

Judges Chapter 13 Part 1

This week, we start chapter 13. Samson is the last of the judges in the book of Judges. Samuel is also a judge but he is in the book of Samuel.

Here is a summary from Robby Dean that I will use as an overview of things to come.

“Nine points we need to pay attention to or we will miss the spiritual lesson of the passage”

“1) Both Samson and Israel are chosen by God to perform a mission of deliverance apart from their own volition. God chooses Samson, imposes a Nazirite vow on him, before he is ever born. Israel is called as Abram, but the nation isn't born until they go to Egypt and then come out in the Exodus, but they are called by Abraham for a mission that they are going to be the means by which God is going to bless the entire world. Israel is going to be the light to the Gentiles. It is through Samson that God is going to bless and deliver the nation.

2) Both Samson and Israel are born miraculously. Israel is born miraculously at the Exodus through all of the ten plagues and then the departure and the parting of the Red Sea. Samson is born miraculously because his mother is barren and yet God brings life into that womb.

3) Both Samson and Israel are born in the midst of a pagan environment and called to a life of separation and devotion to God.

4) Both Samson and Israel succumb to the lure of the pagan environment. Samson is drawn to foreign women. He never saw a woman he didn't lust after. Israel is drawn to foreign gods, called in Scripture spiritual adultery and playing the harlot.

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5) Both Samson and Israel seek peaceful co-existence with the pagan environment around them.

6) Neither Samson nor Israel seem overly concerned with God. They are not operating on positive volition, they don't have a tremendous spiritual inclination. Samson is physically blind at the end and that is a picture for us of Israel's spiritual blindness.

7) Both Samson and Israel want to manipulate God to their own ends and purposes. At the end Samson says, "God, if you'll just give me my strength back I'll attack the Philistines." What he really wanted was vengeance.

8) Both Samson and Israel are protected by God despite their disobedience. This gets to the heart of the whole issue. This shows the emphasis on free will and the way that God's sovereignty overrides the negative volition of man. God is still going to accomplish His purposes of blessing all the nations even when Israel just wants to play the harlot with all the idols and false religions of the cultures around her."

9) The plan of God is not creaturely dependent. None of us are so vital and so important that the plan of God hinges on our obedience or disobedience. God is going to accomplish His will and plan in human history despite our negative volition. The issue then is, are we going to be obedient and enjoy blessings of God in the midst of the outworking of His plan or are we going to be disobedient and just get a lot of suffering and heartache and misery? God is still going to accomplish His plan. The issue is whether we are going to have happiness and blessing or have misery and sorrow.

Judges 13:1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord

gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.

Again. This is the first word in the sentence. Repeatedly, I have said this is not an adverb. It is a verb! “Again” is not necessarily a bad translation, but it obscures the thrust of the word in the Hebrew. “They continued...” is perhaps a better translation. This has been used multiple times previously; “déjà vu all over again.”

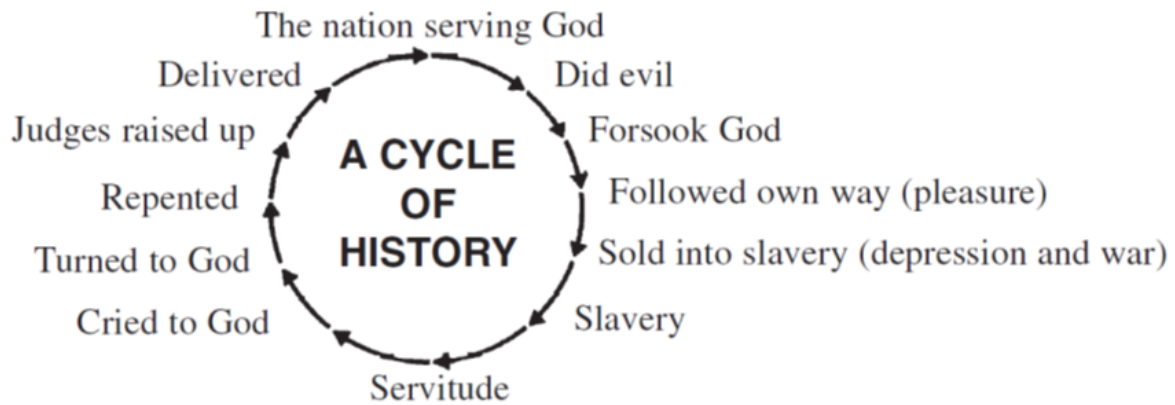
Here, for review purposes, is the list of “again” in the book of Judges. This outline of the sections is based upon a combination of Thomas Constable, J. Vernon McGee and Robert Chisholm.

