Samson
Judges 13:1-7, 24-25
SS Lesson for 06/25/2017

Devotional Scripture: Num 6:1-8

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Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the details of this unusual call of Samson and the outcome. The study's aim is to see that God may employ other people in His call of a person. The study's application is to remind us to be open to the call of God and to allow Him to work out the details over time.

(Key Verse: Judges 13:5)

For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

13:1a. Israel’s monotonous downward spiral climaxed with the seventh recorded apostasy in the Book of Judges (cf. 3:5-7, 12-14; 4:1-3; 6:1-2; 8:33-35; 10:6-9). This apostasy appears to have been a phase of the idolatrous worship previously described in 10:6 (which included “the gods of the Philistines”), because a resulting oppression by the Philistines (in the west) is mentioned in 10:7 to complement that by the Ammonites (in the east).

13:1b. The depths of Israelite apostasy and the greatness of Philistine strength were causes for the unprecedented length of oppression—40 years—though the Philistines continued as a threat until the early years of David’s reign (cf. 2 Sam. 5:17-25). Though earlier Philistine settlements had been present in Palestine (cf. Gen. 21:32-34; 26:1-18; Judges 1:18-19), the Philistines arrived in large numbers during the invasion of the Sea Peoples about 1200 B.C. They organized a pentapolis or confederation of five cities—Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod on the strategic coastal highway, and Gath and Ekron on the edge of the Shephelah or Judean foothills (cf. Josh. 13:3). When the Philistine aggression moved eastward into the land of Benjamin and Judah, the Israelites accepted that domination without resistance (cf. 14:4; 15:11) till the time of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 7:10-14). How was it that Samson’s parents, who were Danites, were still living in the Sorek Valley when much earlier the tribe of Dan had migrated north? (Judges 18) Apparently a few of the Danite clans stayed behind and did not move northward. Unless the repentance mentioned in 10:10-16 includes the western Israelites who were being oppressed by the Philistines (cf. 10:7)—which is unlikely in view of their apparent acceptance of the Philistine domination (cf. 15:11)—there is no mention of Israel’s cry to God before He raised up Samson as a deliverer (contrast 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:7; 10:10). Since Samson judged Israel 20 years (15:20; 16:31), beginning apparently at about age 20, his entire life span must have approximated the 40-year Philistine oppression which began before his birth (cf. 13:5). He was thus a contemporary of Samuel who with God’s help subdued the Philistines after Samson’s death (cf. 1 Sam. 7:10-14).

13:2-5. Samson’s parents were from the clan of the Danites, perhaps implying that the bulk of the tribe of Dan had already made the move northward to the Huleh Valley (cf. chap. 18), so that only a clan or two remained in their original tribal inheritance. The childless wife of Manoah of Zorah was visited by the Angel of the LORD, Zarah, the highest point in the Shephelah, was on a high ridge north of the Sorek Valley and about 14 miles west of Jerusalem. Originally Zorah was a city of Judah (Josh. 15:20, 33), but later it was allotted to the tribe of Dan (Josh. 19:40-41). In this theophany (cf. Judges 2:1-2) the Lord foretold the birth of her son, Samson, and said that he was to be a Nazirite. A Nazirite (meaning “devoted” or “consecrated”) was a person whose vow of separation to God included abstaining from fermented drink, refraining from cutting his hair, and avoiding contact with dead bodies (Num. 6:2-6). Nazirite vows were normally for a limited period of time but Samson was to be a Nazirite of God all his life (Judges 13:7). His mother was to share for a time in part of the Nazirite vow (vv. 4, 7, 14). Besides being set apart as a Nazirite, Samson was chosen by God to begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of...
the Philistines. The completion of this task would be left to Samuel (1 Sam. 7:10-14) and David (2 Sam. 5:17-25).

13:6-8. When Manoah’s wife reported to him her encounter with this One whom she described as a Man of God, who looked like an Angel... Manoah prayed for His reappearance to teach them how to bring up the boy.

13:9-18. In response to Manoah’s prayer the Angel of God (another title for the Angel of the Lord) reappeared, first to his wife and then to Manoah, but He merely repeated His previous instructions (vv. 13-14). Not fully realizing the divine character of his Guest (v. 16b), Manoah invited the Messenger to stay for a meal. The Angel indicated that any provisions should be offered to the Lord as a burnt offering. On asking the Angel’s name, Manoah was informed. It is beyond understanding.

