

Samson's Birth Announced

An angel appears to a barren woman, announcing she will bear a son who will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. The child must be a Nazirite, set apart for God's special purpose.

Judges 13:1-25

CHARACTERS: Angel of the Lord, Manoah, Manoah's wife, Samson

THEMES: Divine calling, Barrenness to blessing, Consecration, Obedience, God's deliverance

ISRAEL HAD FALLEN into sin again, and the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. During this time of oppression, there lived a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan. His wife was barren, unable to bear children—a source of deep sorrow in their culture.

One day the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife with astonishing news: 'You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son.' This was not just any child. The angel continued with specific instructions: 'You must not drink wine or other fermented drink, and you must not eat anything unclean. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.'

The Nazirite vow was a sacred commitment involving three main prohibitions: abstaining from wine and strong drink, avoiding contact with dead bodies, and never cutting one's hair. These outward signs marked an inward dedication to God. But this child would be a Nazirite from birth—chosen before he could choose, set apart for divine purpose.

The woman hurried to tell her husband. 'A man of God came to me. His appearance was like that of an angel of God, very awesome.' She recounted the message about their coming son.

Manoah prayed earnestly: 'Pardon your servant, Lord. I beg you to let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.' God heard his prayer, and the angel appeared again to his wife while she was in the field.

She ran to get Manoah, who asked the angel, 'When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule that governs the boy's life and work?'

The angel repeated the instructions, emphasizing that both mother and child must observe these restrictions. Manoah, not yet realizing he was speaking to the angel of the Lord, offered to prepare a meal. But the angel replied, 'Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord.'

Manoah asked the visitor's name. 'Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.'

Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and sacrificed them on a rock to the Lord. As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground, finally understanding who had visited them.

Manoah was terrified. 'We are doomed to die! We have seen God!'

But his wife reasoned wisely: 'If the Lord had meant to kill us, He would not have accepted our burnt offering, nor would He have shown us all these things or told us this.'

In time, the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him. The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. The child of promise was growing into his calling—a calling that would showcase

both God's power and human frailty, strength and weakness, destiny and choice.

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