

## Judges 11-12 Chapter Study

### INTRO

#### II. The Judges 2:11-16:

##### *H. Jephthah 10:6-12:7*

###### 1. Israel's sin & oppression by the Ammonites 10:6-18

We ended last week with Israel once again under the heavy thumb of foreign oppression.

The Ammonites, a nomadic people who lived to the east, had crossed the Jordan to lay siege to the land.

After 18 years of harassment, the people of Israel finally called out to God in sincere brokenness & repentance.

When they did, He stirred them with the realization the time had come for their liberation.

Ch. 10 ends with the people realizing they have no one to lead them to battle.

Part of the judgment of God has been a lack of competent leaders.

So as they sense His restoration of them & that the time has come for them to rise up & throw off the oppression of the Ammonites, they begin to look for the one God will send to lead them.

###### 2. Jephthah is recruited 11:1-11

**<sup>1</sup>Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah.**

**<sup>2</sup>Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman." <sup>3</sup>Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out *raiding* with him.**

Gilead is a region that lies to the east of the Jordan River, in that territory occupied by the 2½ tribes that decided to settle there.

[Identify features]

It's named after the grandson of Manasseh, whose descendants became the largest & most important clan in Manasseh.

Just as the name Ephraim became synonymous with the northern 10 tribes of Israel, so the name Gilead came to be synonymous with all of the Jews who lived East of the Jordan.

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Jephthah was the son of the man who was the *chief* of the Gileadite clan.

And as was often the case, *being* the chief, he was named “Gilead.”

Jephthah was Gilead’s son by a prostitute, & when he was old enough to live on his own, his half-brothers grew jealous of him & made him take off, lest they have to split the inheritance they would get when their father died into *another* share.

Jephthah went to a region called Tob on the *eastern frontier* of Gilead.

The city of *Ramoth-Gilead*, also known as Mizpah, was located there & that’s where Jephthah settled.

Because of his natural qualities as a leader, other discontents & landless men began to attach themselves to Jephthah.

They became the “Tob-Mob” & raided caravans & border towns.

**4 It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. 5 And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 Then they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.”**

The 18 year Ammonite oppression of Israel wasn’t an on-going *foreign occupation*.

As nomads, they weren’t the kind of people to conquer then set up a central government & administrate a new system.

Their oppression & domination of Israel was a series of massive raids much like a plague of locusts that would descend on the land every so many seasons.

They came, *not to rule*, but to plunder.

It was a classic example of rape, pillage, & steal; much like the Vikings when they raided Europe & England.

So, as the Ammonite tribes begin to mass in the East for yet another raid, the elders of the eastern tribes send word to Jephthah, asking him to lead in their defense.

**7 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?” 8 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”**

Jephthah says, “Hey, I thought I wasn’t good enough to even *live* among you – and now you want me to **LEAD** you?”

They say, “We were wrong. Come prove it by leading us to victory.”

**9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?” 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words.”**

Jephthah asks what their intentions are.

If he’s good enough to lead them in battle, will they then recognize his ability to lead them in peace?

Jephthah is really only concerned with freeing his family from the stain of his past, the blot of his parentage.

His mother may have been a harlot, *but his father was Gilead*, and *that* is what he wants his descendants to be known for; his father, not his mother.

The elders agree to receive him back into Jewish society if he leads them to victory.

**11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.**

As I said, Mizpah is another name for Ramoth-Gilead, the lead city in Tob & Jephthah’s base.

In a formal ceremony there at Mizpah, Jephthah is made the ruler of the people.

His first formal act was to try the route of negotiation with the Ammonites.

### **3. Jephthah tries negotiation with Ammonites 11:12-28**

**12 Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, “What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?” 13 And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, “Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those *lands* peaceably.”**

Jephthah asked the Ammonite chief, who'd managed to pull together their clans into a united force, *why* he was hassling Israel. On what grounds did he justify his raids?

The Ammonite ruler replied that Israel had *stolen* the land east of the Jordan from them, so the Ammonites were only taking back what belonged to them.

**14 So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, 15 and said to him, “Thus says Jephthah:**

This is a gutsy move – He's identifying himself to the enemy as the ruler of Gilead.

