

English

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE



Women of the Bible

New King James Version

Esther: Esther 1-10

Ruth and Naomi: Ruth 1-4

Hannah: 1 Samuel 1-2:10

Abigail: 1 Samuel 25:1-42

Deborah: Judges 4-5

Mary and Elizabeth: Luke 1:5-66 and John 19:25-27

Women of the Bible: Esther

Esther Chapters 1-10

CHAPTER 1

The King Dethrones Queen Vashti

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus^[a] (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia),

2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan^[b] the ^[c]citadel,

3 *that* in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him—

4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all*.

5 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in ^[d]Shushan the ^[e]citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

6 *There were* white and blue linen *curtains* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; *and the couches were* of gold and silver on a *mosaic* pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.

7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the ^[f]generosity of the king.

8 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

9 Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women *in* the royal palace which *belonged* to King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, *wearing* her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she *was* beautiful to behold.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command *brought* by *his* eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this *was* the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice,

14 those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who *ranked* highest in the kingdom):

15 "What *shall we* do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her* by the eunuchs?"

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who *are* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

17 For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.'

18 This very day the *noble* ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus *there will be* excessive contempt and wrath.

19 If it pleases the king, let a royal *decree* go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not *be* altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

20 When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."

21 And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

22 Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

CHAPTER 2

Esther Becomes Queen

1 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

2 Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king;

3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to ^[a]Shushan the ^[b]citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of ^[c]Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them*.

4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

5 In ^[d]Shushan the ^[e]citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.

6 *Kish*^[f] had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with ^[g]Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

7 And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

8 So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at ^[h]Shushan the ^[i]citadel, *under* the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.

9 Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty

preparations to her, besides *her* allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best *place* in the house of the women.

10 Esther had not *revealed* her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it*.

11 And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

13 Thus *prepared*, *each* young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

14 In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the *generosity* of a king.

Mordecai Discovers a Plot

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

20 *Now* Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, mBigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

CHAPTER 3

Haman's Conspiracy Against the Jews

1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who *were* with him.

2 And all the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.

3 Then the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told *it* to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for *Mordecai* had told them that he *was* a Jew.

5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.

6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the whole kingdom

of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), before Haman ^[a]to determine the day and the ^[b]month, ^[c]until *it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar*.

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws *are* different from all *other* people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore *it is* not fitting for the king to let them remain.

9 If it pleases the king, let a *decree* be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it* into the king’s treasuries.”

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

11 And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”

12 Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a *decree* was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who *were* over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring.

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder their ^[d]possessions.

14 A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.

15 The couriers went out, hastened by the king’s command; and the decree was proclaimed in ^[e]Shushan the ^[f]citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was ^[g]perplexed.

CHAPTER 4

Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

1 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, ^[a]he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*.

5 Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.

6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at ^[b]Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai:

11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."

12 So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

13 And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

15 Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai:

16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in [c]Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded [d]him.

CHAPTER 5

Esther's Banquet

1 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the [a]house.

2 So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that *was* in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

3 And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What *is* your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!"

4 So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

7 Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request *is this*:

8 If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”

Haman’s Plot Against Mordecai

9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.

10 Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.

12 Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.

13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”

And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

CHAPTER 6

The King Honors Mordecai

1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

3 Then the king said, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?”

And the king’s servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

4 So the king said, “Who *is* in the court?” Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 The king’s servants said to him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.”

And the king said, “Let him come in.”

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?”

Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”

7 And Haman answered the king, “*For* the man whom the king delights to honor,

8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head.

9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!’ ”

10 Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!”

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him.”

14 While they *were* still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

CHAPTER 7

Haman Hanged Instead of Mordecai

1 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther.

2 And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, “What *is* your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”

3 Then Queen Esther answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. **4** For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”

5 So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?”

6 And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman!”

So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7 Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.

8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther *was*. Then the king said, “Will he also assault the queen while I *am* in the house?”

As the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

9 Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, “Look! The ^[a]gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.”

Then the king said, “Hang him on it!”

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s wrath subsided.

CHAPTER 8

Esther Saves the Jews

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related* to her.

2 So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3 Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews.

4 And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king,

5 and said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing *seems* right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king’s provinces.

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”

7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he *tried to* lay his hand on the Jews.

8 You yourselves write a *decree* concerning the Jews, ^[a]as you please, in the king’s name, and seal *it* with the king’s signet ring; for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”

9 So the king’s scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which *is* the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third *day*; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces *in all*, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

10 And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed *it* with the king’s signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses ^[b]bred from swift steeds.

11 By these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to plunder their possessions,

12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of ^[c]Adar.

13 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king’s command. And the decree was issued in ^[d]Shushan the ^[e]citadel.

15 So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of ^[f]blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of ^[g]Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.

17 And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

CHAPTER 9

The Jews Destroy Their Tormentors

1 Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them.

2 The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people.

3 And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent.

5 Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

6 And in Shushan^[a] the ^[b]citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.

7 Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha—

10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the ^[c]plunder.

11 On that day the number of those who were killed in ^[d]Shushan the ^[e]citadel ^[f]was brought to the king.

12 And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done.”

13 Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.”