13:19-23. Then Manoah sacrificed a young goat (cf. v. 15) with a grain offering (cf. Lev. 2) on a rock to the Lord. He and his wife were amazed as the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame that blazed up from the altar. Realizing the identity of the divine Messenger, Manoah expressed fear of impending death because of their having seen God (cf. Gideon’s similar response, Judges 6:22-23). Manoah’s wife more practically pointed out that God’s acceptance of the sacrifice and the promise of a son indicated that immediate death was not God’s plan for them.

13:24. In fulfillment of the words of the divine Messenger, Manoah’s wife gave birth to... Samson (a name related to the word for “sun”), who grew up under the blessing of the Lord.

13:25. One day the Spirit of the Lord began to stir Samson, that is, to empower him to begin to deliver Israel. This happened at Mahaneh Dan (“Camp of Dan”; cf. 18:11-12 for the origin of the name) between Zorah (Samson’s home; cf. 13:2) and Eshtaol (a town about one and one-half miles east by northeast of Zorah). Samson was later buried between these two towns (16:31; also cf. 18:2, 8, 11). Samson’s leadership as judge or deliverer did not take the form of leading an army against the Philistines. Rather it consisted of his being a lone champion for the cause of his people. His exploits, the record of which begins in chapter 14, distracted the Philistines from more serious invasions into the tribal areas of Benjamin and Judah.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

The angelic message recorded in our text came at a time of great distress for both the nation of Israel and an obscure couple of the tribe of Dan. For the couple, the announcement of the coming birth of a son was an occasion for great rejoicing, for the woman previously had been unable to bear children. While the parents of the one who would be named Samson appear to be godly people, the nation itself had once again fallen into sin. As a result, the Lord had allowed the Philistines to oppress them. The angel’s announcement of a coming deliverer in the person of Samson was also reason for rejoicing. This call of Samson, if we can call it that, is unique in several ways. First, during the tumultuous period of the judges, the Lord’s deliverance usually came in response to national repentance. There is no such repentance recorded here, yet the Lord graciously promised them one who would deliver them from the Philistines. Second, the deliverer was announced even before his birth and naming. Samson apparently grew up knowing that the Lord had a special plan for him, and the Spirit confirmed this (cf. Judg. 13:25). The third unique thing about the call of Samson was that he would be a Nazarite. According to Numbers 6:1-6, a Nazarite vow was a consecration of one’s life to the service of the Lord for a fixed period of time. The vow was marked by three obligations: the Nazarite was to abstain from wine, not cut his hair, and avoid touching a dead body, which would incur ceremonial un-cleanliness. Only the second of these was mentioned by the Angel of the Lord, though Samson’s mother would have been aware of the other requirements. The vow was voluntary; however, in the case of Samson, it was determined for him by the Lord. We find something similar in the cases of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). While the nation was in apostasy and had shown no remorse at this point, the Lord announced that He would deliver His people by one who was set apart and empowered by the Lord for unique service. Such an announcement, along with the later appearance of the Nazarite Samson, perhaps was designed as a rebuke to the people of Israel for their persistence in sin. The Lord did indeed empower Samson to perform amazing feats of strength to defeat and demoralize the Philistine oppressors. Sadly, however, Samson never demonstrated the kind of commitment to the Lord that his Nazarite vow suggested. He broke two, and probably all three, of the requirements for a Nazarite (cf. Judg. 14:8-10; 16:17-19). While Samson is named among the great men of faith in Hebrews 11:32, we realize his faith was balanced against his pride and sinful passion. He is a classic example of a believer who never accomplished what he could have. He possessed great strength but too often failed to depend on the strength of the Lord. His life is a warning to us to be sure we use the gifts the Lord has given us for His glory.
Lesson Introduction and Background
From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When you reflect on your childhood, what memories come to mind? Is it that family outing to the beach during which you were first taught to swim? Is it the aroma of your favorite meal being lovingly prepared? Is it a favorite family tradition that was always practiced during holiday times? But maybe it is a curfew that you had to follow that was an hour earlier than the curfew of your friends. Perhaps it is your parents’ insistence that you not go to a movie that everyone was talking about, because it celebrated ungodly behavior. Possibly it is going to church every Sunday, even when you didn’t want to! Good parents make a real difference in the lives of children. Some parental actions are pleasant and affirming. But some will seem unpleasant and even unreasonable in the mind of a child. Yet both are necessary to bring a youngster to maturity. Today we will conclude our look at some famous judges of Israel, not by looking at the judge himself, but at this judge’s parents.

