

An Alternative Hebrew Bible
- The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve

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INTRODUCTION

An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve seeks to answer the question, "How would the events described in the Hebrew Bible have appeared to the women?"

The answer is provided by over two hundred women characters, some named, others unnamed, some historical, others mythical, some known to have existed, others only presumed to have done so. All possess equal validity in this work.

The plot follows the chronology of the Hebrew Bible – The Five Books of Moses, the Conquest, the period of Judges, the period of Kings, together with the Major and Minor Prophets who lived and preached during their reigns, ending with the Wisdom Writings. The only books of the Hebrew Bible not covered in this work are Psalms and Ecclesiastes.

Each chapter deals with a specific event, grouping together the first-person narratives of a number of women who are presumed to have existed or been present at the time, narratives in which each describes the same event from her particular point of view.

It is the task of a Narrator to describe what happened after the women died and the legacy they left behind them. The Narrator also adds material that embellishes their stories and provides links between them.

Although *An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve* is very much a personal interpretation of the texts on which the narratives are based, an effort has been made to remain faithful to the spirit of the text, if not to the literal word. These texts include not only the Biblical text, but also post-Biblical Jewish texts up to the time of the 11th century rabbi and commentator, Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki).

By its very nature this book does not seek to be original. It is, after all, a retelling of some of the most famous stories in the world, stories that have been retold countless times by others. All it seeks to do is to present a different way of looking at things. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to emphasize characters and events that have enjoyed less attention by commentators, especially those connected with the period from the destruction of the First Temple to the return of the exiles from Babylon.

Underpinned by ten years of research, *An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve* imagines what the Hebrew Bible might have been like, had it been written by women.

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OVERVIEW

An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve is divided into 22 parts.

Parts 1 to 6

Parts 1 to 6 are based on the text of the Five Books of Moses (the Pentateuch).

Part 1 shows how, after Yahweh's first attempt to create a perfect world, it didn't take long before it degenerated into evil. This part covers the Creation, the Fall, the First Murder and the Flood.

Part 2 tells the story of Abraham, the first patriarch and founder of the Hebrew nation, from his early years in Mesopotamia to his life in Canaan.

Part 3 explains the division of Abraham's descendants into two Semite nations, each descended from one of his two sons – Ishmael, the father of the Arab nation and Isaac, the father of the Jewish nation.

A further division of Abraham's descendants takes place in Part 4, in which the enmity between Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, gives rise to the enmity between the nations they found - the Edomites (often representing the Romans) and the Israelites.

In Part 5 we follow the fortunes of the next generation – Jacob's twelve sons who founded the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and his daughter, Dinah. This part explains how the Israelites came to settle in Egypt.

Part 6 relates the story of how a one man, with divine help, transformed a motley collection of slaves into a nation. This part covers Moses's calling, the miracle of the ten plagues, the Exodus, the covenant with Yahweh and the forty year sojourn in the desert.

Parts 7-19

We come now to Parts 7-19 based on the texts of the section of the Hebrew Bible called the Prophets.

The conquest of Canaan is described in Part 7.

The fact that not all the land was in Israelite hands by the death of Moses' successor, Joshua, led to a fragmentary form of local government by judges described in Part 8. This form of government proved to be so unsatisfactory that the prophet, Samuel, the last of the judges, was forced to acquiesce to the people's demand for a king. From this time on, almost every king had a prophet to advise him. Trouble usually arose when the king chose to ignore the prophet's advice.

Parts 9, 10, and 11 describe the reigns of Israel's three kings – Saul, a tragic figure who fell prey to his own fears, David, who in spite of his failings was the beloved of Yahweh, and Solomon, who brought peace, plenty and prestige to his kingdom.

Unfortunately, by the time of Solomon's death there were so many rumblings of discontent that his son, Rehoboam, lacking the leadership qualities of his father, was unable to hold the kingdom together. The division of the kingdom appears in Part 12.

Parts 13, 14, 15 and 16 are devoted to the parallel histories of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, ending with the fall of the northern kingdom to the Assyrians.

Parts 17, 18 and 19 deal with the fate of the southern kingdom of Judah. Like its northern neighbour, it too was eventually conquered, although not by the Assyrians but by the Babylonians.

Parts 20, 21 and 22

The events related in the last section of the Hebrew Bible, called the Writings (Hagiographa), are retold in Parts 20, 21 and 22.

Part 20 covers the three deportations of the people of Judah to Babylon, Part 21 describes the four waves of return to Yehud, as Judah was then called, while Part 22 presents characters from the Bible's wisdom literature.

An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve ends by returning to the stories of the three wives of Adam who opened the book, based not on the Biblical text but on later sources.

MAIN SOURCES

THE HEBREW OR JEWISH BIBLE

An Alternative Hebrew Bible - The Book of Lilith, Plonit and Eve uses as its basic text 'The Complete Tanakh (Tanach) - Hebrew Bible - The Jewish Bible with a Modern English Translation and Rashi's Commentary', published on the Chabad website. Rashi was an 11th century French rabbi whose commentary on the Bible is famous for its conciseness and clarity.

The Hebrew Bible consists of:

The Five Books of Moses, otherwise known as The Pentateuch (the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

The Prophets (the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, plus the Major and Minor Prophets).

The Writings or Hagiographa (the Books of Psalms, Proverbs and Job, the five scrolls - the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther - plus the Books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles).

The difference between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament is the order of the three sections. Whereas both begin with the Five Books of Moses, the Hebrew Bible ends with the Writings, while the Christian Old Testament ends with the Prophets. In addition, the Christian Old Testament includes books not included in the Hebrew canon.

JEWISH WRITTEN LAW

According to the Mosaic covenant, Yahweh promised to favor the Israelites over all other peoples if they kept His laws. This covenant, the core principles of which are the Ten Commandments, is expounded in the Book of Exodus, Chapters 20-23, and in the Book of Deuteronomy, both of which constitute the basic text of Jewish Written Law.

JEWISH ORAL LAW

Jewish Oral Law, passed on by word of mouth from teacher to pupil, is a compendium of laws, statutes and legal interpretations that clarify how the Written Law is to be implemented.

MISHNAH (STUDY BY REPETITION)

Fearing that the oral tradition might be lost through the passage of time, persecution and dispersion, the Oral Law was written down at the beginning of the third century CE under the name of 'Mishnah'. A compilation of legal opinions and debates, it was divided into six topics: agricultural practice, festivals, marriage and divorce, Jewish civil and criminal law, sacrifices and ritual slaughter and finally purity and impurity. This arrangement into topics became the basic format of the 'Talmud'.

THE TALMUD (INSTRUCTION OR LEARNING)

In the 3rd century CE, discussions and elucidations on the 'Mishnah', called 'Gemara', or completion, were compiled by the rabbis of Palestine into the 'Palestinian Talmud'. Between the 3rd and 5th centuries CE, the rabbis of Babylon did the same. Their compilation became the 'Babylonian Talmud'. More extensive than the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud became the more authoritative of the two.

MIDRASH

'Midrash' is an exposition of the underlying significance of a Biblical text.

'Midrash Halacha' focuses on Biblical texts concerning religious laws while 'Midrash Aggadah' focuses on non-legal texts.

The 'Midrash Rabbah' (Great Commentary) is a collection of expositions on the Pentateuch and the five scrolls (listed above).

TARGUMIM

'Targumim' are Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Biblical text.

APOCRYPHA

'Apocrypha' are texts included in certain editions of the Christian Old Testament but not in the Hebrew Bible.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

'Pseudepigrapha' are texts falsely attributed to someone other than the author.

(Some texts are considered both apocryphal and pseudepigraphic, such as the 'Zohar', the foundational text of Jewish mysticism known as 'Kabbala'.)

THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS

An 'apologia' or defense of Jewish history written for a Greek audience by the first-century CE Roman-Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus.

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Part 1
The Beginning

CHAPTER 1

THE CREATION OF WOMAN

The Book of Genesis

Many are familiar with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, but few are aware that Adam had three wives. The character of the first, Lilith, was developed by 13th century Kabbalists (Jewish mystics). The second, of unknown name, appears in the *Great Commentary on Genesis*, compiled between 200-500 CE. The third, Eve or 'Hava' in Hebrew, is the one familiar to us from the Book of Genesis.

Although Lilith enjoys a long history, the only mention of her name in the Bible is in Isaiah, Chapter 34 verses 14-15, where it is translated as a 'night demon'.¹ The *Great Commentary on Genesis* provides much of the background on demons.² However, it was left to the Jewish mystics to develop Lilith's distinctive dual character. In such Kabbalist texts as the *Zohar*³ and a supposedly satirical text called 'The Alphabet of ben Sirach', she is portrayed both as a seductive female luring pious men into sin and as a monster lying in wait to murder innocent children, thereby laying the blame for promiscuity and the death of children squarely at her feet.⁴

Adam's second wife, a woman with no name, here called Plonit ('some woman or other'), provides us with a fanciful explanation as to why Yahweh caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep before He created Eve from Adam's rib. In addition to the *Great Commentary on Genesis*,⁵ she is also referred to, albeit somewhat obliquely, in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 39a).⁶

CHAPTER 1 THE CREATION OF WOMAN

INTRODUCTION

¹ Isaiah 34:14-15

² Great Commentary on Genesis
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³ The Zohar Hebrew – Vayetze 23-27
<https://unityzohar.com/zohar-books/vayetze/22>

⁴ The Alphabet of Ben Sira
<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/alphabet.html>

⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:4
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39a
https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

Since Adam, the first man, was created by Yahweh in His own image as a perfect being, immortal like an angel, some reason had to be found to explain man's imperfection and mortality. As related in Genesis, Chapters 3-4, the culprit was Eve, the first woman who, being of a weaker nature than her mate, was tempted to break Yahweh's law and persuaded Adam to do the same.

Understandably, her character has been richly embellished in post-Biblical literature. Apart from many rabbinical Midrashim (commentaries), her name appears in a number of tractates of the *Babylonian Talmud*, in various apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, and, as has already been stated, in the *Zohar*.

Let them speak now, each in her own voice, the three wives of Adam - Lilith the demon, Plonit the wraith, and Eve, the mythical mother of humanity.

MOTHER LILITH, ADAM'S FIRST WIFE

I was lying on a beach by the Red Sea, luxuriating in the heat of the sun on my naked body and relaxing after the exertions of the night. As I dozed, I could hear the gentle lapping of the waves as they eddied to and fro on the gleaming white sand. If I opened my eyes, I knew I would see a cloudless blue sky reflected in the dark depths of the sea that stretched to the seemingly limitless horizon.

When I eventually awoke, I looked around at the other demons sunning themselves on the beach. Suddenly I felt aroused. I looked down at my body. Although not conventionally beautiful even human males found me very attractive. True I had a little too much hair, but what might be regarded as a defect in the light of day, at night was completely unnoticeable.⁷ Again I looked around, wondering with whom to spend the next few hours. My glance fell on an attractive male demon sprawled nonchalantly on the sand a few yards away...

In order to explain how I came to be lying on a beach by the Red Sea, I need to go back to my birth. I was Father's first attempt to make a mate for Adam, the first man. Unfortunately, from the beginning Adam and I were incompatible. During intercourse he always insisted on being on top, arguing that it was only fitting since he was superior to me. I retorted that, since we had both been made from the earth, we were equal. Because we could not agree, I flew off to the Red Sea.

When I refused to return, Father punished me for insubordination, turning me into a demon of the night, responsible for tempting men into sin and for punishing children for the sins of their fathers. The men I seduced before consigning them to hell, while the children I caused to fall sick and die.⁸

Father lost no time in providing Adam with another wife. His second attempt was no more successful than me, for Adam threw up at the sight of her. Only on His third attempt did Father succeed. Her name was Eve. Submissive, credulous and anxious to please, she was everything I was not. No wonder Adam welcomed her with open arms!

MOTHER LILITH, ADAM'S FIRST WIFE

⁷ Emeq haMelekh Bacharach 140b

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/lilsam.html#EMEQ> 84

⁸ The Alphabet of Ben Sira

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/alphabet.html>

I too married again. My second husband was my twin brother, Samael, king of the demons. Samael and I had been born at the same time and in much the same way as Adam and Eve, as part of one another.⁹ The only difference was that our skin was bright red, whereas theirs was a most unattractive color. Then Father cut us apart, just as he had Adam and Eve.¹⁰ Because He had no time to finish making us before the start of the Sabbath, we possess souls but not bodies.¹¹

My third husband was Father. When His Temple was destroyed and His people exiled, they were accompanied by Father's consort, the Matronit, Mother of the Jews. With the Matronit gone, Father found Himself without a mate. Having decreed that it was not good to be alone,¹² He replaced the Matronit with me, His own daughter and the Matronit's former slave.¹³

⁹ Treatise on the Left Emanation pp. 172-182
http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/jacob_ha_kohen.html

¹⁰ The Zohar Hebrew – Vayetze 23
<https://unityzohar.com/zohar-books/vayetze/22>
The Zohar: Samael and Lilith 148a-148b
<https://glorian.org/learn/scriptures/judaism/sepheer-ha-zohar/zohar-samael-and-lilith>
The Zohar 3:19a The Hebrew Goddess Patai Ch. 7
https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹¹ Great Commentary on Genesis Chapter 7:4-5
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹² The Zohar Hebrew Genesis 1:268, 272
<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/103142?heb/content/view/full/103142&main>

¹³ ספר תולדות אדם שער גדול א
<http://mobile.tora.ws/html/15190-17.html>
הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ס"ט ע"א
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_all.html#HtmpReportNum0127_L2
The Zohar 3:69a The Hebrew Goddess Patai Ch. 7
http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/consort.html#ZOHAR3_69

Without the Matronit by His side Father was no longer king, no longer great, and no longer worthy of praise,¹⁴ while His people, the Jews, were now considered the most inferior of nations.¹⁵ Pious Jews wept, saying,

“How could our God and King have taken the Matronit’s slave as a mate?
Has He no honor?”¹⁶

From that time forth not the Matronit but I ruled over the Land of Israel.¹⁷

¹⁴ ספר תולדות אדם שער גדול (א)

<http://mobile.tora.ws/html/15190-17.html>

¹⁵ הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ס"ט ע"א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_all.html#HtmpReportNum0127_L2

The Zohar 3:69a The Hebrew Goddess Patai Ch. 7

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/consort.html#ZOHAR3_69

¹⁶ הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ס"ט ע"א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_all.html#HtmpReportNum0127_L2

The Zohar 3:69a The Hebrew Goddess 7 Patai

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/consort.html#ZOHAR3_69

Brit Halevi Alqabetz Shlomo P.83

<http://hebrewbooks.org/4901>

The Hebrew Goddess Patai Ch. 7

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹⁷ הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ס"ט ע"א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_all.html#HtmpReportNum0127_L2

The Zohar 3:69a The Hebrew Goddess Patai Ch. 7

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/consort.html#ZOHAR3_69

PLONIT, ADAM'S SECOND WIFE

I shall never forget it – the look of horror on Adam's face when he first saw me, before turning aside to retch! I had just been created. I looked down at my body, wondering what on earth could have produced such a violent reaction. As far as I could tell, I was perfect in every way.

I was Adam's second wife. Father created me after Adam's first wife left him. For some reason He made me from the inside out, starting with my skeleton which He covered with muscles and sinews, followed by flesh containing blood vessels, finally wrapping me up in a thin layer of skin. When Adam, who all this time had been watching Father at work, saw me full of discharge, he was so disgusted that he was unable to look at me, let alone touch me. ¹⁸

I really don't understand why Father allowed Adam to witness my birth. He was supposed to know everything, so why did He not foresee how Adam would react? Then again, why was Adam filled with such disgust at the sight of me? He possessed the same physical characteristics. Surely, once my insides were hidden by skin, my external appearance cannot have been unpleasing to him?

NARRATOR

Had Adam been asleep while Plonit was being created, her story might have ended very differently. Consider what would have happened had Adam been awake when Eve was created.

An emperor once told a rabbi,
"Your God is no better than a thief.
In order to make Eve, He stole one of Adam's ribs while he was asleep."
Offering to answer for the rabbi, his daughter turned to her father and said,
"Let me have a piece of raw meat."
Once it was brought to her she placed it under her armpit,
removed it and offered it to her father to eat.
"I'm not going to eat that!" her father exclaimed. "It's disgusting!"
"Eve would have been equally disgusting to Adam
had he been awake to see how she was made," was her reply. ¹⁹

PLONIT, ADAM'S SECOND WIFE

¹⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

NARRATOR

¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39a

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

I am the living testimony to the truth of the old adage, "*Ignorance is bliss.*" Let me explain.

Before I came into the world Adam was the only one of our species. All around him were pairs of animals copulating together, so he begged our Father, Yahweh, for a mate of his own. ²⁰ Father warned him to think carefully. Did he really want a mate?

Adam didn't need to think twice. He had already made up his mind. As far as he was concerned a bachelor's life was an unenviable one. There was nothing good about it: he had no-one to help him, to make him happy, to bring him luck and to keep peace in the home; no-one to make life worth living, to make him feel whole, to make him appear wise and to protect him; most important of all he had no-one with whom to carry out Yahweh's injunction to go forth and multiply.

He never paused to consider that. on the contrary, marriage might prove to be the complete opposite: a wife might be a hindrance, make his life miserable, bring him misfortune and be the cause of strife; she might make life unbearable, make him feel inadequate, ignorant and open to criticism; worst of all his children might not turn out to be a source of joy but a source of shame! ²¹

Father had made Adam out of earth. However, when it came to making me, Father used a different method, using a part of Adam's body. When choosing which part to use, He reasoned:

"If I make her out of Adam's head, she will be big-headed.

"If I make her out of Adam's ear, she will be an eavesdropper.

"If I make her out of Adam's mouth, she will be a gossip.

"If I make her out of Adam's heart, she will be jealous.

"If I make her out of Adam's hand, she will be light-fingered.