1. The first apostasy 3:7-11 [judge: Othniel] 3:7 “The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,...”
2. The second apostasy 3:12-31 [judge: Ehud] 3:12 “Now the sons of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the Lord.”
3. The third apostasy chapters 4-5 [judge: Deborah and Barak] 4:1 “Then the sons of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the Lord...”
4. The fourth apostasy 6:1-10:5 [judge: Gideon] 6:1 “Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.”
5. The fifth apostasy 10:6-12:15 [judge: Jephthah] 10:6 “Then the sons of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the Lord,...”
6. The sixth apostasy chapters 13-16 [judge: Samson] 13:1 “Now the sons of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the Lord,...”

To do. This is coupled with another word in the Hebrew for a one two verbal punch, “They continued to do evil.” The doing is an infinitive. They intended to do evil. They wanted to do evil. In previous accounts and in the paradigm in chapter 2, they abandoned God/Yahweh. They knew it was wrong but did it anyway!

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Below is the paradigm as illustrated by J. Vernon McGee:



J. Vernon McGee, <https://ttb.org/docs/default-source/notes-outlines/>

The Samson narrative is the last in these cycles.

In the sight. Literally, in the two eyes. The translation is not bad. It just obscures the anthropomorphism of God having “eyes.”

I might translate this verse more literally as, “They continued, the sons of Israel, to do evil in the eyes of God, so as a result, He gave them into the hand (singular) of the Philistines.

Note here that once again the Philistines are the enemy. At the beginning of these six cycles, the Philistines were dealt with under Shamgar (deliverer #2). Here under Samson, the Philistines are again dealt with. But they will continue to be an enemy.

Let me go back and explain a few things about the Philistines. Often commentators emphasize that the Philistines were “Greek Sea Peoples.” Well, it is a little more complicated than that. But rather than me try to put some material together, I will just quote Robby Dean on this topic:

“There is a lot of talk about who the Philistines were and to understand that we are going to have to go back and look at a couple of passages of Scripture. Normally the Philistines are referred to as the Greek Sea

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Peoples, but that is almost a misrepresentation because that implies that they were Greek and they were not Greek. Genesis 10, the Table of Nations: verse 14, "And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistine,) and Caphtorim." Caphtorim is an ancient name for Crete that the Philistines and the Caphtorim have their genealogical root not in Japheth, not in the Greeks up in the north, but they are related to the Egyptians—Mizraim, v. 13. Therefore they are not Greeks, though often that misidentification is made. Later on in the Scriptures in Ezekiel 25:15-16; Zephaniah 2:4, 5; Jeremiah 47:4 they are all mentioned as having come from either Caphtor or Chereth, alternative names for Crete. So that identification stands. Then, in Amos 9:7 God makes a comparison statement: "Just as I brought Israel out of Egypt, I brought the Philistines out of Caphtor." This seems to suggest that just as Egypt was not the original home of the Jews, Caphtor is not the original home of the Philistines. That means they came from somewhere else, probably Egypt, and then they went up Caphtor where there is an intermingling with the Greeks, and then they come over to the shore of the Mediterranean and establish colonies along the coast and establish a beachhead in the land of Canaan. Then as time went by there is this merger. There is more people that come down from either Greece or the Carthaginians and they intermingle with the people who originally established the colonies along the coast of Canaan. The first major mention of the Philistines is in Genesis 20 where Abraham has some dealings with the king of the Philistines whose name is Abimelech. Right there we see that Abimelech is not just a personal name but was a Philistine title for king. So there was more going on when Gideon named his son Abimelech than we met on the surface. He is giving his son a Philistine title of monarchy. In Genesis 20 Abraham is trying to solve the famine problem by going to the Philistines and then lying, using deception. He is using all the human viewpoint problem-solving devices and, of course, whenever we do that and arrogance is in control of the