This is the last of the studies on four delivering judges in the book of Judges, the seventh book of the Old Testament. There were two other major judges (Othniel and Ehud) and six judges who seem only to have served as magistrates in different parts of Israel. In the previous lesson Jephthah defeated the Ammonites that had oppressed the central portions of the land for 18 years. Judges 12 gives the details on another problem that confronted Jephthah: Ephraimites from the western side of the Jordan came to complain that he had not called them when he led the battle against the Ammonites. Jephthah’s reply was that he had called them and they had not come (Judges 12:2, 3). It could be surmised that after Jephthah’s situation with his daughter (see last week’s lesson), he did not feel like trying to appease men who wait until the battle is over before they choose sides. The outcome was a battle between two groups of Israelites. Jephthah and his Gileadites defeated the Ephraimites from the western side of the Jordan (toward the Mediterranean Sea). As the Ephraimites retreated, Jephthah’s men gained control of the fords where the Ephraimites would cross the Jordan River. Each Ephraimite who attempted to cross the Jordan was asked to say a certain word. Anyone who pronounced the word a certain way was recognized as being an Ephraimite and therefore executed (Judges 12:6). Tribes had conquered the promised land some 300 years previously (11:26), which provided time for regional dialects to develop. The last verses of Judges 12 give basic facts of three men who seem to have served only as magistrates in their areas: one in the south, one in the north, and one in the middle section of Israel.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Situation (Judges 13:1)

1 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

The Sin – Evil in the sight of God (1)

Evil of bribery (Isa 5:22-23)

22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks, 23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.

Evil of immorality (Hab 2:15-16)

15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. 16 You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory.
Evil of gratifying the desires of the sinful nature (Rom 13:13-14)

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Evil that will someday have to be accounted for (1 Peter 4:3-5)

3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. 5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The Consequences (1)

Consequences of God's pronouncement of punishment (Num 16:28-33)

28 Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: 29 If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. 30 But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt." 31 As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. 33 They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.

Consequences of man's pronouncement of punishment (Dan 6:24)

24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

Consequences of sharing the punishment of sin (Josh 7:20-24)

20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. 23 They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord. 24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor.

Consequences of not partaking of the good things of God (Jer 29:32)

32 this is what the Lord says: I will surely punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants. He will have no one left among this people, nor will he see the good things I will do for my people, declares the Lord, because he has preached rebellion against me."
God's Plan of Deliverance (Judges 13:2-7)

2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.
3 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.
4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean.
5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."
6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name.
7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

God's selection of barren parents (2-3)

Like Abram and Sarah (Gen 15:2-5)
2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.
4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."

Like Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:19-24)
19 This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

Like Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam 1:9-18)
9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. 10 In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. 11 And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." 12 As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." 15 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. 16 Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." 17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." 18 She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13-17)
13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
God’s sanctification for child (4-5)

Set apart for work (Acts 13:1-3)

13 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Inwardly setting apart Jesus as Lord (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Sanctification through the Word for protection from Satan (John 17:14-19)

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Sanctification through the power of God to be kept blameless (1 Thess 5:23)

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sanctification through the blood of Jesus for service (Heb 9:13-14)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Parent’s obedience (6-7)

Obedience is better because it delights God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Obedience keeps me remaining in God's love (John 15:10)

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.
**Obedience leads to the reward of blessings (Deut. 28:1-6)**

1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

**Obedience brings the reward of freedom (James 1:25)**

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

**Samson’s Preparation (Judges 13:24-25)**

24 So the woman bore 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 upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Maturation (24)**

**Maturity through perseverance (Phil 3:9-14)**

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

**Maturity through relying on God (2 Tim 4:7-8)**

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

**Maturity through throwing off everything that hinders (Heb 12:1-2)**

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Maturity through seeking God’s power (Rev 3:11-12)**

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

**Maturity through testing of faith (James 1:12)**

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

**Holy Spirit’s influence (25)**

**The Holy Spirit is the power to obey God (Ezek 36:27)**

27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
The Holy Spirit provides spiritual life (Rom 8:11)

11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

The Holy Spirit guides in truth (John 16:13)

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

The Holy Spirit teaches how to live (Gal 5:16)

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

The Holy Spirit is the conduit of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Israel’s Spiritual Condition in Samson’s Day Judges 13:1

The Israelites again did evil in the Lord’s sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines for forty years (Judges 13:1).