This was like painting a big ole' target on his forehead.

Just like in chess, the end of the game comes with the death or capture of the king.

[Far Side cartoon – “Bummer birthmark!”]

Jephthah's formal announcement of himself as the leader of Israel here in his 2<sup>nd</sup> message was a real act of faith, & a great mark of leadership, because it let the men of Israel know Jephthah was in this with both feet.

He wasn't just some opportunistic bureaucrat who'd run away at the first sign of battle.

He's a man of courage who's willing to take the lead in facing danger.

The best place to lead from is the front, not the rear.

People are inspired to follow when they see their leader *is committed*, that he or she believes the goal is worthy of pursuing & is willing to take a risk to attain it.

Leaders who give stirring speeches but don't follow through to *do* what they tell others *they* ought to do create a credibility gap;

people don't trust them.

We hear countless stories about politicians, people who pursue leadership in public office who advocate environmental causes, but who drive huge gas-guzzling vehicles.

They advocate a strong military but dodge the draft or secure deferments for their children.

They want to expand government welfare, but they won't give a single dollar of their own income to charity.

They pass all kinds of new taxes but hire the best lawyers & CPA's to figure out how to pay the least amount of tax themselves.

Jephthah was a leader who put his money where his mouth was.

He lets the Ammonites know who's going to lead Israel if it comes to war.

This kind of boldness inspired & emboldened the men of Israel.

**'Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon; <sup>16</sup> for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. <sup>17</sup> Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let me pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not *consent*. So Israel remained in Kadesh. <sup>18</sup> And they went along through the wilderness and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.**

The best route from Egypt to Canaan lay through the lands of Edom & Moab, so Moses had asked for permission to pass through.

But they'd been denied access, so Israel skirted their borders, though the way was much harder.

**<sup>19</sup> Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, "Please let us pass through your land into our place." <sup>20</sup> But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God of Israel**

**delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. <sup>22</sup> They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. <sup>23</sup> ‘And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; should you then possess it?**

Jephthah demonstrates in all of this a thorough knowledge of God’s word & the history of Israel.

When Israel arrived at the northeastern border between Moab & the Ammorite kingdom of Sihon, Moses again asked for permission to traverse his land.

Instead of just refusing, Sihon *attacked* Israel.

Bad move, because he was totally defeated & as the prize of victory, the Ammorite territory had fallen to Israel.

Note there’s a difference between the Ammorites & Ammonites. Jephthah’s challenge to the Ammonite king was – “When did this territory ever belong to you?”

“And when did Israel ever do anything that would require they turn it back over to someone else? We have behaved ourselves justly in all we’ve done.”

But v. 23 is the real reason Israel has a claim to the land – *God gave it to them.*

**<sup>24</sup> Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess.**

Jephthah presents a challenge to the Ammorites; it’s a challenge based on his faith in God.

He knew the land had been given by God to Israel.

So he says, “If you think your god is stronger than our God, bring it on!”

“Our God is red-hot, your god ain’t diddly-squat.”

**<sup>25</sup> And now, are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them?**

After making the contest between them a proof of whose God was

stronger, Jephthah reminded the Ammonite king that his god had already been whooped by Yahweh.

The Moabites *also* worshipped Chemosh, & Moab had been powerless in stopping Israel during the time of Balak, who'd hired Balaam to curse Israel.

**26 While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?**

Jephthah said, "If the lands you're raiding today really belong to you, why have you waited 300 years to lay claim to them?"

**27 Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May [Yahweh] the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.' "** **28 However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.**

The Ammonites' reasons for war were just a smoke-screen for their lust for plunder.

So when Jephthah poked holes in them, it didn't change anything.

#### **4. Jephthah's vow & victory 11:29-33**

**29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon. 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, 31 then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." 32 So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33 And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith—twenty cities—and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.**

## 5. Jephthah's daughter 11:34-40

**<sup>34</sup> When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was *his* only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. <sup>35</sup> And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it." <sup>36</sup> So she said to him, "My father, *if* you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." <sup>37</sup> Then she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I." <sup>38</sup> So he said, "Go." And he sent her away *for* two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. <sup>39</sup> And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man. And it became a custom in Israel <sup>40</sup> that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.**

We looked at this passage on Sunday.