"If I make her out of Adam's foot, she will be a gadabout." ²²

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

²⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 17:4-6

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 63b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_63.html

²¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 17:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Tanhuma Genesis Vayishlach 32:4-36:43

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm20.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 62b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_62.html

²² Great Commentary on Genesis 18:1-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

In the end He chose a part of Adam's body that no one could see. It was all in vain. Despite Father's precautions, my daughters and I were accused of being swollen-headed, eavesdroppers, gossips, prone to jealousy, light-fingered and gadabouts, just as He had feared.²³

The part Father chose was one of Adam's ribs.²⁴ Therefore, because Adam was formed out of the earth and I out of a bone, we were very different. Earth never rots whereas bones do. As a result, Adam had a pleasant smell, while mine was so unpleasant that I was forced to use perfume to disguise it. Like earth, meat makes no sound while it is cooking, whereas bones sizzle. As a result, Adam had a low-pitched voice, pleasant on the ear, while mine was shrill and penetrating. Lastly, because earth absorbs everything, whereas bone is non-porous, Adam was easily placated, while I remained hard and unforgiving.²⁵

Unlike Adam, who was made in stages,²⁶ I was born fully formed.²⁷ Appearing about twenty years old,²⁸ I was so beautiful that every woman born after me was considered as ugly as a monkey.²⁹

²³ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:2-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת וישב ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

²⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:1

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 17:8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 38b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_38.html

²⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 14:7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 14:7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 58a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_58.html

By now Father had learned his lesson. Before taking me to Adam,³⁰ He made sure that Adam would want me by carefully arranging my hair³¹ and dressing me as a bride.³² Only after He was satisfied with my appearance, did he present me to Adam who was waiting impatiently under the marriage canopy.³³ The moment he laid eyes on me, Adam quite took my breath away by taking me in his arms and kissing me, thanking Father for bringing him such a beautiful bride.³⁴ Then he showered compliments upon me to convince me to want him.³⁵

Not only did Father give me away in marriage, but He also acted as Adam's best man,³⁶ conducting the marriage ceremony Himself,³⁷ while His angels danced round us, shaking their tambourines.³⁸ Later, they stood guard over our bridal chamber to make sure no-one disturbed us during our first night together.³⁹

³⁰ The Zohar in English Ch. 12 Nurho de Manhar
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/zdm/zdm021.htm>

³¹ Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvim 18a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvim.pdf>
Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 95a
http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_95.html
Babylonian Talmud: Niddah 45b
http://www.halakhah.com/niddah/niddah_45.html

³² Great Commentary on Genesis 18:1
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:1-2
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 88
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁴ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 87
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁵ The Zohar Ch. 26 Nurho de Manhar
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/zdm/zdm035.htm>

³⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 61a
http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_61.html

³⁷ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 89
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁸ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 88
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁹ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 89
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Adam and I were so happy that our lives passed in a flash. ⁴⁰ In the Garden where we lived was a very handsome creature named Snake, ⁴¹ resplendent in a tight-fitting suit of silver, black and white. Extremely persuasive, first he seduced me and then he caused me to commit a crime. Although Father had forbidden us to eat the fruit of one of the trees in the Garden, Snake persuaded me that no harm would come to me if I did. I made the mistake of listening to him, compounding my crime by encouraging Adam to do the same. ⁴² Only after both of us had tasted the fruit did we become aware of the enormity of what we had done, but by then it was too late. ⁴³

Father punished all three of us in turn. Snake was the first to be punished.
From being king of the animals, now he was the lowest of the low.
From standing upright, now he could only crawl on his belly.
From eating the same food as us, now he ate only dust.
From being admired by all, now he was universally hated.
From being the most passionate of lovers,
now we were the bitterest of enemies.
Snake bit my foot while I struck him on the head. ⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 18:6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 38b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_38.html

⁴¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 19:1-3
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁴² Genesis 3:6

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>
Great Commentary on Genesis 19:4-5
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁴³ Great Commentary on Genesis 19:6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 55b
http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_55.html

⁴⁴ Genesis 3:14-15
Great Commentary on Genesis 20:5-6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b
https://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_9.html
Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 14
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Then it was my turn to be punished. Henceforth, I was irresistibly attracted to my husband who held me completely in his power.⁴⁵ But for this irresistible desire, after experiencing the pain of childbirth, we women would never agree to have another child.⁴⁶ My punishment was to endure the inconvenience of bleeding during menstruation,⁴⁷ the humiliation of having to produce a few drops of blood to prove I was a virgin, the pain of impregnation, the discomfort of pregnancy, the misery of a miscarriage, the agony of childbirth, the anguish of raising children, the heartache I felt every time my husband set out on a journey and, last of all, the frustration of wanting intercourse but not being permitted to say so!⁴⁸

Lastly, Father punished Adam. His punishment was to have his strength curtailed, his height reduced, to sow wheat but reap thistles, to eat grass like an animal, to earn his bread in anxiety, his food by the sweat of his brow⁴⁹ and, finally, to suffer from seventy-four ailments before he died.⁵⁰

There were two punishments that all three of us shared. The first was to be stripped of our immortality and the second was to be banished from the Garden.

⁴⁵ Genesis 3:16

⁴⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 20:7-8
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁴⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 17:8
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁴⁸ Genesis 3:16 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8167/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 20:6-7
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvin 100b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvin.pdf>
Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 14
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁴⁹ Genesis 3: 17-19
Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 14
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁵⁰ Apocalypse of Moses 8-9 Christian Classics
<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

Now that death had entered the world, Adam gave me my name. He called me ‘Eve’ or ‘Hava’, which means a live person as opposed to a dead one. Officially I was known as the mother of mankind because everyone was descended from me.⁵¹ However, behind my back, I was called a snake because, just as Snake had seduced me, so I had seduced Adam.⁵²

From then on, because I had brought death into the world, it was my role to walk in front of the corpse at a funeral. Because I had ruined the dough from which Adam had been made, it was my role to make the bread. Finally, because I had extinguished Adam’s soul, it was my role to light the Sabbath candles. Whereas a man could go bareheaded, I now had to cover my head in shame.⁵³

We left the Garden on the first of Tammuz in the year eight – in other words eight years after the world was created. To us it seemed as though only one day had passed.⁵⁴ Fortunately Mount Moriah, where Adam had been made, was within walking distance. Therefore, after leaving the Garden, it was where we spent our first night.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Genesis 3:20

Great Commentary on Genesis 20:11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Avodah Zarah 43a

http://www.halakhah.com/zarah/zarah_43.html

⁵² Great Commentary on Genesis 20:11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁵³ Great Commentary on Genesis 17:8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁵⁴ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 3

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/3.htm>

⁵⁵ Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 20

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

CHAPTER 2
THE FIRST MURDER
The Book of Genesis

Eve and her three daughters, Kelemath, Leboda and Azura, tell the story of the first murder, as related in Genesis, Chapter 4. The names of Eve's daughters appear in two Syriac Christian works: *Book of the Bee* ⁵⁶ and *The Cave of Treasures*. ⁵⁷ Various apocryphal, pseudepigraphic and rabbinical sources have provided material for this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 THE FIRST MURDER
INTRODUCTION

⁵⁶ Book of the Bee

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

⁵⁷ The Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

By the time I left the Garden I was pregnant.⁵⁸ I was to bear three sets of twins, each time a boy and a girl.⁵⁹ The first set was Cain and Kelemath, the second, Abel and Leboda and the third, Seth and Azura.⁶⁰

When my first son was born, I immediately realized that Snake was his father for, like Snake, he looked more like an angel than a human being. However, I said nothing to my unsuspecting husband, Adam.⁶¹ Instead I cried out in triumph, "I have a son!"

Adam might desert me, but never the son whom he thought was his.⁶²

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

⁵⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 22:1-2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 38b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_38.html

Genesis 4:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 62a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_62.html

Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁶⁰ Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

The Book of the Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

First Book of Adam and Eve Ch. 75:11

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/398/398-h/398-h.htm#chap75>

⁶¹ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁶² Great Commentary on Genesis 22:1-2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Genesis 4:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

We named our first-born, Cain. ⁶³ The years passed. And then came the awful day that Cain's simmering jealousy of his younger brother, Abel, erupted in violence. That evening, when Abel failed to return home, we set out in search of him. Eventually we found Abel lying asleep in a field, protected by the faithful dog that guarded his sheep. Although we shook him hard, he refused to wake.

It was then that we realized that this was what happened to people when they died. Adam and I looked at each other. We had no idea what to feel, what to think or what to do. For some reason drops of water began to fall from our eyes. Before long we were sobbing our hearts out.

Just then, we saw a black bird, to which Adam had given the name 'raven', standing by another of its kind that looked as if it, too, was asleep, just like Abel. With its beak the bird scratched a hole in the ground. When it was large enough, the raven pulled its fellow into the hole and covered it with dirt. Seeing this, we did the same with Abel. ⁶⁴

⁶³ First Book of Adam and Eve Ch. 74
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/398/398-h/398-h.htm#chap74>

⁶⁴ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

KELEMATH, THE SISTER-WIFE OF CAIN

Cain and Abel were always fighting over something. When they were youngsters they argued over their inheritance⁶⁵ and where the Temple would be built – in Cain's territory or in Abel's.⁶⁶

When they grew older they fought over Plonit, the wife our father had rejected because she was so ugly.⁶⁷ Cain became a farmer while Abel reared sheep. One spring they competed with each other over who could offer the most pleasing sacrifice to Yahweh. When the smoke from Abel's sheep rose higher than that of Cain's offering of grain, Cain was understandably furious.⁶⁸

Added to this was the fact that we were now old enough to marry. As the oldest male our father could have had both Leboda and me. However, he magnanimously ceded his right to our brothers.⁶⁹ There was only one condition. He wanted Cain to marry Abel's twin sister and me to marry Abel.⁷⁰

KELEMATH, THE SISTER-WIFE OF CAIN

⁶⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 22:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁶⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 22:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁶⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 22:7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁶⁸ Genesis 4:2-8

Great Commentary on Genesis 22:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 2:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_1

⁶⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 58b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_58.html

⁷⁰ Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

The First Book of Adam and Eve Ch. 78:1-3

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/398/398-h/398-h.htm#chap78>

The Book of the Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

This didn't please my hot-tempered twin at all, for I was far more beautiful than Lebeda. ⁷¹ In the end it came to blows and Abel was killed. ⁷² As a result, Cain and I were forced to leave the mountain in a hurry.

We travelled east to the Land of Nod, wandering from place to place until I bore Cain a son named Enoch. ⁷³

Sometime afterwards Cain ran into our father, who was amazed to find him still alive after killing our brother. Cain explained that the only reason that his life had been spared was because he had expressed genuine remorse for what he had done, unlike our father who, instead of accepting responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit, had blamed our poor mother. ⁷⁴

⁷¹ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

The Book of the Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

⁷² Genesis 4:6-8

Great Commentary on Genesis 22:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 37b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_37.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.2:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_1

The Book of the Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

⁷³ Genesis 4:16-17

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 37b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_37.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.2:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_1

The Book of the Cave of Treasures

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bct/index.htm>

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

⁷⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis Ch. 22:13

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

In the Land of Nod life was very different from that we had led on the mountain. After the birth of our son, Cain lost interest in me and turned his roving eye towards a female named Lilith. It turned out that Lilith had been interested in Cain for a long time, but had been unable to get her talons into him before he killed Abel.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ זהר פרשת בראשית א חלק ב יהי מאלת 101

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/101968?heb/content/view/full/101968&main>

Zohar.1.54a

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Zohar.1.54a.7?vhe=New_Torat_Emet_Zohar&lang=en

LEBODA, THE SISTER-WIFE OF ABEL

In spite of all that Kelemath has told you, I can assure you that at first there was very little sibling rivalry between our two brothers. Cain would provide us with grain from his fields while Abel would provide us with meat from his flock of sheep.⁷⁶

One spring festival our father ordered our brothers to each bring an offering for Yahweh.⁷⁷ Cain brought an offering of grain and Abel one of meat. Cain's offering consisted of some moldy ears of wheat, whereas Abel's was a fat, juicy lamb. Cain placed his offering on the altar with a sour expression on his face, whereas Abel did so with a look of joy. Therefore, no one was surprised when the smoke from Abel's lamb rose up towards heaven, whereas that from Cain's wheat remained hovering over the altar. We all knew what that meant. Yahweh had accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's.⁷⁸

From that day forth there was no love lost between our two brothers. Their enmity came to a head when the time came for us to marry. Contrary to Kelemath's claim that Cain preferred her to me, Cain had hated her from the time they were conceived.⁷⁹ And don't be fooled into thinking that Kelemath was the more beautiful! I was far more beautiful than her.⁸⁰ Why else would Cain have murdered his own brother if not to get his hands on me?⁸¹

LEBODA, THE SISTER-WIFE OF ABEL

⁷⁶ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.21?lang=en

⁷⁷ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.21?lang=en

⁷⁸ Genesis 4:2-5

Great Commentary to Genesis 22:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

⁷⁹ First Book of Adam and Eve Ch. 74

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/398/398-h/398-h.htm#chap74>

⁸⁰ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

⁸¹ Great Commentary to Genesis 22:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

This we discovered when Abel failed to come home one day and his body was found in a field.⁸²

Even a man as ruthless as Cain could hardly remain around after that. The last I heard, he and Kelemath were living as outlaws in the Land of Nod.⁸³

⁸² Genesis 4:8 with Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.21?lang=en

⁸³ Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 21
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.21?lang=en

AZURA, THE SISTER-WIFE OF SETH

My brother-husband, Seth, and I were born when our parents were already getting on in years.⁸⁴ Although they did not talk about it, we knew that we were not their first children. They had four before we were born, two boys and two girls. One of their sons, Cain, had murdered the other, Abel, and escaped to the Land of Nod with his sister-wife Kelemath. Only the murdered son's twin, an embittered, old spinster named Lebuda, remained to look after our aged parents.

Abel's murder had led to a hundred and thirty year-long separation between our parents, to avoid having another son like Cain. Only after they were reconciled were Seth and I born.⁸⁵

From what I was able to discover, Seth was very much like Abel. Our parents were dependent on him for everything, yet he never seemed to mind.⁸⁶

AZURA, THE SISTER-WIFE OF SETH

⁸⁴ Genesis 4:25

הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא דף ע"ז ע"ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html

Zohar 1.54b-55a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

⁸⁵ Genesis 4:25

Genesis 5:3

Great Commentary on Genesis 23:5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

הזוהר המתורגם - ספר ויקרא דף ע"ז ע"ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html

Zohar 1.54b-55a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

Book of the Bee Ch. 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

⁸⁶ מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר נשא פרשה יד יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html#HtmpReportNum0013_L2

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 2:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_1

Our first son we named Enosh.⁸⁷ Although we begged our sons to shun Cain's family in the Land of Nod, they refused to listen and descended from the mountain to fornicate with his daughters.⁸⁸ As a result, our grandchildren looked nothing like us, but resembled apes.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Genesis 4:26
Genesis 5:6-8
The Book of Jubilees Ch. 4
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

⁸⁸ Book of the Bee Ch. 18
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

⁸⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 23:6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

CHAPTER 3
THE WORLD LAPSES INTO EVIL
The Book of Genesis

This chapter deals with the period leading up to the Flood, as described by Ada, Zillah and Betenos, the three wives of Noah's father, Lamech.

Ada and Zillah, mentioned in Genesis, Chapter 4 verses 19-24, as Lamech's wives, brought about the reconciliation between Adam and Eve after their long separation.

Zillah had a daughter named Naamah, who seems to have suffered from a split personality. As the daughter of Zillah she was an idol-worshipper, transformed by the Kabbalists into Lilith's partner-in-crime. As Noah's wife she was called Naamah (pleasant) because of her good deeds. The unpleasant side of her character is revealed in this chapter, while her more pleasant aspect is described in the next.⁹⁰

Lamech's third wife, Betenos, is named as the mother of Noah in the Biblical chronology entitled *The Book of Jubilees*. Her story is based on several apocryphal and pseudepigraphic sources.

All four women describe the polygamy and promiscuity that existed before the Flood.

CHAPTER 3 THE WORLD LAPSES INTO EVIL
INTRODUCTION

⁹⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 23:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

ADAH, ONE OF LAMECH'S TWO WIVES

At the time of our marriage to Lamech, it was the custom for a man to take two wives. One was to bear his children. The other was for marital relations. After bearing children, for all the attention she received from her husband, the first wife was as good as a widow. The second was given a potion to make her sterile and was expected to behave like a whore in bed.⁹¹ In our case I, Adah, was the wife with whom Lamech chose to have his children. After they were born, Lamech refused to have anything more to do with me.⁹² It was Zillah whom he took to his bed.⁹³

Although Zillah had been given a potion to make her sterile, it obviously didn't work because she gave birth to a son named Tubal Cain and a daughter named Naamah. Her son made weapons of destruction while her daughter played the whore.⁹⁴

ADAH, ONE OF LAMECH'S TWO WIVES

⁹¹ Genesis 4:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת בראשית פרשה כג: בניו של קין [שמות בני קין ומשמעותם]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/23.htm>

⁹² Genesis 4:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³ Genesis 4:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 23:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁹⁴ Genesis 4:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 23:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

NAAMAH, DAUGHTER OF LAMECH AND ZILLAH

Not for me the life of my mother, Zillah, who was constantly at the beck and call of my father, Lamech. No matter what she was doing or how tired she was, she was expected to have marital relations whenever he felt like it. Determined that no man would ever order me around in such a fashion, from the very beginning I was rebellious, accused of being a shameless hussy who accompanied herself on a tambourine as she pranced round her idols.⁹⁵

When Mother Lilith heard of my beauty and talent for seduction, she came to me with an unusual request. She explained that ever since Cain had killed his brother, resolved to have no more children like him, his parents had been living apart.⁹⁶ Mother Lilith asked me to join her on her nightly visits to Adam to prevent his sperm from being wasted when he ejaculated in his dreams for, unlike humans, we demons fornicate, become pregnant and give birth in a single day. So, every night I accompanied her to where Adam lay sleeping and used his sperm to impregnate myself. This continued until Adam returned to Eve.⁹⁷

NAAMAH, DAUGHTER OF LAMECH AND ZILLAH

⁹⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 23:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁹⁶ תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין פרק ב

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/1/12202.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Eruvin 18b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eirubin.pdf>

⁹⁷ הזהר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ע"ו ע"ב 8-357

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html#HtmpReportNum0039_L2

Zohar 3:76b-77a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

After my work with Adam came to an end I retired to the sea, coming ashore every night to arouse men in their dreams.⁹⁸

I ended up with many children, nicknamed 'all the troubles in the world'.⁹⁹ They looked just like humans except for the fact that whereas human heads are hairy while their bodies are hairless, the heads of my children were hairless while their bodies were hairy.¹⁰⁰

Busy all night long, with no time to look after my large brood, I asked Mother Lilith to rear them for me.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ הזוהר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ע"ז ע"א 361

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html#HtmpReportNum0039_L2

Zohar 3:76b-77a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

⁹⁹ הזוהר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ע"ו ע"ב 357-8

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html#HtmpReportNum0039_L2

Zohar 3:76b-77a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

Emeq Hamelekh The Hebrew Goddess Ch. 7 Patai

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹⁰⁰ Zohar 1.54b-55a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

Emeq haMelekh Bacharach 140b

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/lilsam.html#EMEQ_84

¹⁰¹ הזוהר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ע"ז ע"א 365

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html#HtmpReportNum0039_L2

Zohar 3:76b-77a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

357-8 הזוהר ויקרא פרשת אחרי מות דף ע"ו ע"ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01778_part_6.html#HtmpReportNum0039_L2

ADAH AND ZILLAH, LAMECH'S TWO WIVES

Everyone has heard the story of how, in order to avoid having another son like Cain, Adam and Eve lived apart for a hundred and thirty years. Not many people know that Zillah and I were responsible for their reconciliation.

