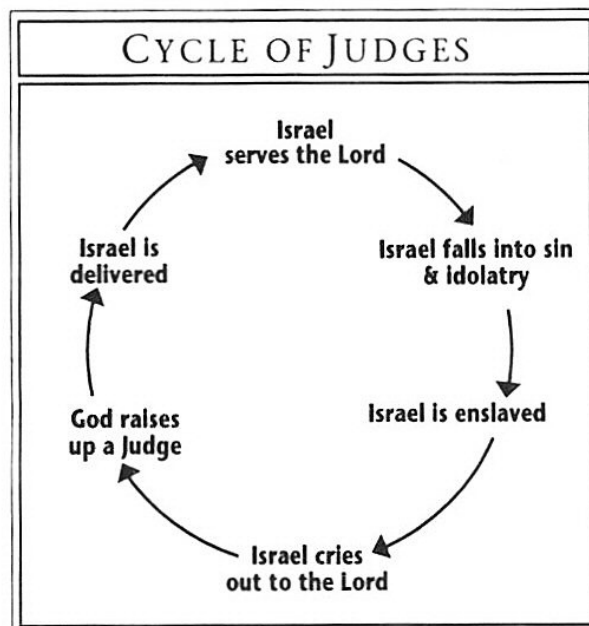
Verses 22-25

²² ***“We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!”***

²³ ***But his wife answered, “If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.”***

²⁴ ***The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan between Zoarh and Eshtaok.***

- Manoah assumed that he and his wife would die on the spot because they had seen God or the messenger of God. Mrs. Manoah pointed out that this was unlikely as they were still alive and had been given a commission from God.
- In due course, Manoah’s wife gave birth to a son. They named the child Samson. He grew up and was blessed by God. The Holy Spirit came upon him in the territory of Mahaneh Dan.



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