



## Naso: Judges 13:2-25

In the centuries after Joshua's conquest of Canaan, "there was no king in Israel," as the Book of Judges emphasizes. A historical pattern recurs: the Israelites sin by worshipping the idols of local nations they failed to drive from the Land; God punishes them by having enemies attack; God appoints an ad-hoc savior (a "judge") to fight off Israel's enemy; peace is obtained; Israel sins, and the cycle starts over.

The Haftarah opens after a period of Israelite sin. God sent the Philistines from the Mediterranean to settle along Canaan's southern coast, where they dominated for forty years (13:1). The Haftarah recounts the miraculous experiences surrounding the birth of Samson, who will "begin to save Israel from the Philistines."<sup>1</sup> It takes place near Philistine territory, in the town of Tzorah belonging to the tribe of Dan, north of ancient and modern Beit Shemesh. Samson's birth is heralded by two angelic visits to his parents, particularly his barren mother. The angel instructs her to raise him as a Nazarite from the womb, and to adopt certain Nazarite and other practices while pregnant. (Unlike the Parashah's Nazirite laws, she and the boy are not instructed to avoid contact with corpses and are told not to eat impure food.) Notably, Manoah and his wife mistake the angel for a man of God until, at the conclusion of their second encounter, it ascends heavenward in the flame of their sacrifice to God. Manoah fears their encounter with an angel portends their death, but his wife argues that the extraordinary events they experienced indicate God's favor. Regardless, God favors Samson as his extraordinary career as he grows into an Israelite savior.

### Haftarah Breakdown

**Verses 13:2-5:** An angel appears to Manoah's barren wife to report that she is pregnant with a son who will begin to save Israel from the Philistines. Since he will be Nazarite from the womb, she must observe Nazarite practices while pregnant.

Judges 13:3	שופטים י"ג:ג
The Lord's angel appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren, and have not borne. You shall conceive and bear a son."	וַיֵּרָא מֵלֶאדָה ה' אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הֲבַיִתָּךְ אִתְּךָ עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יִלְדָּתְךָ וְהָרִיתְךָ וְיִלְדָּתְךָ בֵּן:

**Verses 13:6-7:** She tells Manoah that a man of God appeared to her, informing her that she is pregnant with a son. Since his appearance was as fearsome as an angel, she didn't ask the man's name or origin. She recounts his commands, adding that the son will be a Nazarite until his death but omitting their son's destiny as Israel's savior.

Judges 13:7	שופטים י"ג:ז
He [the"man"] said to me, "Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now do not drink wine or strong drink and do not eat anything defiled, for the child shall be a Nazir of God from the womb to the day of his death."	וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הַגֹּדֵף הַרְהוּ וְיִלְדָּתְךָ בֵּן וְעַלֶּמָה אֶל־תִּשְׁתִּי וְיֵין וְשִׁכָר וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלִי כֹל־טְמֵאָה כִּי־נָזִיר אֶלְקִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר מִן־הַבֶּטֶן עַד־יוֹם מוֹתוֹ: {פ}

**Verses 13:8-11:** God grants Manoah's request for the man of God to appear again so that they may know how to raise the child. The man appears to his wife only, who summons Manoah. The man confirms to Manoah that he previously spoke with Manoah's wife.

Judges 13:11	שופטים י"ג:יא
Manoah arose and went after his wife. He came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man that spoke to the woman?" He said, "I am."	וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ מִנֹּחַ אַחֲרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲאֵתָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבְרָתְךָ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי:

<sup>1</sup> The Philistines remain Israel's foes for generations after Samson's dramatic death, until King David's time.

Verses 13:12-14: Manoah asks the man rules for raising the boy. He repeats that Manoah's wife must fulfill the Nazarite commands he gave her, which he repeats.

Judges 13:13	שופטים י"ג:י"ג
The Lord's angel said to Manoah, "All that I said to the woman, she must keep."	וַיֹּאמֶר מְלָאָךְ ה' אֶל־מְנוּחַ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־אָמַרְתִּי אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה תִשְׁמַר:

Verses 13:15-19: Unaware that the "man" is an angel, Manoah offers him food. He declines, instead suggesting a burnt offering to God. Manoch asks the man's name to honor him when his words come true but the man refuses. As Manoah makes a burnt offering to God, he and his wife see the man act miraculously.

Judges 13:16	שופטים י"ג:ט"ז
The Lord's angel said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat of your bread. If you will make a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord." For Manoah did not know that he was an angel of the Lord.	וַיֹּאמֶר מְלָאָךְ ה' אֶל־מְנוּחַ אִם־תַּעֲצֹרֵנִי לֹא־אֲכַל בְּלֶחְמֶךָ וְאִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה עֹלָה לֵה' תַעֲלֶנָּה בִּי לֹא־יִנְדַע מְנוּחַ כִּי־מְלָאָךְ ה' הוּא:

Verses 13:20-23: Seeing the man ascend to heaven amidst their offering's fire, Manoah and his wife fall on their faces. Realizing they have seen an angel, Manoah fears that they will die. His wife disagrees, arguing that God's acceptance of their offering is a sign of divine favor, as are the angel's tidings to them.

Judges 13:23	שופטים י"ג:כ"ג
His wife said to him, "If the Lord desired to kill us, He would not have taken a burnt offering and a meal offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He now have told us such things."	וַתֹּאמֶר לּוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ לִוִּי חָפֵץ ה' לְהַמִּיתֵנוּ לֹא־לָקַח מִזְבְּנוֹ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְלֹא הִרְאָנוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה וְכֵלֶּת לֹא הִשְׁמִיעֵנוּ כְּזֹאת:

Verses 24-25: Manoah's wife delivers and names her son Samson. As Samson grows, God blesses and inspires him.

Judges 13:24	שופטים י"ג:כ"ד
The woman bore a son and called his name, Samson. The lad grew, and the Lord blessed him.	וַתֵּלֵד הָאִשָּׁה בֶן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שַׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנְּעָר וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ ה':

## Connection

The blessing recited after relieving oneself, "אשר יצר/Who created", concludes with the phrase "ומפליא לעשות/Who acts wondrously" which many commentators trace to the **description of the man/angel's actions** in the Haftarah (13:19). Similarly, R. Moses Isserles ("Rema") interprets this phrase as describing the **miraculous fusion of body and soul**.

Darchei Moshe, Orach Chaim 6:2	דרכי משה, אורח חיים, ו'ב'
...“Who acts wondrously” refers to the soul which God placed into a person. It is a tremendous wonder that something spiritual, from the highest realms, can exist in the physical matter of the human body in this world. which is from the lowest realms. It is impossible for the soul to perform its work, to contemplate intellectual matters, so long as a person is sick in one of his organs, because the body's pain impedes the soul's work. Therefore, the blessing's conclusion states that God is “Healer of all flesh”, by which “He acts wondrously”, causing the soul to be bound with the body.	...מפליא לעשות קאי על הנשמה שנתן באדם וזו היא פליאה גדולה שיתקיים דבר רוחני והוא מן העליונים בדבר גשמי בגוף האדם שהיא מן התחתונים ואי אפשר לנשמה לעשות פעולתו להשכיל במושכלות בעוד שאדם חולה בר מינן באחד מאיבריו כי כאב גופו מטרידו מלעשות פעולתו וע"כ אמר רופא חולי כל בשר ועל ידי זה מפליא לעשות שהנשמה נקשרת בגוף