## 6. Jephthah's run-in with the Ephraimites 12:1-7

**<sup>1</sup> Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!"**

The tribe of Ephraim lived on the west of the Jordan & considered themselves the lead tribe of Israel.

When they heard about Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites, they grew jealous & went to confront him.

They did the same thing with Gideon when he defeated the Midianites.



They came out to challenge him with why they'd not been invited to the battle.

Gideon handled them with kid gloves & quiet diplomacy, & they went home grumbling but feeling superior.

Jephthah deals the Ephraimites very differently.

They've threatened him with violence so he throws it right back at them.

**2 And Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. 3 So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?"**

Jephthah **HAD** called them to join up but they'd lagged.

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The Ephraimites are a great example of those who are *chronic complainers*.

They never do anything themselves, but are always there to criticize & complain what others do.

When someone proposes a venture of faith, they talk about all the reasons why it won't work.

Then when it succeeds, they get indignant that they weren't invited to be a part of it.

They are complainers; Negative ninnies, nit-pickers, cynical-Sallys, sour-Sams.

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Faith in God ought to produce a personality & demeanor that is fundamentally positive & joyful.

A cynical, scornful, critical & negative exterior is a sign of an inner lack of faith.

Psalm 1:1 says,

**Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

One of the reasons why it's so important that we be a committed part of the Body of Christ is so that we can lovingly reflect back to each other what we see in one another.

I recently passed out a questionnaire to about a dozen people, that had

40 questions aimed at helping me understand how *they saw me*.  
The point of the exercise was that we often think one thing about ourselves while we project something different.  
Knowing *how* we're perceived by others is important because there ought to be a continuity between our inner & outer lives.  
The responses I got back were very enlightening.  
For the most part, I knew what my strengths and weaknesses are, and they were affirmed by the survey.  
But one quality was a huge surprise to me.  
I think I'm a pretty positive & happy guy.  
I love to laugh, to enjoy a good time, & I understand what it means to be joyous in the Lord.  
I thought that I presented to others a generally joyous demeanor.  
But across the board, people marked me as deficient in joy.  
So I've decided to get all new friends. No!  
Really, at first I just didn't understand how I could get such low marks regarding joy.  
I really resisted what the survey said & found myself wanting to chalk up the replies to their mis-reading me.  
That was easy when it was just a few of the first questionnaires I got back, but when it was all of them, I realized I had some serious thinking to do.  
I came to the shocking realization I had deluded myself.  
While I thought I was filled with the joy of the Lord, I all too often allow circumstances to effect my mood.  
My faith in God does get eclipsed by circumstances.  
I've asked the Lord to change me in this regard; to make my faith more consistent and firm.  
And to help me have a more positive & joyous demeanor.

From the Ephraimites challenge of both Gideon & Jephthah, we can learn that negativity & cynicism is something that can spread from one person to another.

There seems to be something about the Ephraimites *as a whole* that saw them become whining complainers.

Those we consistently hang out with are going to effect both our inner disposition & outward behavior, either for good or ill.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says,

**Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."**

Think about your upbringing – where your parents positive people of faith or negative & scornful? How has their attitude shaped you? What about those you spend a lot of time with today?

This is why it's so important Christians be part of a small group, meeting with others who are serious about following God and committed to help one another grow.

Who is going to tell you in a loving way that there's something you need to surrender to the Spirit's work?

**4 Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites."**

The men of Ephraim were good-talkers & skilled at intimidation & put-downs, but that's *all* they were good for. When it came to battle, they were pathetic & got quickly whooped by the men of Gilead.

**5 The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived. And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," <sup>6</sup> then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth!'" And he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce *it* right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.**

As a strategic move to keep the Ephraimites from getting away, some of the men of Gilead rushed to the ford, or *crossing* of the Jordan & secured it.

When the men of Ephraim tried to retreat, they were caught.

