

JUDGES 13:24-25 | A CHILD IS BORN

Note: Judges 13:24-25 notes were included on session 3 but not covered in the presentation.

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 </aside>

JUDGES 14:1-4 | THE LORD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

VERSE 1 -

We now fast forward to Samson's adulthood, though his age is unknown. He may be anywhere from mid-teens to mid-twenties.

Samson traveled to Timnath, a city in southwest Israel located in the same region where he lived. The area was dominated by Philistines. The only other mention of the city is in Genesis 38, where the story of another of God's "chosen" men and a woman, Judah and Tamar, is told. Timnath has been discovered and explored by archaeologists in modern times.

The woman Samson encountered was **"of the daughters of the Philistines."** This bit of information sets the stage for the tension of the incident, in which the Nazarite from birth meets a girl from the "enemy camp."

VERSE 2 -

In ancient Hebrew culture, marriage often involved the parents. It would not have been unusual for a young man to involve his parents in finding a wife. Although the phrase may be seen as demanding or rude, it is difficult to know if this was the intended interpretation.

The text does show that Samson had a strong and direct desire for this young woman. The demanding nature of his request may have been more a reflection of cultural norms and directness of language than an indication of rudeness or arrogance.

However, Samson is a complex character, and his actions and words throughout the Biblical narrative do not always align with ideal behavior. His request could be indicative of his impulsive nature, which is evident in various episodes of his life story.

It is worth noting that the Torah does not specifically prohibit a Hebrew man from marrying a Philistine woman. While such a marriage may not have been advisable for various reasons, there was no direct prohibition. Passages such as Deuteronomy 7:1-4 specifically prohibited intermarriage with Canaanites, but the Philistines were not considered Canaanites. The Israelite sons were prohibited from marrying Canaanites because **"they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods"** (Deut. 7:4). Additionally, a strong argument can be made that the Canaanites were descended from Nephilim, and the prohibition was mainly rooted in this cause.

VERSE 3 -

This verse suggests that Samson had a stubborn nature from his youth. Manoah expresses frustration with his son in his question, **"IS THERE never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren?"** However, we should be cautious when reading emotions into text that are not explicitly stated. Nonetheless, it would be natural for a faithful Jew to feel frustrated. This frustration is further demonstrated by the phrase **"uncircumcised Philistines,"** which emphasizes that the Philistines were not only their enemies, but also not Jewish.

Despite this, Samson replies, **"Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well."** The Hebrew text is interesting here. In verse 1, Samson **"saw a woman."** In verse 2, he said, **"I have seen a woman."** Now he says, **"she pleaseth me well."** The Hebrew underlying this phrase is literally "she is right in my eyes." It appears that Samson is making a judgment based on physical appearance alone.

👉 There should be a balance in our lives between what is aesthetically pleasing, including human physical appearance, and other important values. While appearance is valuable and should be considered for ourselves and our children, it can become an all-consuming value if left unchecked. Therefore, it is important to prioritize our values carefully.

We should make a note about the woman being among the **"uncircumcised Philistines."** It is important to remember that Ruth was from among uncircumcised Moabites and yet still became a perfectly acceptable and honorable wife for Boaz. She is even considered one of the most honored women in Judaism. While the scene presented may be problematic on several levels, it does not necessarily need to be interpreted as inherently sinful. The woman of Timnah, for example, could convert to Judaism in the same manner as Ruth. This understanding will be important as we move into verse 4.

VERSE 4 -

This verse adds a layer of intrigue to the narrative that is often left out in retellings. It was the LORD who arranged Samson's marriage, which poses several thought-provoking questions about God's role in Samson's life and actions:

1. Would the LORD have led Samson, who had taken a Nazarite vow, to be unfaithful to that vow by arranging a marriage with a Philistine woman?
2. Did Samson know that the LORD had arranged this marriage, and if so, was he righteous in insisting to **"get her for me to wife"** (v. 1)? Notice that the text simply says **"his father and his mother knew not that it WAS of the LORD,"** with no mention of Samson's knowledge.
3. Did Samson have a choice in the matter, since the LORD devised the plan?

To fully understand Samson's life, we must take into account that God **"sought an occasion against the Philistines."** This adds complexity to Samson's character and his relationship with God that is often left out of the discussion, making the discussion biased against Samson from the beginning.