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soul--always related to trying to solve problems on our own terms--eventually it is going to cause problems. It did, especially for Abimelech. In v. 4 he calls God, not Yahweh, a title related to the Abrahamic covenant, but he calls Him Elohim which indicates that Abimelech has a knowledge of God. His response in this section and his response also when Isaac does the same thing and goes to the Philistines in a time of famine. What we see here is that the Philistines at this time seem to be positive, seem to understand something about the Abrahamic covenant, something about God, but by the time we see them in Exodus chapter thirteen they are antagonistic. So negative volition sets in between Genesis 20 and 26 and Exodus. At this point in Genesis they are not anti-Semitic, they are not against Israel, they are not hostile to Israel, in fact they play a protective role and are responsive to God's mandates. By Exodus we see the national character has been hardened. During that 550-year period the ethnic Philistines that began with Abimelech changed. They are infiltrated by a number of Greek peoples, the descendants of Japheth, and so the Philistine culture becomes a melting pot--"multicultural"! As they become multicultural they begin to absorb everybody's religious systems. In fact, the three main god's that we see the Philistines have by the time we get into Samuel are Dagon, Baalzebul, and Ashterah. Those three names are all Semitic names, so they've got Semitic gods. They just assimilated everybody's religious system and that is how they keep peace, they blend the cultures together. Goliath was not a native Philistine, he was one of the Anakim. The Philistines had their purity wiped out through assimilation with other groups. There was an amalgamation of people and that affects their religious views. The point to be made about that is that this is exactly the kind of attitude that had taken over in Israel. It is a relativism; it is that any god works. Let's not offend anybody by talking about the fact that there is only one God. And remember that all religious systems that

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worship something other than God are based on idolatry which is based on demonism. Deuteronomy 32:16,17; Psalm 96:5.”

<https://deanbible.org/old-testament-menuitem/judges-menuitem/message/2000-judges-044/read>

Forty years. This is the same number of years that Israel was in the desert. You might think of it as a generation. There is now a new generation who have turned their backs on God/Yahweh. In the desert the new generation turned toward God, but not here in the book of Judges.

Judges 13:2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children.

Certain man. A specific individual. Literally “one” man. Here is a thread in the fabric of Scripture. Minoah is one man who appears to have some faith. The Angel of the Lord is referred to as a “man of God.” Samson is a solitary man, devoid of an army, that fights against Israel's enemy in spite of Israel's assimilation into that foreign culture.

Man. Note who is called a man. Here it is Manoah. But there is another “man” in the chapter.

Zorah. Per Merrill Unger, this means, stroke, scourge, hornet. It is “a town of Dan, but really within the limits of Judah (Josh. 19:41; Judg. 8:12)

Dan. A “loser” tribe. Interesting that the name means “judge.” When the tribe of Dan entered their allotted land to take possession of it, they failed.

Judges 1:34 Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;

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Interesting, this matches the sequence of judges in the book of Judges. It started with Othniel from the tribe of Judah who was victorious over the enemy. It now ends with Samson from the tribe of Dan who only was partially successful. He only began to be successful against the Philistines. In the sequence of events in chapter 1, Judah was the first to take possession of its allotted land (Judges 1:1-2). Dan was the last. Except, Dan was unable to take its allotted land. Instead, the Amorites forced the tribe of Dan into the hills (Judges 1:34 which I just quoted above).

As we will see, Samson, the last judge did not die at a ripe old age or in peace. No, he died while in the midst of delivering/saving Israel. The Angel of the Lord said (I am quoting the next verses to make my point but will return to verse 2 before proceeding in the study:

Judges 13:3 Then the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.”

Judges 13:4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.

Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

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A type of Christ?

Christ did not die in peace or of old age. He died in the midst of delivering Israel.

Matthew 1:21 She (Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Herman emphasized the “savior” typology of Samson. He was not the only one. Here is a pertinent quote from Dale Ralph Davis:

“We celebrate the birth of a far greater than Samson (i.e. Jesus Christ). That fact, however, should not cause us to take Samson lightly (no one ever did!). He, too, was a savior; at his birth a savior was born. Such is the keynote of chapter 13. As soon as Manoah’s wife is told she will bear a son, she hears of his mission: ‘And he [emphatic] will begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines’ (v. 5). This text is the hermeneutical star that must go before us as we work through the Samson materials. True, Samson will only begin to save, but even that constitutes him a savior. The theme is still salvation.”

Back to

Judges 13:2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children.

Manoah. His name means “rest.” We will see that he didn’t try to find out who his visitor was like Gideon did with his tests. Instead, Manoah trusted the visitor, the Angel of the Lord. Faith-Rest. The faith is implied by his actions. The “rest” is his name. This “certain” man seems to be special in that he has a modicum of faith.