When, in old age, our husband lost his sight, he was totally dependent on Zillah's son, Tubal Cain, to lead him around. One day, while out hunting together, Tubal Cain spotted an animal in the distance. With Tubal Cain guiding his arm, Lamech shot it with an arrow. Their jubilation was soon cut short when they discovered that the 'animal' was none other than Lamech's grandfather, Cain. Distraught at having killed his own grandfather, Lamech lashed out unseeingly, killing Tubal Cain.¹⁰²

Zillah and I were so upset at Tubal Cain's death that we refused to have any more to do with Lamech. Although he pleaded with us, claiming that he had killed Cain and Tubal Cain by accident, neither Zillah nor I were prepared to forgive him.¹⁰³ In the end we referred our case to an impartial judge - Adam. After listening to both sides, Adam decreed that we should obey our husband and leave Yahweh to punish Lamech, should he deserve to be punished.

Zillah and I weren't prepared to give way without a fight. In no uncertain terms we told Adam,

“Look who's talking! To avoid having any more children like Cain, you've lived apart from Eve for the past hundred and thirty years. If you want us to resume our marital duties, then it's only right that you do so too!”

Adam must have taken our words to heart because, the next thing we heard, he had returned to Eve.¹⁰⁴

ADAH AND ZILLAH, LAMECH'S TWO WIVES

¹⁰² Genesis 4:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰³ Genesis 4:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8168/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 23:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

BETENOS, THE MOTHER OF NOAH

It was a family tradition for cousins to marry, in order to keep the patrimony in the family. Therefore, at a young age I was married to my cousin, Lamech. ¹⁰⁵

When I told Lamech that I was pregnant with our first child, he was overjoyed. Our son was an albino with skin as white as snow, cheeks as pink as roses and hair as white as wool. His eyes shone so brightly that they illuminated the whole house. ¹⁰⁶ We called him Noah because, as Lamech said, he brought us consolation for the harshness of our lives. ¹⁰⁷

BETENOS, THE MOTHER OF NOAH

¹⁰⁵ Book of Jubilees

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁰⁶ The Book of Enoch 105:1-2

http://www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/enoch.html#Enoch_105

¹⁰⁷ Genesis 5:29

Book of Jubilees

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

Noah grew from a beautiful baby into an even more beautiful child. In fact, he looked more like an angel than a boy. From time to time I noticed Lamech staring at me with a strange expression on his face. I had no idea why until one day he burst out, “Swear to me, in Yahweh’s name, that our son is mine and not another’s!”¹⁰⁸

I looked at him in astonishment.

“But whose son could he be, apart from yours?”

He replied,

“Perhaps one of the watchers or the angels or even one of the giants.”¹⁰⁹

I burst into tears and said,

“But surely you remember the sweetness of our love-making and the night I conceived?”¹¹⁰

Doing my best to control myself, I added in a calmer voice,

“I swear the child is yours. The seed was yours, the babe was yours and you were the one who impregnated me – not any stranger, nor any of the watchers nor any other heavenly being.”

I continued, “Why are looking at me like that? What is it that has upset you so? I swear I am telling the truth.”¹¹¹

Lamech left, grumbling under his breath, “We’ll soon find out about that!”

And that was the last I saw of him for several days.

¹⁰⁸ Genesis Apocryphon 2-22

<https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/translation-of-1q-genesis-apocryphon/>

¹⁰⁹ Genesis Apocryphon 2-22

<https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/translation-of-1q-genesis-apocryphon/>

¹¹⁰ Genesis Apocryphon 2-22

<https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/translation-of-1q-genesis-apocryphon/>

¹¹¹ Genesis Apocryphon 2-22

<https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/translation-of-1q-genesis-apocryphon/>

Now there's something I should explain. In those days we humans thought nothing of going around stark naked, copulating whenever we felt like it, in the street, in broad daylight, in full view of everyone. When the immortals saw us women walking around in the nude, unable to control themselves they descended to earth and fornicated with us. Therefore, Lamech's suspicions were not without foundation, although, in my case, I would never have dreamt of having relations with anyone except my husband. ¹¹²

On his return, Lamech told me he had consulted his father, Methuselah, ¹¹³ who had in turn consulted his father, Enoch. ¹¹⁴ Whatever they had told him, it seemed to have assuaged his doubts, because Lamech now accepted that Noah was his. ¹¹⁵

¹¹² Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 22

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

¹¹³ The Book of Enoch 105:3-6

http://www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/enoch.html#Enoch_105

¹¹⁴ The Book of Enoch 105:7-20

http://www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/enoch.html#Enoch_105

¹¹⁵ Genesis Apocryphon 2-22

<https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/translation-of-1q-genesis-apocryphon/>

CHAPTER 4
YAHWEH TRIES AGAIN
The Book of Genesis

The Flood (Genesis, Chapters 6-9) provided Yahweh with a chance to recreate the world after it degenerated into evil. Unfortunately the family he chose to carry out His plan proved only too susceptible to human weakness. Noah became a drunk, his wife, Naamah, as we have seen from the previous chapter, a whore, while their son, Ham, performed an indecent act on his father.

Naamah, the performer of good deeds, describes the Flood and its aftermath, aided by her three daughters-in-law - Adataneses, wife of her eldest son, Japheth, Ne'elatama'uk, wife of her middle son, Ham, and Sedeqetelebab, wife of her youngest son, Shem. The names of all three daughters-in-law appear in the Biblical chronology, *The Book of Jubilees*.¹¹⁶

Much of the narrative in this chapter is borrowed from various apocryphal and pseudepigraphic sources.

CHAPTER 4 YAHWEH TRIES AGAIN
INTRODUCTION

¹¹⁶ The Book of Jubilees 7:13-19

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

NAAMAH, THE WIFE OF NOAH

Not wishing to bring children into a world in which idolatry, adultery, incest and murder were rife, my half-brother-husband, Noah, had hesitated for a long time before taking a wife.¹¹⁷ Shortly after our marriage, Noah had a nightmare that so disturbed him that he was unable to sleep. When I asked him what was wrong, he told me he had a premonition that something awful was about to happen.¹¹⁸ I advised him to consult our great grandfather, Enoch, who knew something about interpreting dreams.

Noah took my advice and returned with the most disturbing news. Apparently, disgusted at the way His Creation had turned out, Yahweh had decided to destroy it by sending a great flood to drown every living thing.¹¹⁹ However, not all were doomed to die. Noah had been ordered to build a boat to save those of each species deemed worthy of being saved, ourselves included.¹²⁰ Building the boat would take so long to complete that it would give Noah time to convince our fellow men to change their ways and thus be saved from destruction.¹²¹

So, for 120 years, Noah planted cedar trees which, when fully grown, he felled for timber.¹²² Throughout this period my husband continued to warn our fellow men of the approaching catastrophe. Even though his warnings invariably fell on deaf ears, he never gave up trying to convince them. The following conversation was typical of many that took place.

¹¹⁷ The Book of Jasher 5:12

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/5.htm>

¹¹⁸ The Book of Enoch 60:1-24

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe063.htm>

¹¹⁹ The Book of Enoch 60:1-10

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe068.htm>

¹²⁰ The Book of Enoch 65:11-12

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe068.htm>

¹²¹ Genesis 6:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8171/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 23

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Genesis 6:9-11:32 Midrash Tanchuma Parshat Noach in Depth

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35860/jewish/Noach-in-Depth.htm

¹²² Great Commentary on Genesis 31:8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

On being asked what he was doing, Noah would reply,
 “I’m building a boat to save us from the coming flood.”
 “You must be joking, old man. Tell us what it’s really for.”
 Noah: “I’m telling you the truth. There’s going to be a flood.”
 “What flood? If the level of the ground water starts to rise,
 we’ll bolt it down with iron plates.
 If it rains, we’ll simply cover our heads to avoid getting wet.”
 Noah: “It won’t happen in any of the ways you can imagine.”
 “Then we’ll just have to make sure our children don’t come to harm,
 by not having any!
 Anyway, we’re so tall that the water won’t even reach our necks.
 If there are geysers, we’ll just stand on them.”
 Noah: “For Yahweh’s sake, change your behavior before it’s too late.
 Otherwise you’ll all drown.”
 “Tell us, old man, if our behavior is so bad, why are we standing here,
 alive and well?”
 Noah: “Because the time isn’t ripe for your punishment.”
 “Ridiculous! We have no intention of changing our ways.”
 Noah: “You’re making a terrible mistake.”¹²³

Once the boat was finished, we started boarding the animals, a male and female of each species.¹²⁴ Noah sat at the entrance, allowing only those creatures to enter who crouched down before him, acknowledging his authority.¹²⁵ Moreover, he chose only males who pursued females, not females who pursued males.¹²⁶

Then came the day that it started to rain and the sea began to rise. At first only a few drops fell, giving our people extra time to mend their ways. When it became clear that they had no intention of doing so, the rain began to fall in torrents.¹²⁷

¹²³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 108b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_108.html
 Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 22
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

¹²⁴ Genesis 6:19
 Genesis 7:9 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

¹²⁵ The Book of Jasher 6:4 6:9
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/6.htm>

¹²⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 31:13
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹²⁷ Genesis 7:12 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

Unable to believe that the flood was really happening, even Noah hesitated to board the boat, waiting till the very last moment, by which time the water had reached his ankles. The gangplank was then hauled up and the hatches battened down.¹²⁸

As the rain continued to fall, the boat gradually lifted off the ground and began to drift from its moorings.¹²⁹ So great was the amount of water that soon the highest mountains were completely submerged.¹³⁰ Every living thing perished, man, bird and beast.¹³¹ Only the fish in the sea survived.¹³²

¹²⁸ Genesis 7:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 32

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹²⁹ Genesis 7:17-18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 32:9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹³⁰ Genesis 7:19-20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 32

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹³¹ Genesis 7:21

Great Commentary on Genesis 32

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 108a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_108.html

¹³² Genesis 7:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 108a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_108.html

Besides Noah and me, there were our three sons, Japheth, Ham and Shem, and their three wives, Adataneses, Ne'elatama'uk and Sedeqetelebab.¹³³ Since Noah had ordered us to refrain from marital relations while on board the boat, the men kept to their quarters while we women kept to ours. Indeed, how could we even think of marital relations while all about us people were drowning?¹³⁴

We soon exhausted ourselves feeding the animals and inevitably we fell sick, coughing so violently that we spat blood. Yet, after one of the lions mauled Noah because he failed to feed it in time, we didn't dare cease our work.¹³⁵ Then and there Noah decided that once we reached dry land, we would have a fourth son to help him with his chores.¹³⁶

Someone once asked our son, Shem,
“Since the species are so different,
how were you able to take care of all of them?”
Shem replied, “The truth is, we had a lot of trouble.
The animals which usually feed by day, we fed by day,
and those that normally feed by night, we fed by night.
We had no idea what the chameleons ate until one day,
while my father was cutting up a pomegranate,
a worm dropped out to be instantly devoured by one of the chameleons.
Seeing this, my father would prepare a mash of bran
and leave it to become wormy.

¹³³ Genesis 7:13
The Book of Jubilees 7:13-19
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹³⁴ Genesis 7:7 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 31:12
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 108b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_108.html

¹³⁵ Genesis 7:23 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8170/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 32:4
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹³⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 36
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

On another occasion my father discovered a phoenix lying in the hold.
'Don't you need to eat?' he asked it.
'I saw that you were busy,' the phoenix replied,
'so I said to myself, I won't trouble you.'
My father was so overcome by such consideration that he exclaimed,
'May Yahweh preserve you!'
This is how the phoenix came to live forever."¹³⁷

After a year had gone by¹³⁸ and we had more or less despaired of ever seeing dry ground again, the rain ceased, the storms abated, the winds died down and the sea stopped rising.¹³⁹ After another 150 days¹⁴⁰ the boat finally went aground on Mount Ararat, east of the River Tigris and south of Armenia.¹⁴¹ Gradually the other mountain peaks re-emerged.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Genesis 8:19

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 108b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_108.html

¹³⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 30

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹³⁹ Genesis 8:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁴⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 33

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴¹ Genesis 8:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 33

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Great Commentary on Genesis 33:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴² Genesis 8:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true

Forty days later, Noah opened a porthole and looked out.¹⁴³ The sky was still very dark. Every week he released a bird and every week it returned. On the day that it failed to do so, we knew that we could safely disembark.¹⁴⁴

Noah opened the hatches. All we could see was marshland.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, after being cooped up aboard the boat for almost two years, we couldn't wait to disembark.¹⁴⁶ Noah refused to let us out until he received permission to do so from Yahweh.¹⁴⁷ Even then he hesitated, until Yahweh promised never again to inflict such a flood upon the earth.¹⁴⁸

Once we were back on dry land, it was time to start all over again. We soon discovered that whereas there had been too much water, now there was too little. The clay soil had dried into a thick crust in which nothing would grow. We had no choice but to wait for the rainy season, when the rain would soften the earth. Ten days after it rained, we were able to sow our first crops.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Genesis 8:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 33:5
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴⁴ Genesis 8:7-12

¹⁴⁵ Genesis 8:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 33
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 34:1

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 34:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴⁸ Genesis 9:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8173/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 34:6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁴⁹ Genesis 8:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8172/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 33
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

HAM'S WIFE, NE'ELATAMA'UK

Ham and I already had three sons when we boarded the boat - Cush, Mizraim and Put. The fourth, Canaan, ¹⁵⁰ was conceived on the boat after Ham and I broke our promise to refrain from sexual relations. ¹⁵¹ When my father-in-law found out, he was furious. I really don't know why he was so angry. It's not as if I actually gave birth on the boat!

Neither I nor my sisters-in-law, Adataneses and Sedeqetelebab, the wives of Japheth and Shem, harbored any illusions as to why we, of all women, had survived the flood. We had been saved for one thing only, to repopulate the earth by providing our husbands with as many children as possible. This meant giving birth repeatedly, without rest. Meanwhile, it was the task of our husbands to provide us with a roof over our heads and food in our stomachs, no small feat with our ever-increasing numbers. ¹⁵²

HAM'S WIFE, NE'ELATAMA'UK

¹⁵⁰ Genesis 10:6

Genesis 9:18

¹⁵¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לו: בני נח וחטאו של חם ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/36.htm>

¹⁵² The Book of Jubilees 7:13-19

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

NAAMAH, THE WIFE OF NOAH

The years passed. Then Noah found a wild vine that had survived the flood. The ripe grapes made him feel so good, that he made up his mind to plant a whole vineyard. ¹⁵³ While he was planting the cuttings, a stranger arrived. For a while he gazed down at my husband, before asking,

“What’s that you’re planting?”

Noah replied, “Vines.”

The stranger continued, “What’s a vine?”

Noah answered, “It’s a plant that produces fruit called grapes, which are very sweet.

They can either be eaten straight off the vine or dried in the sun, in which case they are called raisins or sultanas.

They can also be made into wine, which gladdens the hearts of all who drink it.”

The stranger was silent for a while and then asked Noah,

“Would you like me to help you?”

Naturally Noah answered, “Yes.”

To Noah’s horror, instead of using water to irrigate the vines, the stranger, whose name was Satan, used the blood of animals that he slaughtered on the spot. First he slaughtered a lamb, then a lion, then a monkey and lastly a pig. He then turned to Noah and explained.

“After drinking one cup of wine, a man is as quiet as a lamb.

After he drinks two cups, he becomes as proud and boastful as a lion.

After drinking three cups, he becomes like a monkey, dancing, swearing and scarcely knowing what he is doing.

After drinking four cups of wine, he becomes like a pig, wallowing in his own filth.”

It seems that all this time, the stranger had known about the fruit of the vine! ¹⁵⁴

NAAMAH, THE WIFE OF NOAH

¹⁵³ Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

¹⁵⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 34:3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Midrash Tanchumah or Yelamdinu

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm20.htm>

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35860/jewish/Noach-in-Depth.htm

The trouble was that Noah was far too fond of his own wine, ¹⁵⁵ a weakness that led to a very unfortunate incident ¹⁵⁶ which more or less ended our marriage.

I was lying in my tent, enjoying an afternoon siesta, when Noah entered, clutching a wine-flask to his breast. ¹⁵⁷ Flushed with heat from the wine he had drunk, he removed his clothes. ¹⁵⁸ Once he was naked, it was obvious why he had come.

Ever since leaving the boat, we had been trying unsuccessfully to have another son to help Noah with his chores. ¹⁵⁹ Most of the time I acquiesced to my husband's demands, but on this occasion it was so hot that all I wanted to do was sleep. Protesting, I tried to push him off me. Blind to my struggles and deaf to my entreaties, he continued to persist.