14 So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

15 And the Jews who *were* in a Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

16 The remainder of the Jews in the king’s provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

17 *This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of a *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

The Feast of Purim

18 But the Jews who *were* at a Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of a *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus,

21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar,

22 as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them,

24 because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them;

25 but when ^[k]*Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that ^[j]this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 So they called these days Purim, after the name ^[m]Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them,

27 the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time,

28 *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.

30 And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth,

31 to confirm these days of Purim at their *appointed* time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting.

32 So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

CHAPTER 10

Mordecai's Advancement

1 And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea.

2 Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king ^[a]advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

3 For Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his ^[b]countrymen.

Women of the Bible: Ruth and Naomi

Ruth Chapter 1-4

CHAPTER 1

Elimelech's Family Goes to Moab

1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges [a]ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to [b]dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.

4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they [c]dwelt there about ten years.

5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

Naomi Returns with Ruth

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited[d] His people by giving them bread.

7 Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

12 Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,

13 would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!”

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

16 But Ruth said:

“Entreat^[e] me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people *shall be* my people,
And your God, my God.

17 Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The LORD do so to me, and more also,
If *anything but* death parts you and me.”

18 When she saw that she ^[w]was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, “*Is this Naomi?*”

20 But she said to them, “Do not call me ^[w]Naomi; call me ^[w]Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and ^[w]the Almighty has afflicted me?”

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

CHAPTER 2

Ruth Meets Boaz

1 There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor."

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!"

And they answered him, "The Lord bless you!"

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab."

7 And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women."

9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

10 So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before."

12 The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken [a]kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.

15 And when she rose up to [b]glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not [c]reproach her.

16 Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.

19 And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.”

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”

20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man is a relation of ours, one of [d]our close relatives.”

21 Ruth the Moabitess said, “He also said to me, ‘You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’ ”

22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not [e]meet you in any other field.”

23 So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

CHAPTER 3

Ruth’s Redemption Assured

3 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security[a] for you, that it may be well with you? 2 Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.”

5 And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. 7 And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

9 And he said, “Who are you?”

So she answered, “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take[b] your maidservant under your wing, for you are a [c]close relative.”

10 Then he said, “Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

13 Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning.”

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, “Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

15 Also he said, “Bring the [d]shawl that is on you and hold it.” And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then [e]she went into the city.

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, [f]“Is that you, my daughter?”

Then she told her all that the man had done for her.

17 And she said, “These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’ ”

18 Then she said, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

CHAPTER 4

Boaz Redeems Ruth

1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside, [g]friend, sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

3 Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

4 And I thought to [h]inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if [i]you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’ ”

And he said, “I will redeem it.”

5 Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to [j]perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.”

6 And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel.

8 Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” So he took off his sandal.

9 And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi.

10 Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from [k]his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.”

11 And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

12 May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.”

Descendants of Boaz and Ruth

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a [l]close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel!

15 And may he be to you a restorer of life and a [m]nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.”

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him.

17 Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “There is a son born to Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron;

19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab;

20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;[n]

21 Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed;

22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

Women of the Bible: Hannah

1 Samuel 1-2:10

CHAPTER 1

The Family of Elkanah

1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of [a]Elihu, the son of [b]Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.

4 And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.

5 But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb.

6 And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb.

7 So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

Hannah's Vow

8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the [c]tabernacle of the Lord.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and [d]wept in anguish.

11 Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth.

13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

14 So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

15 But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

16 Do not consider your maidservant a wicked[e] woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now."

17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him."

18 And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Samuel Is Born and Dedicated

19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name [f]Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked for him from the Lord.”

21 Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow.

22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever.”

23 So Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord [g]establish [h]His word.” Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with [i]three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young.

25 Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

26 And she said, “O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord.

27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.

28 Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be [j]lent to the Lord.” So they worshiped the Lord there.

1 SAMUEL 2:1-10

Hannah's Prayer

1 And Hannah prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the Lord;

My [a]horn is exalted in the Lord.

[b]I smile at my enemies,

Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

2 “No one is holy like the Lord,

For there is none besides You,

Nor is there any rock like our God.

3 “Talk no more so very proudly;

Let no arrogance come from your mouth,

For the Lord is the God of knowledge;

And by Him actions are weighed.

4 “The bows of the mighty men are broken,

And those who stumbled are girded with strength.

5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,

And the hungry have ceased to hunger.

Even the barren has borne seven,

And she who has many children has become feeble.

6 “The Lord kills and makes alive;

He brings down to the grave and brings up.

7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich;

He brings low and lifts up.

8 He raises the poor from the dust

And lifts the beggar from the ash heap,

To set them among princes

And make them inherit the throne of glory.

“For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,

And He has set the world upon them.

9 He will guard the feet of His saints,

But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

“For by strength no man shall prevail.

10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces;

From heaven He will thunder against them.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to His king,

And exalt the [c]horn of His anointed.”

Women of the Bible: Abigail

1 Samuel 25:1-42

1 SAMUEL 25:1-42

Death of Samuel

1 Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of [a]Paran.

