

JUDGES 13:6-23 | FEAR AND FAITH

VERSE 6 -

Manoah's wife spoke from her perspective and knowledge. Though "**the angel of the LORD**" (v. 3) came, she simply understood him to be "**a man of God**." However, she knew that something was different with his countenance, an observation that made her curious about his true identity.

Two words in the verse require clarification based on their usage in the King James Version (KJV) and their translation from Hebrew. The first word, "**countenance**", in the KJV connotes more than just a face—it refers to the overall appearance or visible form of someone. This translation aligns with the Hebrew word "mar'eh," used in the original text, which suggests an extraordinary or divine visual aspect.

The second word, "**terrible**", has undergone a change in meaning over time. In the KJV, and the context of the time it was written, "terrible" had the connotation of "awe-inspiring" or "fearfully great" rather than its modern usage which leans more towards causing fear or terror. The angel's "terrible" countenance, therefore, refers to a visage that was imposing, majestic, or divine, befitting "**the angel of the LORD**" (v. 3).

VERSE 7 -

In verses 4-5, the Angel of the LORD initially reveals the special rules that would govern the life of the child to be born. Now, in verse 7, as the message is being relayed by Manoah's wife, there is an explicit confirmation that the child, Samson, is to be a Nazarite, not just from the womb, but for his entire life, '**from the womb to the day of his death**.' This underscores the extraordinary divine assignment bestowed upon Samson, that he was to be sanctified to God even before birth and throughout his lifetime.

Interestingly, in this retelling, there is no mention of the prophecy that the child will '**deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines**' (v. 5). Whether this omission is meaningful or not is uncertain; it could simply reflect the nuances in the storytelling process, where certain aspects are emphasized while others are relegated to the background. Regardless, the central theme remains - the forthcoming birth of a child destined for an extraordinary lifelong dedication to God's service.

VERSE 8 -

One can only imagine the emotions that must have been in Manoah's mind and heart at this moment. Whatever those feelings may have been, Manoah immediately expresses full faith in what his wife reported and goes straight to the LORD, asking for a return visit. This tells us something about Manoah's faith and faithfulness during this time.

Manoah wants the Visitor to "**teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born**." This expression of full faith indicates an unwavering belief that the child will indeed be born. Manoah simply seeks further guidance.

Though not explicitly stated in the text, it seems almost certain that God chose Manoah and his wife because of their righteousness.

VERSE 9 -

Verses 8-9 underscore an important aspect of biblical language and theology: the interchangeability between "LORD" and "God." When "**Manoah intreated the LORD**" (v. 8), we see him calling on the covenant name for God, YAHWEH. In response, "**God hearkened to the voice of Manoah**" (v. 9). This interchangeability continues with the reappearance of the divine messenger, previously described as "**the angel of the LORD**" (v. 3), who now "**came again**" as "**the angel of God**."

The interchangeability of these terms for God not only emphasizes the unity of God's identity but also underscores His different aspects, as YAHWEH (the covenant-keeping God) and ELOHIM (the mighty creator).

As in the previous encounter, "**Manoah her husband WAS not with her.**" The text leaves us pondering why the angel consistently appeared to Manoah's wife in his absence. Was God testing their faith? Was there a particular virtue in Manoah's wife that warranted the divine visits? Or was God acknowledging and addressing her barren state in a special way? These questions invite us to dig deeper into the text, even as we recognize that we can only speculate given the narrative's silence on these details.

#### VERSES 10-11 -

When the man of God reappeared, Manoah's wife wasted no time in fetching her husband. Her quick reaction shows the deep respect and urgency she attached to this unique encounter. Her promptness offers a glimpse of her understanding that this was no ordinary visitor.

On meeting the man, Manoah seeks confirmation if this was the same person who spoke to his wife. This shows Manoah's cautious nature and his desire to verify things for himself, despite his wife's report. Perhaps he is grappling with the reality of this extraordinary visitor, or maybe he wants to hear the man's words firsthand.

The man's response, "**I AM**," needs careful understanding. The word "**am**" is italicized in the King James Version, indicating an addition by the translators. In Hebrew, a simple "I" would suffice as an affirmation, but English grammar requires a verb of being. This pattern is seen elsewhere in the Bible (Genesis 27:24, 32; 28:13; 25:4; 2 Samuel 20:17; 1 Kings 13:14), implying an affirmation without attributing the sense of "**the great I AM**" from Exodus 3:14.

#### VERSE 12 -

Manoah's response is a reflection of his earlier reaction to his wife's report (v. 8). He doesn't challenge the reality of the birth of the child. Instead, he is already anticipating the responsibilities that come with raising this special child, asking, "**How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?**"

Manoah's questions expose his deep concern for what's to come. He comprehends the extraordinary nature of the child they are to raise, and he seeks guidance from God. These queries run parallel, both revolving around the type of life rules they should instill in their child. This goes beyond ordinary parental worries – it's about how to raise a child with a unique calling.

Manoah does not merely accept the prophetic revelation; he actively seeks to understand how he can best fulfill his role in God's plan. This gives us insight into his character, showcasing his humility, a strong sense of responsibility, and respect for the mandate they've received from God.

#### VERSES 13-14 -

Once again, we have the confirmation from the text that this is "**the angel of the LORD**" (v. 13). He gives instructions to Manoah's wife that align with a Nazarite vow, underscoring the sacred nature of her pregnancy and the child she will bear.