Just then who should enter the tent but our middle son, Ham. Covering myself with a sheet, I seized the opportunity to slip out of bed and escape my husband's unwelcome advances.

¹⁵⁵ The Book of Jubilees 7:1
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁵⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 36:4
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁵⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 36:4
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁵⁸ Genesis 9:21

¹⁵⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 36
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

HAM'S WIFE, NE'ELATAMA'UK

One afternoon, clad only in a sheet, my mother-in-law appeared to ask if she could stay with us until Noah sobered up. By now we were all aware of my father-in-law's fondness for wine, so this came as no surprise.¹⁶⁰ Only later did I learn from Ham that he had inadvertently come upon his father forcing himself on his mother, and that my mother-in-law had taken advantage of the interruption to escape.

It was no secret that my parents-in-law were trying to have another son.¹⁶¹ Whereas his two brothers viewed their attempts with tolerance, Ham was furious at the thought of another brother with whom he would have to share the family inheritance.

After catching his parents in the act, Ham immediately went in search of his brothers to tell them of what he had seen. Mocking his father, he told them,
“Three sons were enough for our ancestor, Adam,
yet our foolish father who already has three, wants yet another.
I've just seen him trying to have relations with our mother against her will.
Now he's lying in a drunken stupor, completely naked, in her tent.”¹⁶²

Shocked at his words, Japheth and Seth went to see for themselves. To Ham's great amusement, they backed into the tent to cover their father with a robe - not to avoid the repugnant sight of their father's naked body but to spare him unnecessary shame!¹⁶³

HAM'S WIFE, NE'ELATAMA'UK

¹⁶⁰ The Book of Jubilees 7:1

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁶¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 36

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁶² Genesis 9:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8173/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לו: בני נח וחטאו של חם ה' [חטאו של חם ועונשו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/36.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis 36:5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁶³ Genesis 9:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8173/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 36:6

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

When Noah finally came to his senses, he came storming out of my mother-in-law's tent, cursing our youngest son, Canaan.¹⁶⁴ When I asked Ham why his father was angry with Canaan who, as far as I knew, had done nothing to deserve it, my husband's cryptic answer was that his parents wouldn't be having any more children.¹⁶⁵

He was right. My parents-in-law never did succeed in having another son to help Noah with his chores. Instead, Noah forced Canaan to help him, treating him no better than a slave.

¹⁶⁴ Genesis 9:24-27

¹⁶⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 70a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_70.html

NAAMAH, THE WIFE OF NOAH

After that afternoon on which I had rebuffed Noah's advances, my husband never approached me again. When I questioned him about it, he turned away, mumbling something completely unintelligible. Puzzled and upset, I asked Seth to tell me why Noah wanted no more to do with me. Moreover, why had Noah ceased speaking to Ham, and why did everyone treat Canaan like a slave? ¹⁶⁶

Reluctant at first to answer, eventually Seth revealed what had happened after I had left the tent. Seeing his father lying there naked, Ham had either castrated Noah or sodomized him, or perhaps had done both. ¹⁶⁷ Aghast, I could scarcely believe him. Ham had always been somewhat unruly, but that a son of mine should have perpetrated such an outrage on his own father? It was too much to bear!

No wonder Noah no longer visited me in my tent, or spoke to Ham. But why did he treat our grandson so harshly? Seth explained that it was Canaan who had revealed to his father what Noah had been doing in my tent. As a result Noah had decreed that, as a punishment, he and his descendants would always be treated as slaves. ¹⁶⁸

NAAMAH, THE WIFE OF NOAH

¹⁶⁶ Genesis 9:25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8173/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 36
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁶⁷ Genesis 9:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8173/jewish/Chapter-9.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 70a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_70.html

¹⁶⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 36

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Part 2

The Mothers and the Fathers – Sarah and Abraham

CHAPTER 5
REBELLION IN BABYLON
The Book of Genesis

The Mothers and the Fathers are the three patriarchs and their wives - Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob, Leah and Rachel.

In this chapter, concerning the early years of the first patriarch, Abraham, son of Terah, two rebellions take place. The first is that of Nimrud, the grandson of Noah's son, Ham. Nimrud was elected king of Shinar (South Mesopotamia, later called Babylonia, today's Iraq and the location of the city of Ur). Determined to prevent Yahweh from bringing another Flood upon the earth to destroy mankind, in order to overcome Him, Nimrud built a tower so high that it reached heaven. An unnamed woman of Shinar relates what happened as a result. Genesis Chapters 10 and 11 form the basis of this story.

The second rebellion is described by the wife of Nimrud's powerful chief minister, Terah. Amathlai, whose name can be found in the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 91a), ¹⁶⁹ describes how their son, Abram, rebelled against the idol-worship of his parents, leading to the family's flight from Ur and their settlement in Haran, today's Turkey. The source for this story is the Biblical history entitled *The Book of Jasher* Chapters 7-27.

CHAPTER 5 REBELLION IN BABYLON
INTRODUCTION

¹⁶⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

A WOMAN OF SHINAR

I was born in the land of Shinar, a land rendered fertile by two great rivers called the Tigris and the Euphrates. On the vast plains, rich in alluvial soil and irrigated by canals, through which the two huge rivers meandered on their way to the sea, we grew corn that stretched as far as the eye could see. Here and there, rising like islands of green among the gold, were oases of palm trees that provided travelers with water and shade.¹⁷⁰

When I was born, the human race formed one nation and spoke only one language - Hebrew.¹⁷¹ All of us were descended from the family of Noah, a worshipper of a God named Yahweh,¹⁷² and the only family to survive a great flood that had inundated all the earth. Noah's three sons, Japheth, Ham and Shem, had migrated south, seeking a land large enough to accommodate their growing families. That land was Shinar.¹⁷³

After war broke out between the descendants of Japheth and Ham, the tribe of Ham appealed to Ham's grandson, Nimrud, to lead them to victory. Nimrud was a mighty hunter¹⁷⁴ whose success was due to an outfit that camouflaged him so effectively that animals would approach him unafraid.¹⁷⁵

A WOMAN OF SHINAR

¹⁷⁰ God's Nation: Her Ancestry and Mission James M. Simpson

<https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Nation-Ancestry-Mission-Classic/dp/0259493953>

¹⁷¹ Genesis 11:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת נח יט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

¹⁷² Genesis 5:32

¹⁷³ Genesis 11:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

¹⁷⁴ Genesis 10:6-10

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

<http://targum.info/pj/pjgen6-11.htm>

¹⁷⁵ Genesis 3:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8167/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Great Commentary on Genesis

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

After leading his people to victory, his reward was to be elected king.¹⁷⁶ Nimrud became so rich and powerful¹⁷⁷ that he thought himself Yahweh's equal¹⁷⁸ and persuaded us to think the same.¹⁷⁹

Although Nimrud had been told by his grandfather, Ham, that Yahweh had promised never again to unleash a flood upon the earth, Nimrud feared that Yahweh might change His mind.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, he came up with a plan to build a tower so high that neither the flood waters nor our enemies would be able to reach us.¹⁸¹ Indeed, the tower would be so tall that it would reach heaven, allowing us to challenge Yahweh's rule.¹⁸² The plan was to occupy heaven, wage war against Yahweh and depose Him in favor of other gods.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) 7:31-41
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁷⁷ Genesis 10:8-9 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8174/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvim 53a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvim.pdf>

¹⁷⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Chullin 89a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Chullin.pdf>
Antiquities of the Jews Book I Ch. 4:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

¹⁷⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לז: תולדותיהם של בני נח ב
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/37.htm>

¹⁸⁰ Genesis Chapter 11:4 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 24
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt
Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:20-22
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>
Antiquities of the Jews Book I Ch. 4:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

¹⁸¹ Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

¹⁸² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לח: דור הפלגה ט
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/38.htm>

¹⁸³ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לח: דור הפלגה ו
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/38.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת נח יח
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4
Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:25-26
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

600,000 of us were pressed into service. With no stone or mortar available, we built the tower out of bricks, cementing them together with clay.¹⁸⁴ It took years to build.¹⁸⁵ All my children were born on the building site. You would have thought that I would be allowed to rest after giving birth. Instead, the moment my baby was delivered and swaddled, I was forced to resume making bricks with my baby in my lap.¹⁸⁶

The tower grew so high that it took a full year to carry the bricks up to where the builders were working. If a brick fell down by accident, we would mourn it as though we had lost someone dear to us, yet if someone fell to his death, numbed by overwork, we remain unmoved.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Genesis 11:3 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Genesis Noach
[https://www.sefaria.org.il/Sefer_HaYashar_\(midrash\)%2C_Book_of_Genesis%2C_Noach?lang=en](https://www.sefaria.org.il/Sefer_HaYashar_(midrash)%2C_Book_of_Genesis%2C_Noach?lang=en)
The Book of Jubilees Ch.10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>
Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

¹⁸⁵ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:31
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁸⁶ Greek Apocalypse of Baruch 3 3:1-8
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/3Baruch.html>

¹⁸⁷ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:27-28
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

After forty-three years the tower was finished. It was enormous.¹⁸⁸ By now I had become an old woman. Then came the day I awoke to find I couldn't understand a word of what people were saying. No-one could.¹⁸⁹ In sheer frustration the builders threw bricks at one another,¹⁹⁰ as a result of which many died that day.¹⁹¹

Those who had been in favor of occupying heaven were scattered over the face of the earth. Those who had been in favor of waging war on Yahweh were transformed into apes, spirits and demons. Finally, those who had wished to replace Yahweh with idols found themselves incapable of understanding each other.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 11:6-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:32

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 10:22-25

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁹⁰ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:33-34

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁹¹ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:39

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁹² Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:35-36

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin109a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_109.html

Genesis 11:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:36

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

The tower was destroyed.¹⁹³ One third was consumed by fire, one third sank into the earth and one third remained standing.¹⁹⁴ It came to be known as the Tower of Babel, recalling the moment we had begun to babble in different tongues.¹⁹⁵

Today, what is left of the tower can be seen at a place called Borsippa.¹⁹⁶ If you climb to the top of the ruins and look down, the palm trees below look no higher than grasshoppers.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>
The Book of Jubilees Ch.10:26-28
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

¹⁹⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לח: דור הפלגה ח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/38.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת נח יח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 109a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_109.html

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:38

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁹⁵ Genesis 11:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8175/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 4:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

The Book of Jubilees Ch.10:25-26

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:37

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

¹⁹⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 109a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_109.html

¹⁹⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת נח פרשה לח: דור הפלגה ח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/38.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת נח יח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

As for King Nimrud, he continued to rule Shinar which became known as the land of Nimrud. ¹⁹⁸ I wish I could say that he had learned something from what had happened, but he remained as obdurate as ever. His son, Mardon, was even worse. ¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Micah 5:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16191/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁹ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 7:46-48

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 11:7-8

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

AMATHLAI, MOTHER OF ABRAM

The night our son, Abram, was born, my husband, Terah, held a great feast, attended by all the members of King Nimrud's court. Wishing to curry favor with King Nimrud's chief minister, all those present lavished compliments on our new-born son. Therefore, we were utterly astonished when, the next day, we learned that the very same courtiers who, the previous evening, had lavished compliments on our son, now advised the king to have him put to death! Why? Because, according to the stars, he posed a threat to the throne.²⁰⁰

How an innocent baby could pose a threat to a king as powerful as Nimrud was beyond comprehension. Yet the king was adamant. He gave us three days grace to hand over Abram. If we did not do so, we would all be killed. What did my quick-witted husband do? One of our servants had given birth to a male child the same day that Abram had been born. Terah took the child and handed him over to the king, who promptly dashed out its brains. Satisfied, King Nimrud thought no more of the matter, and in time everyone forgot that there had ever been a child named Abram who had threatened the kingdom.²⁰¹

Just to be on the safe side, from then on, Abram, his wet-nurse and I lived in a cave in the mountains, our whereabouts known only to Terah who, every month, brought us provisions.²⁰² Eventually we left the safety of the cave and returned to Ur, where Abram married his half-sister, Sarai, daughter of one of Terah's other wives. It soon became apparent that Sarai was barren and would never bear a child. This was a great source of sorrow to me because I knew just how much Abram wanted a son.²⁰³

AMATHLAI, MOTHER OF ABRAM

²⁰⁰ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 8:1-4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²⁰¹ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 8:31-34

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²⁰² Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 8:35-36

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²⁰³ Genesis 11:26-30

Book of Jubilees Ch.12:9-11

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

Since, from an early age, Abram had displayed great interest in religion,²⁰⁴ Terah and I decided to send him away to study under Terah's relative, Noah, and his son, Shem.²⁰⁵ On his return he informed us that he had forsaken the worship of our gods, claiming that there was only one God, not many.²⁰⁶

Meanwhile, Terah and I continued to worship our gods as we had always done.²⁰⁷ Twelve large statues stood in our house, to which we daily offered food and drink. When Abram begged us to cease worshipping them, we warned him to keep quiet, in case anyone reported his proselytizing to the authorities. In such cases the punishment was death.²⁰⁸

Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised when Abram asked me to prepare a suitable food offering for our gods. I watched as he reverentially placed it at their feet, before announcing that he intended to remain awake all night long to watch them eat. Smiling fondly, I said,

“Don't you know? They never eat. They prefer to leave the food for us.”²⁰⁹

The next morning, when we brought our food offering as usual, Terah and I were stunned to discover our statues smashed to bits. Only the largest was still intact, holding an axe in its hand. With a perfectly straight face, Abram explained that instead of waiting for the large god to take his portion, the smaller gods had reached out for theirs first, angering the large god who had destroyed them all.

“Look!” Abram said, pointing to the large statue.

“There's the proof. The axe is still in his hand!”²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Book of Jubilees Ch.11:15-16

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

²⁰⁵ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:5-6

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²⁰⁶ Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 26

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²⁰⁷ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 9:6-9

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²⁰⁸ Book of Jubilees Ch. 12:1-8

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

²⁰⁹ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 11:23-32

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁰ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 11:33-40

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

We looked at him in stupefaction. We knew perfectly well that the statues, which Terah had carved with his own hands, could do no such thing. So why was Abram lying? When my husband demanded an explanation for our son's outrageous behavior, Abram asked us how could we believe in a god who could do nothing, not even feed himself? With that Abram seized the axe, used it to destroy the last remaining statue, and made good his escape before we could stop him.²¹¹

Never have I seen my husband so furious. Although I pleaded with him not to do anything rash, Terah refused to listen and dragged Abram before King Nimrud for punishment.²¹² The moment Abram was sentenced to death by fire, Terah immediately regretted doing so.²¹³ However, it was too late, and Abram was thrown into a hot furnace. I was utterly distraught. Had we saved Abram from death as a child, only to have him sentenced to death as an adult?²¹⁴

My story would have ended here, with Abram's death, had not providence intervened. To everyone's astonishment, Abram emerged from the furnace completely unharmed. Not even his clothes were singed.²¹⁵ After that Abram was treated with awe by some and fear by others,²¹⁶ while King Nimrud regarded him more and more as a threat.²¹⁷ It was clear that none of us were safe in Ur and that our only option was to seek a home elsewhere, far from Nimrud's reach.²¹⁸

²¹¹ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 11:41-49
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹² Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 11:50-61
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹³ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:1-8
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>
Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:20-27
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁵ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:28-36
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁶ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:37-43
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁷ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:45-58
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²¹⁸ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12:63-70
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

This is how we came to leave Ur, where our family had lived for generations, and establish a new home in Haran, a region blessed with excellent pasture for our flocks. Abram continued to preach his new religion, gaining many converts.²¹⁹ While he preached to the men, his wife, Sarai, preached to the women.²²⁰

After three years he decided it was time for himself and his family to continue to Canaan, the land promised to him by his God.²²¹ We saw Abram and his family one last time when they visited Haran, remaining with us for five years,²²² at the end of which they returned to Canaan. After that, we never saw them again.²²³

²¹⁹ Book of Jubilees Ch.2:15

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 13:1-2

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²²⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 39:14

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²²¹ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 13:3-5

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²²² Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 13:20-21

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²²³ Sefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 13:22-28

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

CHAPTER 6 FROM BABYLON TO CANAAN The Book of Genesis

The migration of Abram, the founder of the Hebrew nation, from Ur to Canaan via Egypt, ending with the death of Abram's wife, Sarai, is related in Genesis, Chapters 11-23. Telling the story here are Abram's three wives, Sarai, Hagar and Keturah.

According to *Yalkut Shimoni*, a medieval compilation of non-legal rabbinical texts on the books of the Hebrew Bible, the three women were the descendants of Noah's three sons. Sarah was the descendant of Shem, Hagar, the descendant of Ham and Keturah, the descendant of Yaphet.²²⁴ *The Book of Jubilees* also supports the claim that Abraham had three wives.²²⁵

However, other sources claim that Hagar and Keturah were the same person and that Abram remarried Hagar after she converted to the worship of Yahweh,²²⁶ as a result of which her deeds became as 'sweet-smelling' as incense (in Hebrew 'ketoret').²²⁷

CHAPTER 6 FROM BABYLON TO CANAAN

INTRODUCTION

²²⁴ Yalkut Shimoni on Job Chapter 8 Paragraph 904

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Nach.904?vhe=Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Nach&lang=he

²²⁵ The Book of Jubilees 19:11-12

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>

²²⁶ Genesis 25:1

Genesis 25:6 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 5:25

<http://targum.info/targumic-texts/pentateuchal-targumim/>

[קטורה אשת אברהם] מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ד [קטורה אשת אברהם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis 47:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabba/gen027557mbp_djvu.txt

זוהר לעם פרשת חיי שרה

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/101968?heb/content/view/full/101968&main>

²²⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרק כה סימן ח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/5.htm>

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

What probably convinced Abram to take her back was the fact that, after leaving him, Hagar had not been intimate with any other man, preserving her chastity by sealing the entrance to her vagina.²²⁸

²²⁸ Genesis 25:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rabai/61.htm>

SARAI, ABRAM'S FIRST WIFE

I was born a princess of Ur ²²⁹ where my father, Terah, held a high position at the court of King Nimrud. ²³⁰ I married my half-brother, Abram, ²³¹ a man who held such controversial views that all our family was forced to flee the city. ²³²

For a while we settled in Haran, ²³³ before travelling on to a land called Canaan which, my husband assured me, had been promised us by his God, Yahweh. ²³⁴

When we arrived in Canaan, we found the country stricken with famine, so continued south to Egypt ²³⁵ where I acquired a maidservant named Hagar. ²³⁶

SARAI, ABRAM'S FIRST WIFE

²²⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 13a

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_13.html

²³⁰ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 7

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²³¹ Genesis 11:29

Genesis 20:12

²³² Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 12

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH7>

²³³ Genesis 11:13

The Book of Jubilees Ch 12:15

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

Genesis 11:32

²³⁴ Genesis 13:1-8

The Book of Jubilees Ch 12:28

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

²³⁵ Genesis 13:9-10

²³⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 25:1-2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Alas, Abram's God had not blessed us with children,²³⁷ so, on our return to Canaan, I offered Hagar to my husband as a surrogate wife.²³⁸ Realizing that if he wished to have offspring there was no alternative, Abram reluctantly agreed to this arrangement.²³⁹ Even though I had been the one to suggest it, I can't tell you how much I suffered, knowing Hagar was in my husband's bed every night.