Since the culture of the Ephraimites & Gileadites was so close it was difficult knowing which tribe a guy was from.

They looked & dressed alike. And it was easy for the men of Ephraim to fake being one of the Gileadites.

The only difference was that the dialects of the 2 groups had changed one little thing in the 300 years they been separated by the Jordan.

The Gileadites had the "sh" sound while the Ephraimites had

reduced it to the simple “s” sibilant.

So when a new guy wandered near the ford, the men guarding it would tell him to say the word “Shibboleth” which means “stream.”

An Ephraimite would not be able to pronounce it straight-away & would be revealed.

A total of 42,000 Ephraimites were killed in this battle with the Gileadites.

They were fancy talkers but when it came to battle they were *only* talk.

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You don't hear it too much anymore, but just a generation ago, the word “shibboleth” was fairly common in English.

It referred to any marker that identified someone as belonging to a group.

- A guy wearing khakis, a Lacrosse polo shirt, with a Ralph Lauren sweater over his shoulders, the arms tied in a knot, was an 80's shibboleth for a yuppie.
- A young woman dressed all in black, with black hair, black eyes, & dark dusky lipstick, with multiple piercings was a 90's shibboleth for a Goth.
- A Yarmulke is a shibboleth for a Jew. While a kafiyya is a shibboleth for a Muslim.

The point is, belonging to a group finds expression in identifying features.

The Bible is clear in both the OT & NT that the people of God ought to be marked by specific traits.

The *quality* of their lives ought to be on a higher plane than those who live without God.

The difference ought to mark our priorities, our values, how we react; even the way we dress.

And as with the *origin* of the shibboleth, it ought to even affect our *speech*.

Life & death for the men of Israel was determined by one little word that day at the fords of Jordan.

In the same way, eternal life & death is determined by only one word – “Jesus.”

The one question that decides a man or woman's fate is whether or not they can pronounce that *name* correctly.

Now, obviously, I don't mean whether or not a person can sound out the letters & pronounce the word –J-E-S-U-S.

I mean, can they *claim* the NAME.

To be saved, a person must not just be able to say a *word*; they must know the *NAME* of Jesus, & they only know the name if they are *in relationship* with Him.

Think of it this way – The Ephraimites' language & culture had lost the ability to pronounce the “sh” sound.

It wasn't a part of their lifestyle or experience, so they couldn't say the word, & died.

In the same way, the only person who can truly claim the name of Jesus is someone who's been born again & entered into new life.

That new life is lived under the Lordship of Jesus, with a new lifestyle, culture, & language.

In 1 Corinthians 12:3 Paul says,

**I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

Now, Paul is not saying that we can reduce salvation down to some kind of rote formula of saying a sequence of words, as though heaven's gate was opened by reciting an incantation – “Jesus is Lord.”

He's saying that a person's pattern of speech reveals his/her heart.

The ancient world saw a much closer & necessary connection between what one said & what one believed.

Speech was understood as a reflection of the inner person.

Jesus said that the words of the mouth express what's in the heart.

[Mat 12:34]

In 1 Cor 12, Paul is saying that if you want to know what a person is *really all about*, just listen to them; not just a single phrase, but the whole tenor of their conversation.

This is true for all of us & the people we meet every day.

If you want to know what a person is thinking about, what their values are, & whether they believe in God, just listen to them for a few hours.

If you want to know whether or not they're saved, listen for how they speak about Jesus.

Their view of Him determines their destiny. Jesus is the shibboleth of eternal life.

**7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.**

***I. Ibzan, Elon, Abdon 12:8-15***

**8 After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.**

Like some of the other judges, Ibzan had several wives – 60 kids would require that.

**11 After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. 12 And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.**

**13 After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years.**

As we saw last week with Gideon's sons, rulers used donkeys for transportation, so these 70 sons & grandsons were a part of Abdon's administration.

**15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.**

With these last 3 judges, we don't read that they were military leaders.

No oppression by foreigners is mentioned; we're just told they served as civil rulers for a time.

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Following these 3, a long period of oppression began under the hand of what would become Israel's perennial enemy – the Philistines.