These verses give us profound insights into how God views an unborn child. The child was to be "**a Nazarite unto God from the womb**" (v. 5). Moreover, the behavior of Manoah's wife was expected to reflect the sanctity of her child's vow. What she did, particularly in terms of consuming alcohol or non-kosher foods, would impact her child and potentially infringe on his Nazarite vow. This suggests that the conditions of the vow were in effect even before birth, possibly as early as the first trimester.

This perspective provides an insight into a Biblical understanding of personhood, indicating that such a status is conferred upon a child from the moment of conception. This has implications for our understanding of the sanctity of life and respect for its beginnings at conception.

#### VERSE 15-16 -

Out of respect, Manoah desires to offer a meal, a typical ancient Near Eastern form of hospitality towards an honored guest. However, the angel of the LORD, perhaps perceiving that Manoah has not fully grasped His true nature, tells him, "**if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD.**" This subtle redirection serves as an indication of the divine nature of the

Messenger, considering that a burnt offering, a form of worship and atonement, would only be appropriate towards God. This exchange between Manoah and the angel further illustrates Manoah's growing awareness of the divine nature of their guest.

#### VERSE 17 -

Manoah's request to know the name of the Messenger signifies not just his lack of knowledge, but also a respectful curiosity and an awareness that there is more to his guest than meets the eye. Within the cultural context of the ancient Near East, names often held profound symbolic meanings, often reflecting a person's character or destiny. Therefore, Manoah's question underlines his growing recognition of the exceptional significance of their visitor. His request to know the name indicates his desire to comprehend more fully the nature of the one who has brought such significant news.

#### VERSE 18 -

The response of the Messenger is packed with meaning. Acknowledging the deep significance and revelation of the name, "**Why do you ask about my name, since it is secret?**" This response both answers and does not answer the inquiry. The word "**secret**" is translated as "**wonderful**" in Psalm 139:6. And, in a slightly different form, it is famously used in Isaiah 9:6 where it is said of the Messiah, "**His name shall be called Wonderful.**"

If a reader was previously unaware of the identity of the Angel as the Second Person of the Trinity, these words would surely elicit further investigation. Who else but the Second Person of the Trinity would have a "secret" name?

#### VERSE 19 -

In response to the angel's statement, Manoah took "**a kid,**" a term used in the Bible to reference any small livestock, and "**offered it upon a rock unto the LORD.**" Manoah's action does not align with the standard Levitical law for burnt offerings. However, during this time of social and political upheaval, it might have been impractical or even impossible to observe the Torah strictly by going to the Priest and offering the sacrifice at the prescribed location at the Tabernacle.

Despite the unusual circumstances, the response seems to be positive, as implied by the phrase, "**the angel did wondrously.**" Interestingly, the word 'wondrously' is a verb form of the 'secret' or 'wonderful' word used by the angel to describe his name earlier in the conversation. This suggests that even in their unconventional worship, the divine nature of the guest is affirmed.

#### VERSES 20-21 -

The awe-inspiring act of the Messenger is manifest as He ascends to heaven in the flame of the burnt offering. This extraordinary occurrence affirms that this was indeed an 'angel of the LORD' (v. 21). It's worth noting that although the Hebrew text does not include a definite article, its absence doesn't necessarily denote an indefinite status in Hebrew. In this case, the KJV translators were likely exercising caution by not explicitly inserting one, as they had done in verse 3.

#### VERSE 22 -

Manoah's response, "**We shall surely die, because we have seen God,**" likely stemmed from his understanding of Exodus 33:20, where it's stated that no one can see God and live. However, this assertion needs to be juxtaposed with other biblical instances, such as when Jacob wrestled with God and survived (Gen. 32:30), or when Moses conversed with the Lord face-to-face and lived (Num. 12:8). These instances suggest a Trinitarian nature of God, where the direct vision of God the Father would be lethal, but encounters with God the Son, incarnate in human form, are survivable and life-changing.

#### VERSE 23 -

In response to Manoah's concern, his wife brings a logical perspective to the situation, essentially asking, "Why would God reveal these prophecies and instructions to us if He intended to kill us?" This verse illustrates the importance of employing logic and reason in our interactions and understanding of the Lord's actions and revelations.

VERSE 24 -

The narrative then fast forwards to the birth of the child, omitting the details of the pregnancy. The child is named "Samson," derived from the Hebrew name "Shimshon," meaning "like the sun." This may indicate his parents' hopeful aspiration that he would bring a ray of 'sunlight' into the dark circumstances of the Hebrew people.

VERSE 25 -

In this verse we get a sense of God's Spirit working in the Hebrew Scriptures. We are told that **"the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times."** This is the pattern of the Third Person of the Trinity in the Old Testament.

👉 Here are several previous occurrences in which God's Spirit was working in the Bible.

- **Joseph:** In Genesis 41:38, Pharaoh recognizes that the Spirit of God is in Joseph after he interprets Pharaoh's dreams.
- **Bezalel:** In Exodus 31:1-3, the Spirit of God fills Bezalel, giving him wisdom, understanding, and skills in all manner of craftsmanship to build the Tabernacle.
- **The Elders and Joshua:** In Numbers 11:16-17, 25-29, the Spirit of God comes upon the seventy elders and Joshua, enabling them to prophesy.
- **Othniel:** In Judges 3:10, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Othniel, and he becomes Israel's judge and goes to war.
- **Gideon:** In Judges 6:34, the Spirit of the Lord clothes Gideon, empowering him to lead Israel against the Midianites.
- **Jephthah:** In Judges 11:29, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Jephthah, driving him to fight the Ammonites.