

poor and to travellers, a second part he devoted to the service of the Temple, and the third he reserved for himself and his household.

This prudent and benevolent distribution of his goods brought down heavenly blessings on his flocks, which multiplied so exceedingly as to have had no parallel in Israel.

At the age of twenty, St-Joachim was married to St-Anne, who, like himself, was of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David. For the first twenty years, no child blessed their union, and this was naturally a great affliction to the pious couple, for, in those days, every Jewish woman contemplated the possibility of herself becoming the mother or ancestress of that Messiah, whom they so ardently desired and looked for. This childlessness having been publicly made a cause of reproach to St-Joachim, he withdrew into the mountains with his flocks, and for five months remained absent from his spouse St. Anne, who, during all that time, wept over his absence and wore mourning garments in token of her ignorance as to whether her husband still lived. At length, determined on making the greatest efforts to overcome her dejection, she threw aside her sad garb, clad herself in gayer (probably her nuptial) robes, and descending to her garden, was there taking recreation when she was honored by the apparition of an angel who made her the following announcement: "Fear not, Anne, for it is in God's designs that thou shalt give birth to a child who shall be the admiration of all ages even to the end of time."

We are told that, at the very moment when the holy Anne was being thus consoled by her heavenly visitant, another angel appeared to Joachim in the mountains where he was feeding his flocks, and in Heaven's name, gave him a like assurance: "Of thy blood, the angel said, shall be born a daughter; she will dwell in the Temple and the Holy Ghost will come down to her, so that her blessedness shall be greater than the blessedness of any other woman; that which is born