When Hagar did not fall pregnant immediately, a malicious rumor arose according to which I had cursed her with the evil eye, causing her to miscarry.²⁴⁰ The truth was that ever since I had given her to Abram, Hagar's attitude towards me had changed completely. Instead of behaving like a faithful and obedient servant, she now conducted herself as if she was my equal, or even my superior.²⁴¹ To teach her a lesson, whenever I was asked if I was pregnant, I would reply,

“Instead of asking me, why don't you ask that poor woman, Hagar, whom my husband married for the express purpose of bearing children?”

When Hagar heard this, she accused me of not being the Yahweh-fearing woman I claimed to be.²⁴² I told Abram,

“It's your fault I'm unable to have a child.

Moreover, instead of reprimanding Hagar for her insulting manner towards me, you remain silent. Now she no longer respects me.”²⁴³

²³⁷ Genesis 16:1

Great Commentary on Genesis 25:1-2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²³⁸ Genesis 16:1-2

Great Commentary on Genesis 25

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Great Commentary on Genesis 25:1-2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²³⁹ Genesis 16:2

Great Commentary on Genesis 25:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁴⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 25:5-6

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁴¹ Genesis 16:4

²⁴² Great Commentary on Genesis 25:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁴³ Genesis 16:5 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 25:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

My husband turned away with downcast eyes, muttering that the matter was out of his hands and that I should act as I thought fit. So I punished Hagar by slapping her about the face with a slipper and treating her like the servant she was. I also forbade her to have any further contact with Abram.²⁴⁴

I suppose that after this it was inevitable that Hagar would run away. She was soon back begging our forgiveness. It appeared that her little trip on the road had taught her a lesson. We took her back on condition that, in future, she would behave in a manner befitting a servant. After that, she was very meek and mild. Nevertheless, I continued to treat her with a firm hand to ensure her continued good behavior.

Eventually Hagar did conceive and gave birth to a son whom my husband called Ishmael.²⁴⁵ Even though I could no longer stand the sight of his mother, I loved Ishmael as if he was mine.²⁴⁶

Abram never lost hope that I would give birth to a son and that, through him, we would have many descendants.²⁴⁷ I scoffed at the idea. Abram might have been able to father a child when he was a hundred years old, since men do not entirely lose their virility, but there was no way that I could bear a child at the age of ninety - long after my child-bearing days were over.²⁴⁸

It was a very hot day and we were enjoying an afternoon siesta in our tent. Three days had passed since Abram, who had changed his name to Abraham, had circumcised himself prior to circumcising all the other males of our tribe.²⁴⁹ As usual Abraham sat at the entrance to our tent, eagerly scanning the horizon for visitors.

²⁴⁴ Genesis 16:6

Great Commentary on Genesis 25:5-6

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁴⁵ Genesis 16:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true

²⁴⁶ The Antiquities of the Jews Ch. 12:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

²⁴⁷ Genesis 17:16

²⁴⁸ Genesis 17:17

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:7-9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁴⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 86b

http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_86.html

When he told me he could see three figures in the distance, curiosity got the better of me. What person in his right mind would choose to travel on such a hot day?²⁵⁰

As they drew closer, I saw from their robes that one was a Saracen, another a Nabatean and the third an Arab.²⁵¹ Instead of approaching our tent, they stood at a distance, ignoring the glaring sun.²⁵² Abraham didn't think twice but limped out to greet them.²⁵³

Soon they were sitting under the shade of our terebinth tree, while Abraham and I prepared them a meal. After they had eaten I returned to our tent, leaving Abraham to entertain our guests.²⁵⁴ My mind was elsewhere, until one of them said the most extraordinary thing. He said,

“When I return this time next year,
your wife Sarah will have given birth to a son.”²⁵⁵

Whereas Abraham was overcome with joy, I said nothing. I was already an old woman. The idea of me conceiving and being able to deliver and breastfeed a child was laughable.²⁵⁶ I was shocked when they asked why I was laughing. It was as if they had read my mind. Quickly I denied it.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 86b
http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_86.html

²⁵¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 48:9-10
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁵² Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 86b
http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_86.html

²⁵³ Genesis 18:1-2 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8213#showrashi=true

²⁵⁴ Genesis 18:3-8

²⁵⁵ Genesis 18:9-10 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8213#showrashi=true

²⁵⁶ Genesis 18:11-12 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8213#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 48:17-19
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁵⁷ Genesis 18:13-15 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8213#showrashi=true

Exactly as the visitor had foretold, three months later I conceived and, after nine months, bore a son named Isaac.²⁵⁸ Not only did I give birth but I also had a plentiful supply of milk, not to mention the fact that I looked years younger.²⁵⁹ There were many who refused to believe that I had given birth at such an advanced age and claimed I had adopted an abandoned baby.

What did Abraham do? On the day that Isaac was to be weaned from the breast, he made a feast to which he invited the chiefs of all the clans. Their wives had been ordered to bring their babies but to leave their wet nurses at home. Once one baby cried out to be fed, all the others joined in, including our son, Isaac. Seeing me hesitate to feed Isaac in public, Abraham said,

“This is no time for modesty! Uncover your breasts so that all can witness the miracle Yahweh has performed.”

Left with no choice, I displayed my breasts for all to see. I nearly died of embarrassment! My milk gushed out like two fountains, enough to feed all the babies present. No longer could anyone claim that I had not given birth to Isaac.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Genesis 21:1-2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:2-3

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 92a

http://www.halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_92.html

²⁵⁹ Genesis 17:16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8212#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 87a

http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_87.html

²⁶⁰ Genesis 17:16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8212#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:9-10

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 87a

[Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 87a Halakhah Website](http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_87.html)

When Ishmael and Isaac were older, Ishmael would take his younger brother hunting. Ishmael, who was very skilled with a bow, would shoot an arrow in Isaac's direction, all the time pretending it was a game.²⁶¹ Alarmed for Isaac's safety, I begged Abraham to divorce Hagar and send her and Ishmael away,²⁶² nagging him until he gave in to my demands.²⁶³

As far as I was concerned, that was the end of Hagar and her son.

²⁶¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 53:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁶² Genesis 21:10 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²⁶³ Genesis 21:11 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Genesis 21:12-3

HAGAR, ABRAM'S SECOND WIFE

I was raised in the harem of the Pharaoh of Egypt, the daughter of one of Pharaoh's concubines.²⁶⁴ Therefore, when my mother came to tell me that I was to be given to a great lady as her maidservant, I was shocked. After I learned that the great lady in question was Sarai, wife of the tribal chief of the Hebrews, and that I would shortly be leaving for the land of Canaan, I was even more downcast. I had no desire to leave the country of my birth, or serve a woman from the strange tribe that worshipped an invisible god.²⁶⁵ However, I had no choice, for my father had decreed that it was better for me to be the servant of a woman like Sarai, than to be a great lady in my own right.²⁶⁶

After ten years of marriage, my mistress still had no children and it was clear to everyone that she was barren. This meant the end of Abram's line, a matter considered a catastrophe by the Hebrews. It was now that Sarai proposed to give me to Abram as a surrogate wife, to provide him with the son she was unable to have.²⁶⁷

I was appalled! My father had ordered me to serve Sarai, not service her husband! Did I really have to have relations with a man old enough to be my grandfather?²⁶⁸

After Sarai had badgered me for weeks, telling me how fortunate I was to be wife of such a great man, I gave in and began sharing Abram's bed.²⁶⁹ It was then that Sarai's behavior changed absolutely. She accused me of treating her with condescension.²⁷⁰

HAGAR, ABRAM'S SECOND WIFE

²⁶⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

²⁶⁵ Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 27

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

²⁶⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:1

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁶⁷ Genesis 16:1-2

Great Commentary on Genesis 45:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁶⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 45

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁶⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:3-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷⁰ Genesis 16:4

She would send her servants to ask if I was pregnant, calling me, “that poor woman.” I tried to tell them that Sarai was not what she appeared to be, for had she been a truly good woman, she would have become pregnant long ago.²⁷¹

Sarai was arrogant and had a temper - as her servant, who knew better than me? She was not above scratching Abram’s face when she was angry with him.²⁷² He was completely under her thumb and did nothing when she started acting vindictively towards me.²⁷³ Not only did she prevent me from having intercourse with Abram but slapped my face with a slipper and made me carry my own buckets of water and towels to the baths - a task reserved for servants, not for the wife of a great man. Being forced to do such menial work was degrading for someone in my position.²⁷⁴

Aware that after giving me away as a gift, my father would look none too kindly on my return, nevertheless I decided to return to Egypt. Arriving at the city of Shur, which protected our eastern frontier from Bedouin incursions, I stopped to drink from a well and to rest under the shade of a juniper tree.²⁷⁵

A stranger engaged me in conversation, and I confided to him that I was running away from my mistress’s harsh treatment.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:4-5
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷² Great Commentary on Genesis 45:5
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷³ Genesis 16:6
Great Commentary on Genesis 45:5-6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:5-6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷⁵ Genesis 16:7
Great Commentary on Genesis 45:7-8
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷⁶ Genesis 8:8 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 45:7
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.10:4
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_10

To my surprise, he seemed to know all about my predicament and told me it was a waste of time expecting Sarai to change her behavior. Instead he advised me to return to Abram's camp and give no further grounds for complaint.²⁷⁷ If I did so, not only would my life improve, but I would give birth to a son who would rule the entire region and provide me with many grandchildren.²⁷⁸ When he added that this son of mine would be named Ishmael, meaning, 'Yahweh has heard my troubles', I realized that the stranger was no ordinary man, but a messenger from Abram's God, Yahweh.²⁷⁹

Following the stranger's advice, I returned to my master and mistress who, after I humbly begged Sarai's forgiveness, accepted me back into the fold. Everything happened as the stranger predicted. I became pregnant and bore a son whom Abram called Ishmael.²⁸⁰

Thirteen years passed. Abram announced that he intended to circumcise every male child over the age of eight days. Since there was no priest to perform the procedure, Abram was forced to circumcise himself. I don't know how he did it; it must have been so painful. Then he proceeded to circumcise all the other males of our tribe. I was so proud of my son, now thirteen years old, who did not even flinch.²⁸¹ After this, we had to call my master, Abraham, instead of Abram, and my mistress, Sarah, instead of Sarai.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 92b

http://www.halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_92.html

²⁷⁸ Genesis 16:10-11 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 45:8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.10:4

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_10

²⁷⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 45:7-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸⁰ Genesis 16:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 45:3-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸¹ Genesis 16:16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.10:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_10

²⁸² Genesis 18:5,15

Sometime later, Sarah, whom everyone had thought barren, conceived most unexpectedly. She bore a son whom she and Abraham called Isaac.²⁸³ Meanwhile, my son, Ishmael, had grown up to be exactly as the stranger had predicted - a great hunter but somewhat unruly. He certainly liked the girls and worshipped our Egyptian gods rather than Yahweh, the God of Abraham, his father.²⁸⁴ Isaac would follow him around everywhere, as younger brothers do, begging Ishmael to teach him how to use a bow and arrow.²⁸⁵ I regarded Ishmael's behavior as typical of a teenage boy, sowing his oats, rebellious towards his elders and impatient with those younger than himself.

Much as I resented my mistreatment by Sarah, one thing I cannot deny. Before she gave birth to a child of her own Sarah had behaved in a very loving fashion towards Ishmael. However, after Isaac was born, her attitude towards my son changed utterly. She accused him of being immoral, irreligious and a danger to Isaac.²⁸⁶ Yet I never dreamed that she would go to the lengths she did.

Early one morning Abraham woke me and Ishmael, pushed a piece of paper into my hand, together with some bread and water, and told us to leave and never come back!²⁸⁷ Ishmael and I were stunned. Surely Abraham could not mean what he had said? To cast us out with only bread and water was absolutely contrary to his nature. He was known to be a very generous man, even to strangers.²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Genesis 16:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8211#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 45:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 53:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 53:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸⁶ Genesis 21:9 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:2

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁸⁷ Genesis 21:14

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:12-13

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

²⁸⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 86b

http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_86.html

It didn't take much for me to realize who was responsible. How could Sarah be so vengeful as to force Abraham to send us away? ²⁸⁹

Numb with shock, we left Abraham's camp, walking slowly along the road to the desert. Ishmael, who had a fever, was constantly thirsty and quickly used up our scant supply of water. By the time we reached the desert, there was no more left. ²⁹⁰ Soon he was so weak that he couldn't take another step. Since I lacked the strength to carry him, I helped him to lie him down in the shade of a juniper tree. ²⁹¹

I sat at a distance, waiting for death to put an end to Ishmael's suffering. ²⁹² The irony of the situation was not lost on me. A messenger from Yahweh had promised me descendants so numerous they would defy count, yet my only son was close to death. Truly, it was beyond all understanding. ²⁹³

Just as Ishmael was about to draw his last breath, a shadow fell over me. I looked up to see the same stranger who had foretold my son's birth. Now he foretold that Ishmael would live. ²⁹⁴ All I had to do was to help him stand and Yahweh would take care of the rest. ²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

²⁹⁰ Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

²⁹¹ Genesis 21: 15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:13

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹² Genesis 21: 16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:13

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹³ Great Commentary on Genesis 53:13-14

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹⁴ Genesis 21: 17 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:13-14

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹⁵ Genesis 21:18

Out of nowhere a well suddenly appeared. It was now that I realized that the juniper tree, under which Ishmael lay, was the same tree under which I had conversed with the stranger all those years before.

Hastily I filled our water skins and gave Ishmael to drink.²⁹⁶ After he revived, we continued on our way. Eventually we met some shepherds who took us in.²⁹⁷ This is how we survived and came to live in the Paran desert.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Genesis 21:19

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:14-15

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁹⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 12

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_12

²⁹⁸ Genesis 21:21

Great Commentary on Genesis 53:15

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

NARRATOR

Sarah died when she heard that Abraham was willing to sacrifice their son, Isaac, to Yahweh. The news was brought to her by Satan, posing as Isaac.²⁹⁹

When Abraham learned of Sarah's death, he searched everywhere for a suitable place to bury her. Even though Yahweh had promised him the entire land of Canaan, in the end he had no choice but to buy a small plot from Ephron the Hittite for four hundred shekels.³⁰⁰ On this plot was a cave known as the Cave of Machpelah, where all the Mothers and Fathers are interred.³⁰¹

It was the task of a certain Rabbi Bana'ah to mark every grave, to prevent people from accidentally walking over them, rendering themselves unclean. One day he came to the Cave of Machpelah, where he found Abraham's servant, Eliezer, standing guard outside. He asked,

“What's Abraham doing?”

Eliezer replied,

“He's asleep in Sarah's arms and she is gazing fondly down at him.”

The rabbi said, “Go and tell him that Bana'ah is here.”

When he heard that the rabbi was at the door, Abraham said, “Let him in. We're not doing anything he shouldn't see.”

Rabbi Bana'ah entered, satisfied himself that all was well, and then came out again. This shows that Abraham and Sarah remained a devoted couple, even after their deaths.³⁰²

NARRATOR

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת וירא כג²⁹⁹

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L4

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 32

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

³⁰⁰ Genesis 23:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8218/jewish/Chapter-23.htm%20-%20showrashi=true#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 111a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_111.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 14

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_14

³⁰¹ Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvim 53a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvim.pdf>

³⁰² Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 58a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_58.html

KETURAH, ABRAHAM'S THIRD WIFE

I was a nobody until a man named Isaac came to our village in search of a wife for his widowed father.³⁰³ The fact that I came from a poor family, with no lineage to speak of, did not interest him in the least. What concerned him was whether I was a virgin,³⁰⁴ whether I worshipped Yahweh, was I young enough to bear children, and was I easy going?³⁰⁵ Since I answered all these requirements, I was taken to meet his father. In this way I became the third wife of Abraham, the leader of our people.³⁰⁶

Despite the fact that, at the time of our marriage, he was already an old man, Abraham succeeded in fathering six sons who provided me with seven grandchildren and three great grandsons.³⁰⁷ I was very proud of them all. My sons were men of courage and wisdom³⁰⁸ and my grandsons showed exceptional promise.³⁰⁹ So you will understand that it broke my heart when they all moved away.

KETURAH, ABRAHAM'S THIRD WIFE

³⁰³ Genesis 25:62 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרק כה סימן ה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/5.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו א

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

³⁰⁴ Genesis 25:1 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

³⁰⁵ Genesis 25:1 Radak on Genesis

[https://www.sefaria.org.il/Radak_on_Genesis.25.1?ven=Eliyahu_Munk_HaChut_Hameshulash&vhe=Presburg : A. Schmid, 1842&lang=en](https://www.sefaria.org.il/Radak_on_Genesis.25.1?ven=Eliyahu_Munk_HaChut_Hameshulash&vhe=Presburg%3A_A._Schmid,_1842&lang=en)

³⁰⁶ Genesis 25:1

³⁰⁷ Genesis 25:2-4 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

³⁰⁸ The Antiquities of the Jews Book I Ch.15

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I#Chapter_15

³⁰⁹ Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 5:25

<http://targum.info/targumic-texts/pentateuchal-targumim/>

NARRATOR

It was Abraham who sent Keturah's sons away. Having decreed that Isaac, the son of his first wife, Sarah, would inherit the patrimony, and estranged from Ishmael, the son of his second wife, Hagar, Abraham settled the six sons of his third wife, Keturah, as far away as possible, hoping to avoid friction between his sons after his death. They did not leave empty handed but went laden with gifts.³¹⁰

For all Abraham's precautions, throughout the centuries there continued to be ill-feeling between his descendants.³¹¹ Claiming that Canaan belonged to all Abraham's sons, not just to Isaac, the descendants of Hagar and Keturah filed a lawsuit against those of Sarah. The court was presided over by Alexander the Great. Gebiha, the son of Pesisa, represented the descendants of Sarah.

