

# “What Shall We Do with the Child?”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Manoah's question to the angel in the Samson story presages the question of all new parents: "Teach us what to do with that child who has been born." (Judges 13:8) The miraculousness of birth gives way to the wary wonder and anxiety of parenthood.

Much of the bible is a story of parents and children. Abraham sends his child into the wilderness, filled with fear and yet trusting to the goodness of God. Once in the desert, Hagar and Ishmael, as with Jacob, find angels, are safe and are saved. The parental act of protection and letting go, holding close and sending forth, embraces worlds of anguish, fraught hopes and necessary losses.

As Marilynne Robinson writes in her shimmering work, *Gilead*, "That is how life goes — we send our children into the wilderness. Some of them on the day they are born, it seems, for all the help we can give them. Some of them seem to be a kind of wilderness to themselves. But there must be angels there too, and springs of water. Even that wilderness, the very habitation of jackals, is the Lord's. I need to bear this in mind."

What shall we do with the child that is born? We are as perplexed as Manoah as we too wrap them in love and send them out into God's world.