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Wife. The wife is not named. The word can mean “woman.” So we have a “man” and a “woman.” In Genesis chapter 2, the man is “adam.” The word for woman is the same word for woman here in Judges chapter 13, Ishah.

His wife was barren and had borne no children. She is special. Like Job, she suffered for a special purpose. Out of that suffering came great blessing. We see this type of situation previous to this.

This condition is emphasized here. First the adjective barren. That would have been sufficient for us to understand the wife’s situation. But then, there is the verb, she had not given birth (children). There is no separate word for children, but that is understood in the verb. When the Angel of the Lord arrives, He will reiterate this condition. The emphasis is, apart from God, there is no hope. All we can do is faith and then rest (Manoah).

We need to pause and look at other barren women.

Again from Dale Ralph Davis, “This motif of the barren woman is a familiar pattern in Scripture. Sara anguished over her childlessness (Gen. 11:30-21:1). Rebekah’s first twenty years of marriage were childless (Gen. 25:19-26). Rachel was both barren and green with envy until she at last bore Joseph (Gen. 29:31-30:24). Then in post-Samson time we meet Hannah (1 Sam. 1) and Elizabeth (Luke 1).”

But there is something that the translations do not bring out correctly. Let Robby Dean explain.

“Behold, now [he arrests her attention], you are barren and bear no children; but you shall conceive”— and that is an incorrect translation, it is not a Hebrew imperfect continuing the narrative style, it is a perfect tense of the verb and should be translated "you have conceived." It is not a future tense, it is a past tense. He is announcing that she is now

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pregnant. There are two verbs here, first the verb *harah* which means to conceive, then the second verb *yalad* which means to give birth. There is a noun form of *harah* and it is *hareyon*, and it should be translated "conception" or "pregnant." However, there is no noun form of the verb *yalad*. That is really important to understand some crucial distinctions about the origin of life.”

If you look in your Bibles, you will note that they almost universally say “will conceive.” Yet, the NET Bible admits what Robby Dean is saying is true.

“Another option is to translate, “you are already pregnant and will have a son.” The earlier reference to her being infertile (v. 3) suggests that her conception is still future, but it is possible that the earlier statement only reflects her perspective (as far as she is concerned, she is infertile). According to this interpretation, in v. 5 the angel reveals the truth to her—actually she has recently conceived and is now pregnant (see the translation in R. G. Boling, *Judges [AB]*, 217). Usage favors this interpretation.”

I want to emphasize something here that others have not. Yes there were women who were barren. In at least six cases in the Bible the barrenness was from God to fulfill His purpose. The end result is a son who will be very special. The barren woman who suffers for a while receives great blessing as a result of giving birth to a very special son.

Take a look at three that are prior to Samson.

Abraham’s wife Sarai had no children.

Genesis 11:30 Sarai was barren; she had no child.

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Literally, Sarai, barren, none to her, child. Yet, when she does have a child, it is promised by the Angel of the Lord.

Genesis 17:19 But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

So the son born to Sarah is someone special with a special purpose from God. From barren and childless to an everlasting covenant. Jesus Christ will be a descendant of Isaac. Her child will be in the line of The Savior. That is pretty special.

Isaac’s wife Rebekah was also barren and had no children.

Genesis 25:21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Again, there was blessing out of barrenness. There were two sons, both blessed. But Jacob, the second borne received the birthright blessing. He was renamed by God. His children formed the basis of the nation of Israel. Jesus Christ was a descendant of Jacob/Israel. That again, is pretty special.

Jacob’s wife Rachel was also baren and childless.

Genesis 29:31 Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

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Genesis 30:22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.

Genesis 30:23 So she conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.”

Genesis 30:24 She named him Joseph, saying, “May the Lord give me another son.”

Rachel’s first borne after being barren was Joseph. He was someone very special. He became second in command to Pharaoh in Egypt. That also is pretty special.

Since Samuel and John the Baptist are future to the events in Judges, I will not cover them here.

So now in Judges chapter 13, Samson, the only borne son of Manoah and his wife will begin to deliver/save Israel from the Philistines.

The emphasis here is that God has a plan. Suffering of various kinds has a purpose in God’s plan. Trusting God will result in unexpected blessings.