When he asked the counsel for the prosecution on what evidence the other man based his claim, his opponent replied,

“On Jewish law.”

Gebiha replied, “Then I shall base my defense on the same law.

Is it not written that Abraham gave all that he had to Sarah's son, Isaac, and only gifts to the sons of Hagar and Keturah?

Surely the fact that he did so while alive, whilst ensuring that all his sons lived apart, indicates that this was his true intent.

Therefore, his decision cannot be overturned in a court of law.”

This left the counsel for the prosecution speechless. No one was surprised when Alexander passed judgment in favor of the Jews. The same happened when the Egyptians filed a similar claim. No one could get the better of Gebiha, the son of Pesisa, when it came to the law.³¹²

NARRATOR

³¹⁰ Genesis 25:5-6

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 5:25

<http://targum.info/targumic-texts/pentateuchal-targumim/>

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 26

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

³¹¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סו: ברכת יצחק את יעקב ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/66.htm>

³¹² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה סא: אברהם לעת זקנותו ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/61.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_91.html

CHAPTER 7
PASS THE SALT!
The Book of Genesis

Genesis Chapter 19 describes the nefarious activities of the citizens of Sodom that led to the city's destruction. It also reveals the less than admirable behavior of Lot and his family, who had accompanied Lot's uncle, Abraham, from Babylon to Canaan.

Lot's wife, Edith, whose name appears in *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*, a Midrash (commentary) that retells the stories of the Bible, relates what happened when Lot asked her to pass the salt.³¹³ The sequel to her story is told by her two unnamed daughters, who blame their shocking behavior on an unfortunate misunderstanding.

CHAPTER 7 PASS THE SALT!

INTRODUCTION

³¹³ Pirke Rabbi Eli'ezer Ch. 25

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

EDITH, LOT'S WIFE

My husband, Lot, came from a highly respected family in Ur that unfortunately got into trouble with the authorities and had to leave the city rather quickly. Some of its members settled in Haran.³¹⁴ Others, like Lot's uncle, Abraham, and us, continued on to Canaan.³¹⁵ It soon became clear that there simply wasn't enough pasture for all our flocks,³¹⁶ so Lot's uncle, the head of our tribe, suggested we split up and go our separate ways.³¹⁷ This was just as well for by now my husband was heartily sick of his uncle and his demanding God, Yahweh.³¹⁸

Allowed first choice where to settle, Lot didn't hesitate to claim the fertile plain of the Jordan, stretching as far south as the city of Sodom.³¹⁹ The Sodomites were notorious for practicing sodomy on each other. Whenever a stranger visited the city, first he was raped and then robbed of all his money.³²⁰ Lot, who had been brought up by his uncle to welcome visitors, used to sit by the city gates to bring them home before they were assaulted.³²¹

EDITH, LOT'S WIFE

³¹⁴ Genesis 11:31

³¹⁵ Genesis 12:4
Genesis 13:1

³¹⁶ Genesis 13:5-7
Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 3:8
<http://targum.info/pj/pjgen12-7.htm>

³¹⁷ Genesis 13:8-9
Great Commentary on Genesis 41:6
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 3:8
<http://targum.info/pj/pjgen12-7.htm>

³¹⁸ Great Commentary on Genesis 41:7
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³¹⁹ Genesis 13:10-12

³²⁰ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 11:1
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews
Great Commentary on Genesis 50:5-7
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin109a
https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_109.html

³²¹ Genesis 19:1 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

It often seemed as if my husband was the only law-abiding citizen left in Sodom.³²²

One evening he brought home two handsome strangers, ordering me to prepare them a meal.³²³ Whilst I and my daughters were serving them, Lot and I quarreled over the salt.³²⁴ Infuriated, I decided to teach him a lesson. I went round to all our neighbors, requesting salt for our guests. By the time I had finished, all the townspeople knew we had visitors, thus undoing all my husband's efforts to keep their visit a secret.³²⁵

Just as we were about to retire for the night, our servants burst in to tell us that the house was surrounded.³²⁶ Hearing that our guests were unusually attractive, the Sodomites demanded that we hand them over to their tender mercies.³²⁷ Lot went out to face them, closing the door behind him.³²⁸ I could hear him begging them to behave decently, to respect the laws of hospitality and not shame us and our guests.³²⁹

³²² Pirke Rabbi Eli'ezer Ch. 25

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³²³ Genesis 19:1

³²⁴ Genesis 19:3 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וירא פרשה נ: המלאכים בסדום ד

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/50.htm>

³²⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וירא פרשה נא: עונשה של סדום

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/51.htm>

³²⁶ Genesis 19:4 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³²⁷ Genesis 19:5 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³²⁸ Genesis 19:6

³²⁹ Genesis 19:7

They shouted, “Don’t try our patience any longer.
How dare you try to hide them!
Do you have any more guests you’re keeping from us?”³³⁰

It was now that Lot did something unforgiveable. Instead of sending out our two guests, he offered the rabble outside our two unmarried daughters. I was so shocked, that I stood there open-mouth, unable to utter a word.³³¹ The Sodomites retorted,

“Get out of way. We’re not interested in your daughters.
We can have them any time. We want the strangers.”

Whereupon they crowded round my husband and tried to break down the door.³³²

Just when I feared the worst, the two strangers stepped forward, opened the door, pulled Lot back into the house and slammed it shut.³³³ Outside there was a sudden silence, followed by shrieks and cries of “I can’t see!” It turned out that the Sodomites had been struck blind.³³⁴

³³⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 50:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³¹ Genesis 19:8 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:5-7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 11:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

³³² Genesis 19:9 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:5-7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³³ Genesis 19:10

³³⁴ Genesis 19:11 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:8-9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 11:4

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

One of the strangers said,
“You must leave immediately, you and all those you hold dear.
If there are any other members of your family living in the city,³³⁵
you must warn them that the city is about to be destroyed.”³³⁶

Lot rushed off to warn our relatives. These included our two married daughters and their families, and the fiancés of our two unmarried daughters who were still living with us.

He returned alone, explaining that our sons-in-law had refused to believe him. Worse, they had mocked him, saying,

“That’s absurd! How can a city as strong as Sodom be destroyed?
Its defenses are always kept in good order, so we have nothing to fear.”³³⁷

By now it was dawn. The strangers tried to impress upon Lot how urgent it was we leave immediately. They said,

“Don’t wait for the others. Take your wife and daughters and go,
so that you don’t die with all the other Sodomites.”³³⁸

Lot continued to procrastinate, saying,

“What about all my possessions? I can’t just leave them behind.”³³⁹

The strangers responded,

“Don’t worry about your possessions. Flee for your life! Save yourselves!”

³³⁵ Genesis 19:12 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³³⁶ Genesis 19:13

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:8-9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³⁷ Genesis 19:14 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:8-11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³⁸ Genesis 19:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³³⁹ Genesis 19:16

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

While Lot was still dithering, we suddenly found ourselves a good distance from the city, completely mystified as to how we had got there. The strangers, who had accompanied us, told Lot,

“You’ve been spared the fate of your fellow citizens for one reason only – because of your uncle, Abraham.”³⁴⁰

If you want to live, don’t look back at what is about to happen.

Flee from this plain into the mountains and seek refuge with your uncle.”³⁴¹

Suddenly it began to rain all over the valley. It seemed like perfectly ordinary rain until it turned into sulfur and fire.³⁴² Everything in the valley was destroyed, including our city of Sodom and its neighbor, Gomorrah.³⁴³

The whole time we were hastening from Sodom, I kept thinking of my two married daughters and their families, whom we had left behind in the city. Had they decided to follow us or not? Eventually I could contain my curiosity no longer and, regardless of the strangers’ warning, turned to look back.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Genesis 19:16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³⁴¹ Genesis 19:17 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 50:11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³⁴² Genesis 19:24 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 51:3-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³⁴³ Genesis 19:25 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 51:3-4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³⁴⁴ Pirke Rabbi Eli'ezer Ch. 25

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

LOT'S DAUGHTERS

We were five sisters, daughters of Lot and Edith. For years our father had insisted on welcoming visitors to our house, in defiance of a city ordinance forbidding the practice. So far he had not been caught. Our sister, Pelotet, who was married to one of the wealthiest men of Sodom, thought she could do the same. She was mistaken. After she was caught harboring visitors, she was burned at the stake.³⁴⁵

Of the remaining four of us, two were married and lived with their husbands, while my younger sister and I still lived with our parents.³⁴⁶ Luckier than our sisters who chose to remain behind in Sodom, we escaped the city's destruction. Nor did we look back to see what was happening, unlike our poor mother. One moment she was searching for salt, the next moment she was covered in it!

The morning after our escape, Sodom, Gomorrah and the entire plain were still smoking like a furnace.³⁴⁷ We made for the mountains where we lived in a cave.³⁴⁸

Because we had never travelled, we thought that the valley, in which Sodom and Gomorrah were located, was the entire world. With both cities destroyed, we were convinced that the world had come to an end.³⁴⁹ With everybody dead, who would give us children?

LOT'S DAUGHTERS

³⁴⁵ זוהר לעם פרשת ויבואו שני המלאכים סדומה רכה

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/92550?heb/content/view/full/92550&main>

Pirke Rabbi Eli'ezer Ch. 25

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 19:24-35

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/19.htm>

³⁴⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis 50:9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Pirke Rabbi Eli'ezer Ch. 25

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁴⁷ Genesis 19:27-28 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³⁴⁸ Genesis 19:30 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³⁴⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 51:5-8

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

As the elder sister, it was left to me to take the initiative. I turned to my younger sister and said,

“There’s no-one left to give us children and continue the human race.
The only man still alive is our father,
who’s already so old that he may soon be unable to father any more children.
He may even die before he has the chance to do so.
We must lose no time.
Let us make him so drunk that he no longer knows what he is doing
and then have intercourse with him.
This way we will have children to continue his name.”³⁵⁰

So that night we plied our father with wine. When he was so drunk that he didn’t know what was happening, as the elder daughter, I was the first to have intercourse with him.³⁵¹ He was still drunk when I left him, or perhaps he had already sobered up and knew exactly what was going on, but just pretended that he didn’t.³⁵² The following night it was my sister’s turn.³⁵³

Normally, a woman does not conceive after having intercourse for the first time. However, to make it easier for us to conceive, we had ruptured our own hymens beforehand. As a result, we became pregnant after sleeping with our father once only and did not have to repeat the experience.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Genesis 19:31-32 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 11:5
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

³⁵¹ Genesis 19:33

³⁵² Great Commentary on Genesis 51:8-9

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Nazir 23a
https://www.halakhah.com/nazir/nazir_23.html
Babylonian Talmud: Horayoth 10
https://www.halakhah.com/horayoth/horayoth_10.html

³⁵³ Genesis 19:34-35 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

³⁵⁴ Genesis 19:36 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8214/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true
Great Commentary on Genesis 51:8-9
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Before you judge us, consider this. We acted from the noblest of motives. After all, our only aim was to preserve the human race. Why else would we break such a taboo? Our actions were no worse than our father's. Any self-respecting man would have been prepared to die to save his wife and children, while our father had been only too willing to save himself by handing us over to the Sodomites.³⁵⁵

NARRATOR

The descendants of the daughters of Lot were the Moabites and the Ammonites, two tribes living east of the River Jordan at the time of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. No members of either tribe could be accepted as converts to the religion of Yahweh, even after the passing of ten generations. This was the punishment meted out to the daughters of Lot for having committed incest with their father.

The story of Lot and his daughters has been retold time and again. Never a Sabbath goes by when it is not read out in the synagogue.³⁵⁶ Some rabbis claim that while their story disgusts the men of the congregation, it doesn't seem to disgust the women.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת וירא יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L4

NARRATOR

³⁵⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Horayoth 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/horayoth/horayoth_10.html

³⁵⁷ Great Commentary on Genesis 51: 9-10

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וירא פרשה נא: עונשה של סדום ט

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/51.htm>

Part 3

The Mothers and the Fathers – Rebecca and Isaac

CHAPTER 8
TWO SEMITE NATIONS - ISHMAEL
The Book of Genesis

The division of the Hebrews into two Semite nations is attributed to the different fates of Abraham's two sons - Ishmael, the son of his concubine-wife, Hagar, and Isaac, the son of his wife, Sarah. Whereas Hagar and Ishmael were sent away empty-handed, Isaac remained to inherit the patrimony.

Ishmael became a champion archer.³⁵⁸ As the angel had predicted, he used his prowess with the bow to rob unwary travelers. Some say that as he grew, so did his cruelty.³⁵⁹

Ishmael's story is presented by his two wives, Ayeshah and Fatima, as recounted in *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* and *The Book of Jasher*.

CHAPTER 8 TWO SEMITE NATIONS - ISHMAEL

INTRODUCTION

³⁵⁸ Genesis 21:20 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8216#showrashi=true

³⁵⁹ Great Commentary on Genesis 53:14-15

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

AYESHAH, ISHMAEL'S FIRST WIFE

As the daughter of a Moabite woman and an Egyptian sorcerer, I was considered a crossbreed. Therefore, I was married to another crossbreed - Ishmael, the son of a Hebrew chieftain named Abraham, and his Egyptian wife, Hagar. Unfortunately there had been a falling-out between my husband and his father, after which there was no further contact between them.

You would never know from the way she dressed, that my mother-in-law had once been an Egyptian princess. Perhaps this was because she and Ishmael had lived in a shepherd encampment for so long. From the beginning we did not get along. Hagar did not hide her disapproval at her son's choice of bride and I resented her interfering.

One day an old man rode into camp. Without dismounting from his camel, he asked for Ishmael. When I told him that Ishmael and his mother were out picking dates, he had the cheek to ask me for something to eat and drink. Naturally I told him, in no uncertain terms, that we had nothing to spare.

Before he turned to leave, the old man asked me to pass on a message to my husband. The message was that a certain old man from Canaan suggested he change the entrance to his tent. I had no idea what he was talking about.

When I finally remembered to pass on the message, I was aghast at Ishmael's reaction. Instead of thanking me, he divorced me on the spot! How was I to know that the old man was his father, Abraham, and that the entrance to his tent was me? ³⁶⁰

AYESHAH, ISHMAEL'S FIRST WIFE

³⁶⁰ Book of Jasher Ch. 21

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH21>

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.30?lang=en

FATIMA, ISHMAEL'S SECOND WIFE

My story starts when an old woman came to our village in search of a wife for her son. She described him as a great hunter who, with the right sort of wife, would father a nation. This extravagant claim I attributed to motherly pride. After inspecting all the unmarried girls in the village, she chose me and I was sent on my way with a small dowry.

When we reached our destination, I was somewhat discouraged to find that my new home was a shepherd encampment at the edge of the desert. I was far more impressed with my new husband, who was a fine figure of a man - virile too. It was not long before I conceived and bore what was to be the first of twelve sons.

One day an old man rode into our encampment and stopped by our tent. From the dust on his clothes it was obvious that he had come a long way. Without descending from his camel, he asked for Ishmael. I explained that my husband was out picking dates with his mother and suggested he wait for them in the comfort of our tent.

Accepting my invitation, he dismounted and entered. Imagine my astonishment when the tent lit up to reveal all manner of fine delicacies. After taking a few sips of water, the old man departed as mysteriously as he had come, leaving me dazed from what I had seen.

When Ishmael and his mother returned from the date plantations, I rushed to tell them what had happened and to show them all the delicacies in our tent. Never have I seen my husband so happy! He explained that the old man was his father, Abraham, from whom he had been estranged for many a long year, and that all the delicacies in the tent proved that his father still loved him.

NARRATOR

Ishmael's family went from strength to strength. From his twelve sons were descended twelve tribes which formed the Arab nation. It turned out to have been no idle boast when Fatima's mother-in-law had promised her that, with the right wife, Ishmael would father a nation. ³⁶¹

FATIMA, ISHMAEL'S SECOND WIFE

³⁶¹ Hasefer Hayashar (The Book of Jasher) Ch. 21:37-48

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH21>

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 30

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.30?lang=en

CHAPTER 9
TWO SEMITE NATIONS - ISAAC
The Book of Genesis

In Genesis, Chapters 24-28, Abraham's faithful servant, Eliezer, was sent to find a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac, from among his master's kinsmen in Mesopotamia. The girl he brought back was named Rebecca.

Rebecca bore Isaac twin sons, the elder named Esau and the younger named Jacob. Normally the elder son inherits the birthright (a double portion of the inheritance as stipulated in Deuteronomy Chapter 21 verse 17), and receives the blessing which a father bestows on the son chosen to head the family after the father's death. However, in this case, the order was reversed. It was Jacob, the younger brother who received both.

It was Jacob's cunning that persuaded Esau, on the verge of fainting from lack of nourishment, to trade the birthright for a bowl of red lentils. It was Rebecca's cunning that enabled Jacob to deceive Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau – a definite case of 'like mother, like son'.

Rebecca and her faithful nurse, Deborah, tell us their stories. They are joined by Bakol, Isaac's young sister, whose existence is inferred from Genesis Chapter 24 verse 1: "*And Abraham was old advanced in days and the Lord had blessed Abraham with everything.*"³⁶²

This passage gave rise to a dispute as to whether or not Abraham had a daughter, based on the assumption that, if Abraham had everything, then he must also have had a daughter. Her story can be found in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate 'Baba Bathra', Folios 16b and 141a).³⁶³ Expansions of the story of Abraham's daughter, Bakol, can be found in the work of later authorities such as the Ramban, Rabenu Bahia, the Maharal and Rabbi Amar.