David and the Wife of Nabal

2 Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

3 The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings. He was of the house of Caleb.

4 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep,

5 David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.

6 And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: ‘Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!

7 Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel.

8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore [b]let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.’ ”

9 So when David’s young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

10 Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my [c]meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?"

12 So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words.

13 Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

14 Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he [d]reviled them.

15 But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields.

16 They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep.

17 Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel[e] that one cannot speak to him."

18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.

19 And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

20 So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them.

21 Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good.

22 May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light."

23 Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.

24 So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant [f]speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant.

25 Please, let not my lord [g]regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: [h]Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent.

26 Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging[i] yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal.

27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord.

28 Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.

29 Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling.

30 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel,

31 that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant.”

32 Then David said to Abigail: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand.

34 For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!”

35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, “Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person.”

36 Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.

37 So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.

38 Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

39 So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head.”

And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife.

40 When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, “David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife.”

41 Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.”

42 So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, [j]attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife.

Women of the Bible: Deborah

Judges chapters 4-5

CHAPTER 4

Deborah

1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.

2 So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim.

3 And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, “Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, ‘Go and [a]deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun;

7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will [b]deliver him into your hand’?”

8 And Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!”

9 So she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under[c] his command, and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh.

12 And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

13 So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, [d]“Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.

15 And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.

16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear.” And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a [e]blanket.

19 Then he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him.

20 And he said to her, “Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there any man here?’ you shall say, ‘No.’ ”

21 Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

22 And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, “Come, I will show you the man whom you seek.” And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

CHAPTER 5

The Song of Deborah

1 Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

2 “When[a] leaders lead in Israel,

When the people [b]willingly offer themselves,

Bless the Lord!

3 “Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!

I, even I, will sing to the Lord;

I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

4 “Lord, when You went out from Seir,

When You marched from the field of Edom,

The earth trembled and the heavens poured,

The clouds also poured water;

5 The mountains [c]gushed before the Lord,

This Sinai, before the Lord God of Israel.

6 “In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,

In the days of Jael,

The highways were deserted,

And the travelers walked along the byways.

7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,

Until I, Deborah, arose,

Arose a mother in Israel.

8 They chose new gods;

Then there was war in the gates;
Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

9 My heart is with the rulers of Israel

Who offered themselves willingly with the people.

Bless the Lord!

10 "Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,

Who sit in judges' attire,

And who walk along the road.

11 Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places,

There they shall recount the righteous acts of the Lord,

The righteous acts for His villagers in Israel;

Then the people of the Lord shall go down to the gates.

12 "Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake, awake, sing a song!

Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,

O son of Abinoam!

13 "Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles;

The Lord came down for me against the mighty.

14 From Ephraim were those whose roots were in Amalek.

After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,

From Machir rulers came down,

And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter's staff.

15 And [d]the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;

As Issachar, so was Barak

Sent into the valley [e]under his command;

Among the divisions of Reuben

There were great resolves of heart.

16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,

To hear the pipings for the flocks?

The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart.

17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,

And why did Dan remain [f]on ships?

Asher continued at the seashore,

And stayed by his inlets.

18 Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death,

Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

19 “The kings came and fought,

Then the kings of Canaan fought

In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;

They took no spoils of silver.

20 They fought from the heavens;

The stars from their courses fought against Sisera.

21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,

That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.

O my soul, march on in strength!

22 Then the horses’ hooves pounded,

The galloping, galloping of his steeds.

23 ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the [g]angel of the Lord,

‘Curse its inhabitants bitterly,

Because they did not come to the help of the Lord,

To the help of the Lord against the mighty.’

24 “Most blessed among women is Jael,

The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed is she among women in tents.
25 He asked for water, she gave milk;
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.
26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg,
Her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,
She split and struck through his temple.
27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
At her feet he sank, he fell;
Where he sank, there he fell dead.
28 "The mother of Sisera looked through the window,
And cried out through the lattice,
'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?'
29 Her wisest [h]ladies answered her,
Yes, she [i]answered herself,
30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil:
To every man a girl or two;
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?'
31 "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord!
But let those who love Him be like the sun
When it comes out in full strength."
So the land had rest for forty years.

Women of the Bible: Mary and Elizabeth

Luke 1:5-66 and John 19:25-27

LUKE 1:5-66

John's Birth Announced to Zacharias

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

9 according to the custom of the priesthood, [a]his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you [b]these glad tidings.

20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.”

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple.

22 But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

23 So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying,

25 “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

Christ’s Birth Announced to Mary

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; [c]blessed are you among women!”

29 But [d]when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I [e]do not know a man?”

35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”

38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”
And the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah,
40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb;
and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is
the fruit of your womb!

43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my
womb for joy.

45 Blessed is she who [f]believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her
from the Lord.”

The Song of Mary

46 And Mary said:

“My soul [g]magnifies the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.

50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with His arm;

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.

54 He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,

55 As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

Circumcision of John the Baptist

59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias.

60 His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.”

61 But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” 6

2 So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled.

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.

65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea.

66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

JOHN 19:25-27

Behold Your Mother

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”

27 Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.