Again from Dale Ralph Davis, “There is something missing, something we have come to expect. There is no statement between verse 1 and verse 2 about Israel ‘crying out’ to Yahweh in their distress (cf. 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6-7; 10:10).”

“We have already argued that Israel’s ‘crying out’ to Yahweh did not in itself involve repentance (see the discussion on 3:9 and footnotes there.) It is a cry for help in trouble rather than a confession of sin. Yet here in 13:1 their cry is missing. Here then is Israel who not only does not cry

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out in repentance from sin but also does not even cry out for relief from misery. They have, apparently, grown accustomed to servitude; in fact, in the Samson cycle, they are content with it, are surprised should anyone suggest otherwise (see 15:11).”

Gary Inrig is more assertive of the Israelite hostility toward Samson. “The people were slowly but surely losing their identity, but they were so ignorant of what was going on that when God did send Samson, they were ready to hand him over to death rather than to upset the Philistines.”

Isn't that similar to the time of Jesus? The Jews are under the thumb of the Romans. They are content to live under that system instead of having their own king. Indeed, they claim that Caesar is their king! And then they hand Jesus over to the Romans to be put to death!

John 19:14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he *said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!”

John 19:15 So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate *said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.

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John 11:48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

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Judges 13:3 Then the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.”

Angel of the Lord. This is the 2nd person of the Trinity, the pre-incarnate Christ.

Gary Inrig (Hearts of Iron Feet of Clay) says it nicely: “We have met Him before in Judges, both in the introductory section (2:1-5) and in the story of Gideon (6:11-24). In both of those situations we observed that this is neither a human messenger nor even an “ordinary” angel, but a visible manifestation of God Himself to a human being. The angel is, we saw, best thought of as the pre-incarnate Son of God, but, of course, those who encountered Him had no way of knowing that.”

You are barren and have borne no children. This sounds like He is rubbing this curse in. Instead, he springs right away to the promise that will solve this problem. Similar to the message to Marry in Luke chapter 1.

Luke 1:30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

Judges 13:4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.

From Robby Dean:

“Verse 4 -- "wine" is yayin which is the normal word for alcoholic, fermented beverage deriving from grapes. "Strong drink" is the Hebrew word shekar, referring to barley beer or ale. It did not refer to what we would call strong drink because they did not have distillation in the ancient world. "Nor eat any unclean thing"—they were so apostate in Israel now that they were eating all of the dietary prohibitions.”

Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

Again, Robby Dean has this covered.

Verse 5 – we need to look at Numbers chapter six to understand what is meant to be a Nazirite. Nazirite derives from the Hebrew word which means to make a vow. Vows were part of the Mosaic law, they were voluntary and they were temporary. That means it was up to the individual's volition as to whether they made a vow and it was not a permanent situation. It was temporary and when it was over with they

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had to make certain sacrifices to God to signify the end of that vow period. There were all kinds of vows but Numbers chapter six describes the vow of the Nazirite, a very special vow and a vow that had a very visible presence so that people would know you were a Nazirite. Because of the visibility of it, with the long hair, people would know that you were living a special kind of life. There is an expansion in Numbers to what we read in Judges, they were not to touch anything associated with the grape. Why? We read in the Psalms that wine was given to man for the joy of his soul. What this symbolizes is that this person who has taken a Nazirite vow is demonstrating that by his abstinence from wine his joy comes from God and not from anything else. So just to make sure there is no confusion over the issue he has to stay away from anything produced by the grape vine. Then in the second part of the vow, verse 5, "no razor shall pass over his head." He doesn't cut his hair and he is to let it grow long and flowing; "and he shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord." So it is temporary. Verse 6 – he shall not go near a dead body. The long hair is to tell everybody he is a Nazirite, a visual expression. But death is always a reminder of spiritual death and uncleanness in the Old Testament. The whole point that God is making through this visual training aid is that death comes from sin and I can't have anything to do with sin or its effects in my presence. I am a holy God and you cannot come into my presence at all if there is the least taint of sin in your life. Verse 7 – that is the most extreme situation. The most personal situation is when someone very close to you in your immediate family dies. The normal thing is to grieve and go to the funeral.”

Summary of Nazirite Requirements:

Long hair – Visual sign of a Nazirite

Grapes – Grapes provide joy; No grapes emphasizes joy comes from God

Unclean – Unclean is related to death and sin. Stay away from sin.

He shall begin to deliver Israel.