CHAPTER 9 TWO SEMITE NATIONS - ISAAC
INTRODUCTION

³⁶² Genesis 24:1

³⁶³ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra16b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_16.html
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra141a
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_141.html

REBECCA, ISAAC'S WIFE

Outside the gates of our city of Nahor was a well to which we girls came at sunset to fill our pitchers with water. One evening, after filling them as usual, we were just about to leave when a stranger approached us, asking for a sip of water.³⁶⁴ The other girls refused, saying that they had none to spare. I remonstrated with them for treating a stranger so shabbily, saying

“All he asks is a drop of water. How can you say no?”³⁶⁵

I lowered my pitcher and allowed the stranger to drink.³⁶⁶ Seeing he was weary from his journey, I also offered to water his camels.³⁶⁷ While doing so, I could see the stranger watching me closely. After searching in his saddle bag, to my astonishment he presented me with a gold nose ring worth half a shekel and two gold bracelets worth ten shekels.³⁶⁸ Such jewelry was rare in our country and more than a suitable gift for a young girl like me.³⁶⁹

REBECCA, ISAAC'S WIFE

³⁶⁴ Genesis 24:10-17 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה נט: זכויותיו של אברהם יא

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/59.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis 60:5

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Bereishit_Rabbah.60.5?ven=Sefaria_Community_Translation&vhe=Midrash_Rabbah--TE&lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

³⁶⁵ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁶⁶ Genesis 24:18 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁶⁷ Genesis 24:19-21 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

³⁶⁸ Genesis 24:22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁶⁹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

The stranger introduced himself as Eliezer, the servant of a great man in Canaan, sent to our city on an important mission by his master. In reply, I told him my name and that of my father and grandparents. Eliezer asked whether we could offer him and his men hospitality for the night. I replied that I saw no reason why not.³⁷⁰ However, first I needed to obtain my father's consent.³⁷¹

When my brother Laban saw the jewelry I was wearing, he commented, "This man must have money", before rushing off to welcome our unexpected guest.³⁷²

To our astonishment, it turned out that Eliezer's master was our distant relative, Abraham, who, since settling in Canaan, had prospered and become a rich man. Eliezer's mission was to find a wife for his master's son, Isaac, who would inherit everything after his father's death.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Genesis 24:27 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁷¹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁷² Genesis 24:28-31 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁷³ Genesis 24:32-36 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ז

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

Then Eliezer surprised us all by announcing that he had already succeeded in his mission. Naturally we were agog to hear who the lucky bride was, although I already had my suspicions. He replied by listing his criteria. First, Isaac's bride had to be a relative. Second, she had to have the right kind of character. Since I answered both, he had chosen me.³⁷⁴ I thought that he had taken a big chance. What if I had been blind or lame?³⁷⁵

Eliezer asked my family if they agreed to the match.³⁷⁶ Where money was concerned, my brother, Laban, didn't have to think twice. Before my father could even open his mouth, he jumped up and replied,

“Why bother to ask us for permission,
when it is plain that fate has chosen our Rebecca?
Of course we agree!”³⁷⁷

When I awoke the next morning, it was to find the house in an uproar. My father, already an old man, had passed away in his sleep. No doubt the excitement of the previous evening had been too much for him.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Genesis 24:37-48 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁷⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וירא ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Ta'anith 4a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Taanith.pdf>

³⁷⁶ Genesis 24:49 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁷⁷ Genesis 24:50-53 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יא

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 16:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁷⁸ Genesis 24:55 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

After we had mourned him for seven days, Eliezer informed us that it was time for him to return to his master, and that he wished for me to accompany him.³⁷⁹ I was still very young,³⁸⁰ so Laban, who was now my guardian, replied,

“Let Rebecca stay with us another year,
so that we can prepare a suitable dowry.³⁸¹
If not a year, then at least ten months. Then she can leave.”³⁸²

Eliezer begged him to let me leave immediately.³⁸³ In the end Laban, who was prepared to be generous as long as it didn't cost him anything, decided to let me have the final word. What my family didn't realize was that, although I was still so young, I already had strong opinions of my own and thoroughly disapproved of their idol-worshipping ways. When I was asked,

“Are you prepared to go with this man?” I replied, “Definitely,”
adding under my breath, “whether you like it or not.”³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ Genesis 24:54 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

³⁸⁰ Book of Jasher Ch. 24:40
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/24.htm>

³⁸¹ Genesis 24:55 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יב
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 57a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kethuboth.pdf>

³⁸² Genesis 24:55 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 57b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kethuboth.pdf>

³⁸³ Genesis 24:56

³⁸⁴ Genesis 24:57-59 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יב
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

It was decided that my faithful old nurse, Deborah, would accompany me to Canaan, where I would need someone familiar to console me, having left my home and family.³⁸⁵ On our departure, my family gave me their blessing - poor compensation for the valuable going-away gift that was my due, but all that I could expect from my miserly brother, Laban.³⁸⁶

After a long and dusty journey, during which I plagued Eliezer with endless questions about my future husband and his family, we eventually arrived in Canaan. At the time, Isaac and his father were living in the south, somewhere between Kadesh and Shur on the Egyptian border.³⁸⁷

Although it was already dusk when we reached our destination, instead of leading us into the family encampment, Eliezer stopped by a large field, in the middle of which a man was standing, head back and arms outstretched to the sky.³⁸⁸ Seeing us, he turned and started walking in our direction.³⁸⁹ When he drew near, I was so astonished at his majestic appearance that I fell off my camel, accidentally rupturing my hymen on a piece of wood. This was a serious matter because an unruptured hymen was proof of an unmarried girl's virginity.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ Genesis 24:60 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

³⁸⁶ Genesis 24:61
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יג
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יד
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁸⁷ Genesis 24:62 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יד
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁸⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר יד
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁸⁹ Genesis 24:63

³⁹⁰ Genesis 24:64 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר טו
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

I asked Eliezer, “Who’s that coming towards us?”
He replied, “That’s Isaac, your husband.”
To cover my embarrassment, I veiled myself with a scarf.³⁹¹

Those two innocent actions of mine – falling off my camel and covering my face with a veil like a prostitute – gave rise to a great deal of misunderstanding, both being regarded as acts of licentious behavior.³⁹² What people didn’t realize was that our customs in Haran were very different, not only to those of the people of Canaan but especially to those of Abraham and his family. At all events, it took me a while to live them down.

Eliezer went to talk to Isaac. After a short conversation,³⁹³ Isaac approached and led me by the hand to the tent that had once belonged to his mother. Such is the way of the world. As long as a man’s mother is alive, he remains attached to her, but as soon as she dies, he finds consolation in his wife.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Genesis 24:65

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁹² בראשית רבה מ"ח:י

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Bereishit_Rabbah.60.3?ven=Sefaria_Community_Translation&vhe=Midrash_Rabbah--TE&lang=en&with=Bereishit%20Rabbah&lang2=en

ילקוט שמעוני תורה קט

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%98_%D7%A9%D7%9E_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%94_%D7%A7%D7%98

Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 11

https://www.halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_11.html

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 60

https://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_60.html

³⁹³ Genesis 24:66 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר טו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

³⁹⁴ Genesis 24:67 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 92b

http://www.halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_92.html

Isaac was forty and I thirteen.³⁹⁵ It was only after many years that I succeeded in becoming pregnant.³⁹⁶ It turned out that I was expecting twins. They moved around so much in my womb that I was in constant pain. I decided to consult the physicians at the Shem Academy. All they did was to mumble some nonsense about one of my twins being strong and the other virtuous, and that they would always be enemies. Since this was the last thing an anxious mother-to-be wanted to hear, I dismissed it out of hand. Moreover, it didn't help to take away the pain.³⁹⁷

When my pregnancy reached full-term, the twins were delivered by my old nurse, Deborah, who had never left my side after accompanying me from Nahor. They were both boys.³⁹⁸ The first to emerge had a ruddy complexion, a sure sign that he would have a fiery temper. Most unusually, he was covered in a fine red down. This twin we named Esau, meaning he was fully formed. The second emerged holding on to his brother's heel, so we called him Jacob, from the word 'heel'.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ Genesis 25:20 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 32

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

³⁹⁶ Genesis 25:21 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 64a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_64.html

³⁹⁷ Genesis 25:22-23 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

ילקוט שמעוני תורה קי פרשת תולדות

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%98_%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%94_%D7%A7%D7%99

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 18:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

³⁹⁸ Genesis 25:24

³⁹⁹ Genesis 25:25-26 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 18:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

While they were small, our twins more or less behaved in the same way, but by the time they were thirteen, it was clear that Jacob preferred studying while Esau preferred hunting.⁴⁰⁰ Jacob was an innocent while Esau was crafty. Esau knew exactly how to pull the wool over his father's eyes. He would ask him,

“Father, how do we calculate how much salt and straw to offer up to Yahweh?”

As a result, Isaac was convinced that Esau scrupulously observed the law.⁴⁰¹

Esau became his father's favorite. It infuriated me to think that he would become head of our family instead of Jacob, who was by far the more worthy of the two.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Genesis 25:27 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו י

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

⁴⁰¹ Genesis 25:27 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

Midrash Tanhuma

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/15571/jewish/Toldot-In-Depth.htm

⁴⁰² Genesis 25:28

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סה: עשיו, נשותיו ומעשיו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/65.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו י

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

Fate intervened when I overheard Isaac ask Esau to prepare his favorite stew, so that he would have the strength to bless Esau before he died.⁴⁰³ Taking advantage of the fact that by now, Isaac was almost completely blind,⁴⁰⁴ I quickly arranged for Jacob to impersonate Esau and receive his father's blessing instead.⁴⁰⁵ Since this blessing, once bestowed, could not be rescinded, Jacob would become the official head of the family after Isaac's death.⁴⁰⁶

When Esau found out that he had been cheated of his father's blessing, he was so angry that he threatened to kill Jacob at the first opportunity. When I heard this, I advised Jacob to seek sanctuary with my brother, Laban, in Nahor, promising him that, once the whole affair had blown over, I would send word for him to return.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Genesis 27:1-5 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8222#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סה: עשיו, נשותיו ומעשיו יב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/65.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/15571/jewish/Toldot-In-Depth.htm

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 18:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁰⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סה: עשיו, נשותיו ומעשיו י

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/65.htm>

מדרש תנחומא פרשת תולדות ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L4

⁴⁰⁵ Genesis 27:5-29

⁴⁰⁶ Genesis 27:30-40

⁴⁰⁷ Genesis 27:41-45 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8222#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו ט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו י

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 13a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_13.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

DEBORAH, REBECCA'S NURSE

My brother, Rotheus, and I were descended from a minor branch of Abraham's family. Although born into the Chaldean nobility, we were captured and sold to a man named Laban, who appointed me nurse to his little sister, Rebecca.⁴⁰⁸ When I heard that Rebecca was betrothed to the son of our distant kinsman I was overjoyed and immediately agreed to accompany her to Canaan.⁴⁰⁹ No-one was more relieved than I when Rebecca expressed herself well-satisfied with her new husband. Moreover, it was obvious that he felt the same.⁴¹⁰

I expected Rebecca to become pregnant any day, but as time went on and she did not conceive, it began to look as though I would never have the pleasure of nursing her children as I had nursed her. Finally, though, came the happy day when I was able to tell Rebecca that she was about to become a mother.⁴¹¹ When she gained more weight than was usual, I immediately suspected twins.

Rebecca suffered a lot during her pregnancy and complained to me in private,
"If I had known it was going to hurt this much,
I would never have prayed to conceive."

DEBORAH, REBECCA'S NURSE

⁴⁰⁸ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs 8:1
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁴⁰⁹ Genesis 24:59-61

⁴¹⁰ Genesis 24:64,67 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8219#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר טו
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 92b
http://www.halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_92.html

⁴¹¹ Genesis 25:21 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Yevamoth 64a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Yevamoth.pdf>

I suggested she consult the rabbis. Perhaps they could explain why she was suffering so much. ⁴¹² From what Rebecca told me, they weren't much help, apart from confirming what I already knew - that she was expecting twins. ⁴¹³

In due course Rebecca gave birth to two sons whom Isaac named Esau and Jacob. More different babies you could not imagine. One was ruddy and hairy all over, while the other was pale and smooth. I nursed both boys as if they were my own, just as I had nursed their mother before them. ⁴¹⁴

It was soon clear to everyone that Isaac favored Esau while Rebecca favored Jacob. It wasn't hard to understand why. Isaac was a gentle man and was obviously attracted to the son who was the complete opposite, namely Esau. Rebecca, on the other hand, was a very matter-of-fact person who preferred her dreamier son, Jacob. ⁴¹⁵ Jacob may have been a daydreamer, but he was also very intelligent.

⁴¹² Genesis 25:22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

Yalkut Shimoni

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/15571/jewish/Toldot-In-Depth.htm

⁴¹³ Genesis 25:23

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

⁴¹⁴ Genesis 25:24-27 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8220#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

⁴¹⁵ Genesis 25:28

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו ו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 18

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

And then came the fateful day when the brothers quarreled over the patrimony. ⁴¹⁶ I suggested to Rebecca that the wisest course would be to send Jacob to her brother, Laban, in Nahor, where he would be safe from Esau's plans of revenge. Once Esau had calmed down, then Jacob could return home. Rebecca took my advice and sent Jacob away. ⁴¹⁷

For many years Jacob lived with his Uncle Laban in Nahor, where he married his two cousins and raised a large family. ⁴¹⁸ When Rebecca judged the time right, she sent me to tell him that it was safe for him to come home. By now I was an old woman and feared that the journey might be too much for me. However, because I loved my mistress dearly, I did as she asked. What kept me going was the thought of the look on Rebecca's face when she was finally reunited with her favorite son.

When Jacob saw me, he guessed why I had come. Overjoyed, he immediately made arrangements to set out for Canaan. As for me, I was overwhelmed by what I saw. From a penniless fugitive, Jacob was now a rich man, with four wives, twelve stalwart sons and large flocks of livestock.

⁴¹⁶ Genesis 25:29-34
Genesis 27:1-41

⁴¹⁷ Genesis 27:42-45

⁴¹⁸ Genesis 35:22-26

NARRATOR

Although Deborah succeeded in passing on Rebecca's message, she died on the return journey and was buried under an oak tree at the foot of the mountain on which stood Beth-el.⁴¹⁹ The tree came to be known as 'The Weeping Oak', because it was here that Jacob wept, not only for Deborah,⁴²⁰ but also for his mother who died before she could be reunited with her beloved son.⁴²¹

Rebecca was buried in the family tomb in Hebron.⁴²²

NARRATOR

⁴¹⁹ Genesis 35:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פא: יעקב הולך לקיים את נדרו ה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/81.htm>

מדרש רבה מגילת קהלת פרשה ז ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/kohelet-raba/raba-kohelet7.htm>

⁴²⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פא: יעקב הולך לקיים את נדרו ה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/81.htm>

⁴²¹ מגילת קהלת פרשה ז א - [ב] טוב ללכת אל בית אבל מלכת אל בית משתה ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/kohelet-raba/raba-kohelet7.htm>

Book of Jasher Ch. 36:4-6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/36.htm>

⁴²² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה נח: מותה של שרה ד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/58.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Eirubin 53a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eirubin.pdf>

BAKOL, DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM

Not many people know that my illustrious father, Abraham, son of Terah, had a daughter named Bakol. It stands to reason that, since Yahweh had blessed my father with everything - wealth, possessions, honor, long life and eventually sons - he had a daughter too. ⁴²³ I was the youngest of Abraham's children, born after my half-brother, Ishmael, and my brother, Isaac. Because I was the youngest, everyone spoiled me, but I never let it go to my head.

Some daughters, because of their diligence and quick minds, are good students, but when it comes to housework are lazy and incompetent. Other daughters are excellent housewives and good at managing their family's affairs, admired not only by members of their family, but also by others. However, when it comes to their studies, their performance is shameful. There are also daughters who are good both at their studies and at housework, but their behavior otherwise leaves much to be desired. Finally, there are those who are good at their studies, competent housewives, their behavior beyond reproach, but lack religious belief.

However, as my name (in everything) indicates, I was perfect in every way. I had an outstanding reputation, was good at my studies, an excellent homemaker, perfectly behaved both in word and deed, multi-talented, God-fearing and wise, as was only fitting for the daughter of Abraham, the son of Terah. ⁴²⁴

BAKOL, DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM

⁴²³ Genesis 24

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 16b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_16.html

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=1&perek=24&mefaresh=ramban

רמב"ן לבראשית פרק כד

רבנו בחיי בראשית כ"ד:א'

https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu_Bahya_Bereshit.24.1?lang=he

מהר"ל:

http://www.aspaklaria.info/001_ALEF/%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94%D7%9D%20%20%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%94%20%D7%95%D7%94%D7%91%D7%98%D7%97%D7%94.htm

⁴²⁴ בת היתה לאברהם ו"בכל" שמה הרב עמאר

<http://haravamar.org.il/%D7%A2%D7%9C-%D7%94%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%94/%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%AA/%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%AA-%D7%97%D7%99%D7%99-%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%94/123-%D7%91%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%AA%D7%94-%D7%9C%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94%D7%9D-%D7%95-%D7%91%D7%9B%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%94>

Proverbs 31:10

When Isaac and I reached marriageable age, my father was faced with a dilemma. Who could we possibly marry? Neither of us could marry any of the idol-worshipping Canaanites. In my brother's case, my father solved the problem by finding him a wife from among our relatives back in Mesopotamia. Since, according to our customs, a wife is required to follow the religion of her husband, Isaac's wife, Rebecca, adopted ours - the worship of Yahweh.⁴²⁵ However, if my father sent me back to Mesopotamia to marry one of our relatives, I would have to follow the religion of my husband, which, in Mesopotamia, meant idol worship.⁴²⁶

Since this was an insoluble problem, I never married, but remained a spinster all my life. None of my good qualities could compensate me for being deprived of the love of a husband and the joy of a child.

