

Mighty Samson

Judges 13:2-13:25 and 16:4-30

A certain man from Zorah was named Manoah. He was from the tribe of Dan. Manoah had a wife who wasn't able to have children.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife. He said, "You are not able to have children. But you are going to become pregnant. You will have a baby boy. Make sure you do not drink any kind of wine. Also make sure you do not eat anything that is 'unclean.'

"You will become pregnant. You will have a son. He must not use a razor on his head. He must not cut his hair. That is because the boy will be a Nazirite. He will be set apart to God from the day he is born. He will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines."

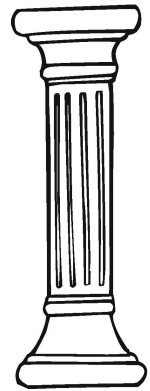
Then the woman went to her husband. She told him, "A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God. His appearance was so amazing that it filled me with great wonder. I didn't ask him where he came from. And he didn't tell me his name.

"But he said to me, 'You will become pregnant. You will have a son. So do not drink any kind of wine. Do not eat anything that is "unclean." That is because the boy will be a Nazirite. He will belong to God in a special way from the day he is born until the day he dies.' "

Then Manoah prayed to the Lord. He said, "Lord, I beg you to let the man of God you sent to us come again. He told us we would have a son. We want the man of God to teach us how to bring up the boy."

God heard Manoah. And the angel of God came again to the woman. He came while she was out in the field. But her husband Manoah wasn't with her. The woman hurried to her husband. She told him, "He's here! The man who appeared to me the other day is here!"

Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he spoke to him. He said, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?"



"I am," he replied.

So Manoah asked him, "What will happen when your words come true? What rules should we follow for the boy's life and work?"

The angel of the Lord answered him. He said, "Your wife must do everything I have told her to do. She must not eat anything that comes from grapevines. She must not drink any kind of wine. She must not eat anything that is 'unclean.' She must do everything I have commanded her to do."

Manoah spoke to the angel of the Lord. He said, "We would like you to stay and eat. We want to prepare a young goat for you."



The angel of the Lord replied, "Even if I stay, I will not eat any of your food. But if you still want to prepare a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord."

Manoah didn't realize it was the angel of the Lord. Then Manoah asked the angel of the Lord a question. "What is your name?" he said. "We want to honor you when your word comes true."

The angel replied, "Why are you asking me what my name is? You would not be able to understand it."

Manoah got a young goat. He brought it together with the grain offering. He sacrificed it on a rock to the Lord.

Then the Lord did an amazing thing. It happened while Manoah and his wife were watching. A flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven. The angel of the Lord rose up in the flame. When Manoah and his wife saw it, they fell with their faces to the ground.

The angel of the Lord didn't show himself again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized it was the angel of the Lord.

"We're going to die!" he said to his wife. "We've seen God!"

But his wife answered, "The Lord doesn't want to kill us. If he did, he wouldn't have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from us. He wouldn't have shown us all of those things. He wouldn't have told us we're going to have a son."

Later, the woman had a baby boy. She named him Samson. As he grew up, the Lord blessed him. The Spirit of the Lord began to work in his life. It happened while he was in Mahaneh Dan. It's between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Some time later, Samson fell in love. The woman lived in the Valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah.

The rulers of the Philistines went to her. They said, "See if you can get him to tell you the secret of why he's so strong. Find out how we can overpower him. Then we can tie him up. We can bring him under our control. Each of us will give you 28 pounds of silver."

So Delilah spoke to Samson. She said, "Tell me the secret of why you are so strong. Tell me how you can be tied up and controlled."

Samson answered her, "Let someone tie me up with seven new leather straps. They must be straps that aren't completely dry. Then I'll become as weak as any other man."

So the Philistine rulers brought seven new leather straps to her. They weren't completely dry. Delilah tied Samson up with them.

Men were hiding in the room. She called out to him. She said, "Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!"

But he snapped the leather straps easily. They were like pieces of string that had come too close to a flame. So the secret of why he was so strong wasn't discovered.

Delilah spoke to Samson again. "You have made me look foolish," she said. "You told me a lie. Come on. Tell me how you can be tied up."

Samson said, "Let someone tie me tightly with new ropes. They must be ropes that have never been used. Then I'll become as weak as any other man."

So Delilah got some new ropes. She tied him up with them. Men were hiding in the room. She called out to him. She said, "Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!"

But he snapped the ropes off his arms. They fell off just as if they were threads.

Delilah spoke to Samson again. "Until now, you have been making me look foolish," she said. "You have been telling me lies. This time really tell me how you can be tied up."

He replied, "Weave the seven braids of my hair into the cloth on a loom. Then pin my hair to the loom. If you do, I'll become as weak as any other man."

So while Samson was sleeping, Delilah took hold of the seven braids of his hair. She wove them into the cloth on a loom. Then she pinned his hair to the loom.

Again she called out to him. She said, "Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!"

He woke up from his sleep. He pulled up the pin and the loom, together with the cloth.

Then she said to him,

"How can you say, 'I love you'? You won't even share your secret with me. This is the third time you have made me look foolish. And you still haven't told me the secret of why you are so strong."

She continued to pester him day after day. She nagged him until he was sick and tired of it.

So he told her everything. "I've never used a razor on my head," he said. "I've never cut my hair. That's because I've been a Nazirite since the day I was born. A Nazirite is set apart to God. If you shave my head, I won't be strong anymore. I'll become as weak as any other man."

Delilah realized he had told her everything. So she sent a message to the Philistine rulers. She said, "Come back one more time. He has told me everything."

So the rulers returned. They brought the silver with them. Delilah got Samson to go to sleep on her lap. Then she called for a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair. That's how she began to bring him under her control. And he wasn't strong anymore.

She called out, "Samson! The Philistines are attacking you!"

He woke up from his sleep. He thought, "I'll go out just as I did before. I'll shake myself free."

But he didn't know that the Lord had left him.

Then the Philistines grabbed hold of him. They poked his eyes out. They took him down to Gaza. They put bronze chains around him. Then they made him grind grain in the prison. His head had been shaved. But the hair on it began to grow again.



The rulers of the Philistines gathered together. They were going to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They were going to celebrate. They said, "Our god has handed our enemy Samson over to us."

When the people saw Samson, they praised their god. They said,

"Our god has handed our enemy over to us.
Our enemy has destroyed our land.
He has killed large numbers of our people."

After they had drunk a lot of wine, they shouted, "Bring Samson out. Let him put on a show for us."

So they called Samson out of the prison. He put on a show for them.

They had him stand near the temple pillars. Then he spoke to the servant who was holding his hand. He said, "Put me where I can feel the pillars. I'm talking about the ones that hold the temple up. I want to lean against them."

The temple was crowded with men and women. All of the Philistine rulers were there. About 3,000 men and women were on the roof. They were watching Samson put on a show.

Then he prayed to the Lord. He said, "Lord and King, show me that you still have concern for me. God, please make me strong just one more time. Let me pay the Philistines back for what they did to my two eyes. Let me do it with only one blow."

Then Samson reached toward the two pillars that were in the middle of the temple. They held the temple up. He put his right hand on one of them. He put his left hand on the other. He leaned hard against them.

Samson said, "Let me die together with the Philistines!"

Then he pushed with all his might. The temple came down on the rulers. It fell on all of the people who were in it.