



"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."
—Martin Luther King Jr.

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Manoah (Part Two)

If professors and commentators think so little of Manoah, Samson's father—as documented in Part One—why would we want to consider him as an example of true masculinity? We need to look more closely at what Judges 13 says about him before we make a final judgment.

Manoah means "rest." From this definition, some commentators infer that he was sterile or low on testosterone. Some even claim he was mentally challenged. [Judges 13:2](#) says that his wife was "barren," and the Angel of the Lord mentions it again in verse 3. The Angel frames His statement to say that Manoah's wife, unable to conceive in the past, would do so in the future. A miracle is about to happen: He would heal her, just as He had for Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, and would do for Hannah and Elizabeth.

Jewish literature calls Manoah's wife one of the twenty-three "truly upright and righteous women who came forth from Israel." Consider the husbands of those barren women [God](#) healed, men like Abraham, [Isaac](#), and Jacob. These men had their faults, yes, but they are heroes of [faith](#). God does not seem to perform this type of miracle for dim-witted fools.

Of course, the Angel was none other than the God who later became [Jesus Christ](#). He accepts offerings in verse 16, and in verse 18, He refuses to give Manoah His name, saying, "It is a name of wonder" (*The Good News Bible*). The Hebrew word rendered "name of wonder" means "wonderful, incomprehensible, extraordinary." After seeing this Being rise in the flames (verse 20), Manoah says to his wife, probably with awe in his voice, "We have seen God!" (verse 22).

Manoah was a man of faith. Josephus writes, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, that Manoah was "a person of such great virtue, that he had few men his equal, and without dispute the principal person of his country." Of Manoah's wife, he comments: "He had a wife celebrated for her beauty, and excelling her contemporaries. He had no children; and, being uneasy at his want of posterity, he entreated God to give them seed of their own bodies to succeed them." One must read Josephus with caution, as he tends to embellish things to favor the Jews. Even so, his testimony is an excellent counterpoint to the modern, so-called intellectuals. His Manoah does not sound like a dim-witted, faithless, lazy man.

The Angel of the Lord appears first to Manoah's wife, an indication that she was indeed a godly woman. But, does this make Manoah less of a man? What does she do after this happens? She immediately tells her husband, giving him the details verbatim (verses 6-7) with no taunting or superiority. Their marriage, it appears, was a good one. They communicated with each other. There were no secrets. We could say they were on the same page.

In verse 8, Manoah prayed that God would send the Angel "to us again and teach us what we shall do for" their coming son. It is at this point that many commentators pile on Manoah, saying that he should have had faith in what his wife said and not bothered God any further, implying that he exposed a lack of faith. They also suggest that the Angel appeared to his wife in the first place because—remember, his name means "rest"—he was probably taking a nap.

Yet, "God listened to the voice of Manoah" (verse 9). God does not answer the prayers of sinners ([John 9:31](#); see [Isaiah 59:1-2](#); [I Peter 3:12](#); [Proverbs 1:28-30](#); [15:29](#); [28:9](#)), but He answered Manoah's prayer. The doubters shrug,

countering that the Angel reappeared to his wife, not Manoah, who, again, was likely napping.

In [Judges 13:10](#), after seeing the Angel again, "the woman ran in haste and told her husband." She looked to Manoah as the head of the family and immediately ran to find him. He immediately rises and follows her (verse 11), acting in haste, as the Hebrew word implies, to speak to the Angel. Notice verse 12. After hearing the Angel's confirmation of being the One who had spoken to his wife earlier, Manoah says, "Now let Your words come to pass!" He is excited, hopeful, and trusting, readily accepting that the miracle will occur as promised.

He asks nothing for himself or his wife, just for more details on his son's life and work. He realizes that there is more to this than the miracle of his wife's healing. His nation is in crisis under the heel of the Philistines, and his son is to be a Nazirite, separated out from all the other boys. In answer, the Angel reiterates what He had told Manoah's wife (verses 13-14). Critics read this as the Angel insulting him, saying essentially, "I already told your wife, the smarter of you two. Ask her." They altogether fail to see Manoah's humility. He does not respond with anger, bitterness, or sarcasm, simply asking if he and his wife could prepare a meal for the Angel (verse 15). He extends hospitality, even worship, because the goat they fix for Him becomes a burnt offering since the Angel says He would not eat their food (verse 16).

Consider what we have learned. Just because *Manoah* means "rest" in no way suggests that he was stupid, slow-witted, or lazy. Josephus says he had "few men his equals," so critics, it appears, read too much into his name. His wife, evidently a beautiful, righteous, and wise woman, married a humble man who realized he "married up" and considered her a full partner in their relationship. We see no signs of toxic masculinity in the record of his life.

The Angel appears first, not to Manoah, but to his wife—twice. Critics conclude that Manoah lacked faith, was napping, or fell short of the brains required to understand His promise. Why is it a bad thing that his wife sees the Angel first? Can she not be wise, faithful, and worthy of God's Kingdom in her own right? Both times the Angel appears, she immediately seeks out Manoah to share the news with him. It seems she looked to him for leadership as the head of the family, and he heard her story and believed it.

Knowing her character, he was not surprised that the Angel appeared to her! He also readily accepted that they would have a son and prayed that God would teach them more of what they should do.

Consider, too, what this says about God. He chose Manoah and his wife to raise a son to deliver Israel. We can find fault with his name, his faith, even his childrearing skills, yet God chose this man and spoke to him in person! This was a huge honor and responsibility. It is difficult to see such an honor given to a "fop" or "slow-witted laggard." Manoah was a man with the faults common to all men, but he was a man God decided He could work with.

And Manoah proved Him right. He was a man of faith who prayed, and God answered. He tried to converse with the Angel, asking insightful questions to gain more knowledge. In humility, he accepted God's will and worshipped Him for His blessing.

In [Judges 16:31](#), after Samson's death, "His brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him." Evidently, Manoah and his wife went on to have more children. The verse gives the impression of a large and well-to-do family. Was this because his son judged Israel for twenty years or because Manoah was a good and godly man? You be the judge.

- Mike Ford

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Recent years have witnessed the merciless assault on marriage and family values by godless forces such as feminism, homosexuality, and free sex. Under the best of conditions, marriage takes work to make it succeed. Next to baptism, marriage is the most important decision we could ever make. God, having distributed His characteristics between the genders, created and blessed the marriage relationship (at the beginning of creation) as a lifelong,

God-plane relationship for the purpose of producing children developing divine character, providing the basis of the proper kind of government (learning rulership and submission, authority and love, and humility and glory), providing the prototype of the intimacy of Christ and His bride (functioning as one unit or spirit), ultimately reproducing the Godkind, and providing the prototype of the Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

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by James Beaubelle

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