I believe it is safe to say that whatever evil the Israelites are now committing, it is worse than at an earlier time:

19 When a leader died, the next generation would again act more wickedly than the previous one. They would follow after other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They did not give up their practices or their stubborn ways (Judges 2:19, emphasis mine).

Based on this premise, we may assume that Israel’s disobedience is even worse than this earlier description of their sin recorded in chapter 10:

6 The Israelites again did evil in the Lord’s sight. They worshiped the Baals and the Ashtars, as well as the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. They abandoned the Lord and did not worship him.

7 The Lord was furious with Israel and turned them over to the Philistines and Ammonites (Judges 10:6-8).

The period of oppression in chapter 10 was 18 years (verse 8). Now, the period of Philistine domination is 40 years. Thus, the author must be referring to another, later, time period.

It may be important for the reader to recognize what is not said in the first verse of chapter 13, though it is found in earlier chapters. The author does not describe this period of domination as horribly cruel and oppressive as, for example, it was in chapter 6, or in chapter 10. Neither are we told (as we were earlier in Judges) that the Israelites “cried out” to God, either in repentance or in a plea for help.

What I am about to say is inferential (some might even say “speculative”), rather than propositional (a truth based upon a clear statement in the Bible). Nevertheless, it does seem that the author has some reason for not referring to any great anguish or agony on Israel’s part and for not mentioning (as he has in the past) that the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance.

I am inclined to conclude from the author’s silence on these matters that the Israelites were content (or at least complacent) with regard to their domination by the Philistines. Why would this be? Let me suggest some possible reasons.

Considerable time (40 years) has passed, and the Israelites may simply have gotten used to Philistine domination. (In New Testament times, how many Israelites were crying out to God for deliverance when they were subjected to Roman rule?)

Domination by the Philistines would mean that the Israelites would enjoy a measure of stability, as well as protection from the other nations which surrounded them. A number of years ago, there were some who would have said, “Better Red (under communist rule) than dead.” Some Israelites may have been thinking, “Better a Philistine than dead.”
Philistine rule provided the opportunity to worship any number of gods. Religious pluralism may have sounded sweet to some wayward Israelites.

The Philistines, like the other Canaanite peoples, were serious in their pursuit of sensual pleasure. Their (im)morality and their religion actually promoted sensuality. And thus there were undoubtedly some Israelites who endured (if not enjoyed) Philistine domination, simply because it was more fun than fundamentalism (pun intentional).

Sadly, Israel’s apathy with regard to their political and moral bondage is not that difficult for someone today to understand because we see a very similar perspective in our country today. Over the last few decades, our constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms have been eroded away by government intervention, legislation, and high court interpretation. Many people have not protested (loudly enough) because of the benefits they supposed they were gaining from government domination and encroachment. And now we see giant strides being taken to suppress our liberties even further, and all too many Americans are willing to let it happen because of the benefits they believe they are gaining. Let us learn from Israel’s mistakes.

The First Angelic Visitation Judges 13:2-7

2 There was a man named Manoah from Zorah, from the Danite tribe. His wife was infertile and childless. 3 The Lord’s angelic messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, “You are infertile and childless, but you will conceive and have a son. 4 Now be careful! Do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean. 5 Look, you will conceive and have a son. You must never cut his hair, for the child will be dedicated to God from birth. He will begin to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines.” 6 The woman went and said to her husband, “A man sent from God came to me! He looked like God’s angelic messenger – he was very awesome. I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. 7 He said to me, ‘Look, you will conceive and have a son. So now, do not drink wine or beer and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean. For the child will be dedicated to God from birth till the day he dies’.” (Judges 13:2-7).