For 40 years they brutally harassed the people of God until God raised up the best know of the Judges - Samson.

His story is a classic example of wasted potential.

***J. Samson Chs. 13-16***

**1. Samson's birth 13**

**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.**

This was by far the longest Israel labored under the oppression of her enemies before God sent deliverance.

When they hear the word “Philistines,” most people think of Goliath, the giant warrior David slew with a sling.

But the history between Israel & the Philistines is a long one.

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The Philistines were originally from the island of Crete where a powerful sea-faring culture was birthed.

For reasons that remain a mystery, these people, called the Sea-peoples by historians, left Crete in a mass migration that landed on virtually every shore of the Mediterranean.

The Philistines landed at first in the Nile delta, but the Egyptians pushed them back into the sea.

They then sailed north a short distance and landed on the largely unoccupied shore of Canaan, right about the same time as the conquest under Joshua.

Today, the word “Philistine” has a strong negative connotation and is used as a cultured put down for someone who’s an uneducated brute.

If you call someone a Philistine it means they’re rude, crude, & barbaric.

Which is interesting because technologically & culturally, the Philistines were far more advanced than either the Canaanites or the Israelites.

The archaeology of their ancient sites reveals they’d entered the iron age while Canaan was still in the bronze age.

Their wide-ranging voyages across the Mediterranean exposed them to all kinds of advances which they incorporated into their culture.

By the time we read about here, the Philistines were a good 150 years ahead of Israel.

Their superiority meant their ability to dominate Israel for an entire generation.

**2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, [about 15 miles from Jerusalem] of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.**

We never do get her name.

### **3 And the Angel of the LORD . . .**

As is so often the case with this phrase, “The angel of the Lord” this isn’t merely a messenger, it’s Jesus Himself.

Just as He had appeared to Gideon, now He appears to Samson’s parents.

**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.”**

The message was that this woman’s barrenness would be removed with the conception & birth of a child who would grow to be Israel’s deliverer.

The woman was told to be sure not to drink any wine, nor to eat anything unkosher, or to allow the child’s hair to be cut.

All because he was to be devoted to the vow of the nazirite.

The word ‘nazirite’ means “to separate/consecrate”

It has nothing to do with the village of Nazareth.

Rather, it was something God provided for in the law to allow people to show a season of special devotion to Him.

In Numbers 6:1-21 the rules for the nazirite vow are described.

- A person wasn’t allowed to drink any alcohol, & just to make sure they didn’t they were to draw the line well back from it by also abstaining from anything **grown** on the vine; grapes, raisins.
- They were also to make sure they didn’t come into contact with any dead body by which they would become ritually unclean.
- Finally, they were not to cut their hair.

We’ll see why these three prohibitions were important this coming Sunday.

What’s important to notice here is that Samson’s mother was told that she was to take care toward these things, because as her



child developed in her, what she did affected him.  
Also, the Nazarite vow was usually something one did for only a period of time, maybe a year, or half a year.

Samson's vow was lifelong and began even before His birth.

**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.' "** **8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." 9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her.**

Manoah didn't just chalk up his wife's report about seeing an angel to her imagination.

He prayed about it and asked for confirmation and more detail.

So the messenger came again, but to the woman as before;

Manoah wasn't there.

**10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!" 11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I *am*." 12 Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass!* What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" 13 So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. 14 She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe." 15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we**

**will prepare a young goat for You.”**

Hospitality & entertaining strangers was an important mark of piety & morality & Manoah sense the need to show a warm welcome to this visitor so he asks if he would like some food.

**16 And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LORD.)** **17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What *is* Your name, that when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?”** **18 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?”**

While Manoah wanted to prepare a meal, the visitor said an *offering* would be more appropriate.

It’s clear this visitor is none other than Jesus when he identifies His name as Wonderful.

In Isa 9:6 we read –

**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

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**19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on—** **20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—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.** **21 When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD.**

Smart guy!

**22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!”**

Okay, maybe he’s not too smart!

**23 But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a**

**grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time.”**

She appears to have a lot more on the ball than her husband.

**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.**

This was a region in the center of Israel over which the Philistines had stretched their power.