We are first introduced to Samson’s father, Manoah, who comes from the tribe of Dan. He had a wife, but we are never given her name. To me, she is simply “Mrs. Manoah.” Mrs. Manoah was barren, and so she and her husband had no children. We don’t know if they were elderly, as was the case with some others in the Bible with a similar condition.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Mrs. Manoah even though there is no indication that she petitioned the Lord for a child. The Angel spoke to the woman, informing her that although she was barren, she would soon give birth to a son. The Angel then gave her instructions regarding the boy’s prenatal care, as well as his lifestyle after his birth. The woman was not to drink any alcoholic beverages, nor to eat any unclean food. The boy’s hair was never to be cut. If it was not already clear to her, these instructions were an indication that her son would be a Nazirite from birth. He would also begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

It is worth noting here that Mrs. Manoah’s conduct and prenatal care were required because her child would be a Nazirite “from birth.” It is not that difficult to conclude that God regarded this woman’s fetus to be a human being, and thus she was instructed to commence the practices of a Nazirite while the child was still in her womb. Life begins in the womb. It is just that simple. The words of the Angel of the Lord make it clear that it is so.

There is one more thing that we should note from the Angel’s words to Mrs. Manoah. Her son, who was to be a Nazirite for his lifetime, would “begin” to deliver Israel from the Philistines (verse 5). There will be other deliverers who will carry on this task, but it is Samson who will begin the process, which will continue after his death.

Mrs. Manoah went to her husband to tell him what she had just seen and heard. She told Manoah that a “man of God” came to her and that his appearance was like that of an angel. In her words, He was awesome. There was something about him that distinguished him from mere men. Not only was this person awesome, He was also mysterious. She did not ask His name or where He came from, and neither did He tell her. She reasoned that He must be an angel.

She went on to tell her husband what the Angel did say. He told her that she would conceive and bear a son. He also instructed her that she must not drink wine or fermented beverages, and she must not eat any unclean food. This was because her child was to be a Nazirite his entire life – from womb to tomb.

At this point, it is necessary for us to pause for a moment to make a few observations. First, note that Samson’s status as a Nazirite was neither voluntary (on his part), nor was it temporary (as it usually was). Samson’s function as a Nazirite was imposed upon him by God. Second, Mrs. Manoah was required to be a participant in
Samson’s practice as a Nazirite. As noted before, this is because Samson was a living human being the entire time he was in her womb, and so the Nazirite restrictions had to apply to her during her pregnancy. Third, the Angel of the Lord is merely recognized as a “run of the mill” (i.e., ordinary) angel at this point in time. It is later that both Manoah and his wife recognize Who they are dealing with. Fourth, even though Numbers 6 is emphatic about a Nazirite not having contact with the dead, nothing is said of that in our text.

Fifth, we should note that while nothing is said regarding contact with the dead, something is said about refraining from foods that are ceremonially unclean. Nothing is said about unclean foods in the instructions pertaining to the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6 because all Israelites were to avoid unclean foods. One taking the Nazirite vow was going above and beyond the standards of conduct followed by the average Israelite. Under the Law of Moses, no Israelite was permitted to eat unclean food. Now, unclean foods are specifically prohibited in the case of Mrs. Manoah and Samson. Why would it be necessary to forbid them to eat unclean foods? I believe it is because of the apostasy and idolatry of the Israelites. Food and drink were an essential part of heathen worship, and thus in order to worship with the Philistines, one would eat their unclean foods. It would appear that the Israelites were regularly eating unclean foods, and so for a Nazirite to be set apart to God, it was necessary to apply this general prohibition to Samson and his mother specifically.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/13-samsons-silver-spoon-judges-131-25)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In 1946, Dr. Benjamin Spock published The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care. For more than half a century, this book was a consistent best seller, selling more than 50 million copies and being translated into about 40 languages. Mothers were encouraged by a basic message: you know more than you think you do! Samson’s parents lived well before Dr. Spock. They received direction, not from a popular author, but from God himself. Child-rearing experts have some value, but we can encourage parents to this day with the words of God, who knows more than all of us combined!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God uses the ungodly to exact judgment on His people, and He uses the godly to deliver them (Judg. 13:1-2)
2. Physical limitations do not impact the miraculous power of God (vs. 3)
3. God’s promises require strict obedience (vss. 4-5)
4. It is important to respect God’s messenger and receive the message that God has for us (vss. 6-7)
5. Obedience to God brings abundant blessings to our homes (vs. 24)
6. When God is with us, He will work through us (vs. 25)