⁴²⁵ Genesis 24:1-4

⁴²⁶רמב"ן לבראשית פרק כד
http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=1&perek=24&mefaresh=ramban
רבנו בחיי בראשית כ"ד:א'
https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu_Bahya_Bereshit.24.1?lang=he

Part 4

The Mothers and the Fathers – Leah Rachel and Jacob

CHAPTER 10
THE KINGDOM OF ESAU
The Book of Genesis

When Rebecca enabled her younger son, Jacob, to cheat her elder son, Esau, out of his father's blessing, little did she realize that she had set in train a sequence of events that was to lead to permanent enmity between the Israelites and the Edomites. As related in Genesis, Chapter 36, the descendants of Esau became the ancestors of the Edomite nation. Edom (meaning red), the land of the Edomites, founded by Esau (born red all over) who sold his birthright for a dish of red lentils, lay southeast of Canaan. ⁴²⁷

The protagonists in this chapter are Esau's three wives - two Hittite women named Adah and Oholibamah, and his cousin, Mahalat, the daughter of his uncle, Ishmael. ⁴²⁸ Joining them is Timna, a Horite princess who became the concubine of Esau's son, Eliphaz.

Adah and Oholibamah were idol-worshippers whom Esau married without his parents' consent. Rebecca hated them so much that she even contemplated suicide. ⁴²⁹ Fortunately Esau's third wife was his cousin, Mahalat, the daughter of his uncle, Ishmael, and, as such, met with Rebecca's approval. ⁴³⁰

The tangled relationships between them arise from the adultery and incest rife at the time. For example, from Esau's first marriage to Adah, he had a son, Tzivon, whose illegitimate daughter later became another of Esau's wives.

CHAPTER 10 THE KINGDOM OF ESAU

INTRODUCTION

⁴²⁷ Genesis 36:1

⁴²⁸ Genesis 36:2-3

Seder Olam Rabbah Chapter 2:1-2

https://www.sefaria.org/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.2.1-2?ven=Sefaria_Community_Translation&vhe=Seder_Olam_Warsaw_1904&lang=en

⁴²⁹ Genesis 27:46

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו יא

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

⁴³⁰ Genesis 36:2-3 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי סדר זרעים, מסכת ביכורים דף יא, ב פרק ג הלכה ג גמרא

http://kodesh.snunit.k12.il/b/r/r1b03_011b.htm

ADAH, ESAU'S FIRST WIFE

My father, Elon, was a leading Hittite lord. Eager to enter into an alliance with Isaac, the rich and powerful tribal chief of the Hebrews, he married me to Isaac's eldest son, Esau.⁴³¹

From the start we were attracted to one another, I to my husband's red-haired, muscular body, and my husband to my habit of wearing perfume and gold jewelry, so different from the women of his tribe.⁴³² After our marriage, I continued to worship my Hittite gods, burning incense night and day.⁴³³ Fascinated by my religious rituals, my husband came to worship them too.

Although his parents loathed my loose behavior and idol-worshipping ways,⁴³⁴ I did my wifely duty and bore my husband a son named Eliphaz and another named Tzivon.⁴³⁵

ADAH, ESAU'S FIRST WIFE

⁴³¹ Genesis 36:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 18:4

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴³² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

⁴³³ Genesis 36:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

⁴³⁴ Genesis 26:35 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8221#showrashi=true

Targum Onkelos Ch. 25-28 Section 6 Toledoth 26

http://targum.info/onk/Gen25_28.htm

Genesis 27:46

מדרש תנחומא פרשת תולדות ח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L4

⁴³⁵ Genesis 36:4

Esau's prowess as a hunter was by now legendary. He owed his success to a hunting outfit owned by his family and handed down from generation to generation. Embroidered with pictures of animals, so lifelike that they deceived the wearer's prey into approaching closer,⁴³⁶ it was Esau's most treasured possession.⁴³⁷ Unwilling to be parted from it even for a second, the only person he trusted to look after it was his mother, Rebecca.

When Esau discovered that his mother had dressed his brother, Jacob, in his hunting outfit, to deceive their blind father into granting Jacob his blessing, my husband was furious.⁴³⁸ While Esau ranted and raved about how he intended to punish his brother, I merely commented that, had he entrusted his hunting outfit to me instead of to his mother, he, not Jacob, would be head of the family after Isaac's death. This seemed to anger him even more.

⁴³⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

Great Commentary on Genesis

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

⁴³⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סה: עשיו, נשותיו ומעשיו טז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/65.htm>

⁴³⁸ Genesis 27:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8222#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סה: עשיו, נשותיו ומעשיו טז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/65.htm>

OHOLIBAMAH, ESAU'S SECOND WIFE

Esau's son, Tzivon, was a notorious womanizer who didn't care with whom he slept – his own mother, his son's wife – it made no difference to him. All that interested him was satisfying his lust. As a result, when his mother, Adah, found herself pregnant, she couldn't be sure who the father was – her husband, Esau, or her son, Tzivon. The child, a boy named Anah, took a Hittite wife. It didn't take long before Tzivon started sleeping with his Hittite daughter-in-law. The result of their incestuous union was me.
439

When Esau introduced me to his parents as his second wife, he was careful to present me as Judith, the daughter of a Hebrew named Beeri. He knew they would never approve of a Hittite wife who continued to worship her Hittite gods, erecting altars wherever she could, let alone one who was his own granddaughter. Unfortunately, somehow or other they discovered my true identity and would have nothing further to do with me.⁴⁴⁰

Being married to an old man like my grandfather, is it any wonder that, although I continued to share Esau's bed, it did not prevent me from seeking pleasure elsewhere? I still bore Esau three sons - Jeush, Jalam and Korah. The truth is, I am not sure if he was the father of any of them.⁴⁴¹

OHOLIBAMAH, ESAU'S SECOND WIFE

⁴³⁹ Genesis 36:2 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא פרשת וישב א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

⁴⁴⁰ Genesis 36:2 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

⁴⁴¹ Genesis 36:5 Rashi commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231/jewish/Chapter-36.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
מדרש רבה חומש בראשית וישלח פרשה פב יב
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0081_L2

MAHALAT, ESAU'S THIRD WIFE

When my mother, Ayeshah, was so cruelly thrust out of Ishmael's camp, she was already pregnant with me. We continued to live in the desert where my half-brother, Nebaioth, was born and where I gave birth to an illegitimate daughter named Igrath.⁴⁴²

In belated recognition of his responsibilities towards me as a parent, before he died, my father, Ishmael, betrothed me to my cousin, Esau, son of my Aunt Rebecca and Uncle Isaac.⁴⁴³ My brother, Nebaioth, gave me away at our wedding.⁴⁴⁴

Esau already had two Hittite wives whom he had chosen without his parents' consent and with whom his parents refused to have any contact. However, as a close relative I was eagerly welcomed into the family and Esau back into the fold. My aunt and uncle had no idea that I had an illegitimate child, unfortunately the only child I was to have.⁴⁴⁵

Esau and my father, Ishmael, had a lot in common. Both were angry that they had been denied the inheritance they considered rightly theirs and plotted how to do away with their brothers, Jacob and Isaac, in order to claim it for themselves.⁴⁴⁶

MAHALAT, ESAU'S THIRD WIFE

מאיר תהלות עמ' 237⁴⁴²

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33039>

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?aits=1&req=33039&st=%u05d0%u05d2%u05e8%u05ea>

Sefer Meir T'hillot Meir Arama

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/queen.html>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו ה'⁴⁴³

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

⁴⁴⁴ Genesis 36:3 Rashi commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231/jewish/Chapter-36.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

Babylonian Talmud Megilah 17a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

⁴⁴⁵ Genesis 28:8-9

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book I Chapter 18:8

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁴⁶ Genesis 25:29-34

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת תולדות פרשה סז: ברכת יצחק את עשו ה'

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/67.htm>

TIMNA, THE CONCUBINE OF ELIPHAZ

I come from Seir, the land of the Horite nation, named after our founder, also called Seir. With the arrival of the Hebrews its name was changed to Edom, after their leader, Esau, and we became known as Edomites.

Our founder, Seir, had seven sons, one of whom was named Lotan.⁴⁴⁷ After Lotan's mother entered into an adulterous relationship with Esau's eldest son, Eliphaz, she became pregnant with me. However, since their relationship was kept secret, I grew up thinking that Seir was my father and Lotan my brother, not my half-brother. As a result, I was much influenced by him.

As the offspring of Seir, both my brother and I held Horite titles. Lotan was a chieftain, while I was a princess. However, after the Hebrew conquest our titles meant nothing, for we were now a vanquished nation. Maintaining that it was more of an honor to serve a Hebrew than to be a Horite chieftain, Lotan offered his allegiance to their leader, Esau.

Encouraged by my brother to marry a Hebrew chieftain, I asked to be accepted into their tribe as a convert. To my great disappointment I was rejected. So, following my brother's example, I decided that it was better to be the concubine of a Hebrew than to be the wife of a Horite chieftain.⁴⁴⁸ The only Hebrew who would have me was Eliphaz who, unknown to me, was my own father. This I only discovered when it was too late.⁴⁴⁹

Contrary to what Lotan had told me about the Hebrews being such a noble people, when I caught my husband having relations with his mother, Oholibamah, I realized that they were no better than us Horites.⁴⁵⁰

TIMNA, THE CONCUBINE OF ELIPHAZ

⁴⁴⁷ I Chronicles 1:38-39

⁴⁴⁸ Genesis 36:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231#v=3&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב יד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 99b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_99.html

⁴⁴⁹ מדרש תנחומא פרשת וישב א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

⁴⁵⁰ Genesis 36:5 Rashi commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8231/jewish/Chapter-36.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית וישלח פרשה פב יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0081_L2

From my union with Eliphaz was born a son named Amalek. It brought me no small satisfaction when Amalek grew up to be the scourge of the Hebrews, the very same people who had refused to accept me into their tribe.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 99b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_99.html

CHAPTER 11
JACOB IN HARAN
The Book of Genesis

The story of how Isaac's family became a tribe is related in Genesis Chapters 28-49. Two sisters, Leah and Rachel, and their two maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah, reveal a tale of romance, intrigue and deceit worthy of any Hollywood epic. With these four women, Jacob, the son of Rebecca and Isaac, fathered twelve sons, the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

LEAH, JACOB'S FIRST WIFE

My father, Laban, often spoke of his young sister, Rebecca, who had married a distant relative from Canaan. Although, from time to time, we received news of her and her family, we had never actually met. Rebecca had given birth to twin boys named Esau and Jacob. Twins seem to run in our family, for I had a twin sister named Rachel, born minutes after me.⁴⁵² At the time my story begins, Rachel and I were both fourteen.⁴⁵³ Rachel was very pretty with a beautiful complexion. The only thing said about me was that I had weak eyes.⁴⁵⁴

One evening Rachel came running home, so excited she could barely speak. A stranger had introduced himself to her, claiming to be our cousin, Jacob. Our father lost no time in checking whether the stranger was who he claimed to be. When he had satisfied himself that it was really Jacob, he immediately brought him home.⁴⁵⁵

After he had refreshed himself, Jacob explained the reason behind his unannounced arrival. He and his brother, Esau, had quarreled. Esau, who had a fiery temper, had threatened to kill him so, on his mother's advice, he had come to us for refuge until his brother's anger subsided. Although we were dying to know what the brothers had argued about, politeness demanded we say nothing. Only later did we learn that Esau had good cause to hate his brother, after being cheated out of his father's blessing.⁴⁵⁶

CHAPTER 11 JACOB IN HARAN

LEAH, JACOB'S FIRST WIFE

⁴⁵² Genesis 29:16

סדר עולם רבה פרק ב ב

http://www.sefaria.org/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.2.1-2/en/Sefaria_Community_Translation?lang=he

⁴⁵³ סדר עולם רבא פרק ב

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

⁴⁵⁴ Genesis 29:17

⁴⁵⁵ Genesis 28:5

Genesis 29:13

⁴⁵⁶ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

Our father was no fool. I knew very well why he had extended such a warm welcome to our cousin. The servant sent to convey our Aunt Rebecca to Canaan to marry our father's distant cousin, Isaac, had arrived with ten camels bearing gifts as a dowry. Naturally father assumed that Jacob had brought even more, so he was bitterly disappointed when, as if reading his mind, Jacob said,

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, but I’ve come empty-handed.

All I can offer you is my thanks.”⁴⁵⁷

Despite his obvious displeasure, our father had no choice but to welcome Jacob into our home. After all, he was our flesh and blood. However, father made it clear to Jacob that he could only stay a month.⁴⁵⁸

During the month that followed, Jacob earned his keep by tending our sheep. At the end of the month it was agreed that he would remain with us and be paid for his work.⁴⁵⁹ It soon became clear that Jacob and Rachel had fallen in love, and, therefore, it came as no surprise when Jacob requested Rachel’s hand in marriage, offering to work without wages for seven years to pay her dowry.⁴⁶⁰

I was surprised when father consented to this arrangement. I knew that he had always regretted allowing his sister, Rebecca, to marry someone from Canaan and was determined that his daughters should not do the same.⁴⁶¹ It was obvious to me that he would do all in his power to prevent Jacob from taking Rachel back to Canaan.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁷ מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית ויצא פרשה ע יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_part_7.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35876/jewish/Vayeitzei-In-Depth.htm

⁴⁵⁸ Genesis 29:14 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

⁴⁵⁹ Genesis 29:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁶⁰ Genesis 29:18 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁶¹ Genesis 29:19

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁶² Genesis 29:18 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יז [אעבדך ברחל בתך]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

After the seven years were up, Jacob, who was getting on in years and wanted sons to carry on his name, was prepared to wait no longer. He demanded his right to marital relations with Rachel, according to the betrothal agreement.⁴⁶³ Father summoned Rachel and me, swore us to secrecy and then divulged to us a plan whereby I would replace Rachel in the nuptial bed. Both of us were stunned. We knew our father was devious, but this? Knowing better than to argue, we remained silent.⁴⁶⁴ The truth is, I was happy to marry our cousin, for I knew that if Rachel was allowed to marry Jacob, there was a strong possibility that I would be married to his hot-tempered brother, Esau.⁴⁶⁵

At the end of the week-long wedding celebrations, Jacob retired to the marriage tent to await his bride. Leading Rachel by the hand, our father entered the tent while I waited outside. After he had extinguished the candles, in the resulting darkness Rachel and I swapped places.⁴⁶⁶ When Jacob asked why the candles had been extinguished, our crafty father had his answer ready.

“What do you think –
that I will allow my daughter to have marital relations with the lights on?”⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶³ Genesis 29:21-22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

⁴⁶⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יט [מעשה הרמאות של לבן במשתה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

⁴⁶⁵ מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L4

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב טז [ועיני לאה רכות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 123a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_123.html

⁴⁶⁶ Genesis 29:23

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית ויצא ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L4

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁶⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יט [מעשה הרמאות של לבן במשתה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

Jacob had no idea it was me in his bed until the following morning, by which time it was too late.⁴⁶⁸ He was furious and called me the deceitful daughter of a deceitful father. When he asked me why I had deceived him, I didn't hesitate to accuse him of the same behavior, saying,

“Who are you to talk?

Didn't you deceive your father into giving you his blessing?”⁴⁶⁹

After his anger had died down, Jacob agreed to work for another seven years in order to win Rachel as his bride.

Unfortunately, as a result of father's deception, Jacob wanted nothing to do with me. Indeed, had he been in a position to do so, in all likelihood Jacob would have divorced me.⁴⁷⁰ My husband was not the only one who despised me. No-one had a good word to say about me. Rather, they accused me of being a hypocrite, pretending to be a Yahweh-fearing woman whilst, in reality, I was the complete opposite. Otherwise, how could I have cheated my sister as I had?⁴⁷¹

Since Jacob rarely consented to lie with me, for a long time I thought I couldn't have children.⁴⁷² Yahweh must have seen my misfortune and taken pity on me, because soon I bore four sons, Reuben, Shimon, Levi and Judah.⁴⁷³

After another seven years had passed, Jacob married Rachel and ceased visiting my tent. Like me, for a long time Rachel was unable to bear children. Resentful as I felt towards Jacob, I couldn't help feeling sorry for her.

⁴⁶⁸ Genesis 29:25

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁶⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יט [מעשה הרמאות של לבן במשחה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

⁴⁷⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ב [עקרות שנואות בפני עצמן]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁴⁷¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ב [עקרות שנואות בפני עצמן]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁴⁷² פסיקתא דרב כהנא פיסקאות יה-כא: קלד-קמו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/psiktakahana/psiktakahana15.pdf>

⁴⁷³ Genesis 29

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה א [לאה נפקדה בבנים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית ויצא ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L4

This brings me to the story of the mandrakes. It was harvest time. Everyone was busy bringing in the wheat. One evening my eldest son, Reuben, brought me some mandrakes. As everyone knows, the fruit of the mandrake is ripe by early May. About the size of a small apple, it is ruddy or yellow in color and both smells and tastes delicious. An aphrodisiac, it is called by the Arabs, ‘the devil’s apple’.⁴⁷⁴ Knowing of my desire to have more children, Reuben hoped I would have the opportunity to use the mandrakes - should Jacob once again visit me in my tent.⁴⁷⁵

When Rachel heard about the mandrakes she begged me to give her some.⁴⁷⁶
I reproached her, saying,
“Not only have you taken my husband from me,
but now you want my mandrakes too?”⁴⁷⁷
Out of desperation, she replied,
“Very well. You can take my place in Jacob’s bed tonight.
Just give me some of those mandrakes.”⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ Mandrakes

<http://biblehub.com/topical/m/mandrakes.htm>

⁴⁷⁵ Genesis 30:14 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עב: ראובן והדודאים ב [ראובן נשמר מן הגזל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/72.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁷⁶ Genesis 30:14

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁷⁷ Genesis 30:15

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁷⁸ Genesis 30:15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עב: ראובן והדודאים ג [תני נא לי מדודאי בנד]

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/72.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

So that evening, when I heard the braying of Jacob's donkey coming in from the fields, I went out to meet him and explained the arrangement I had come to with Rachel. I half expected Jacob to refuse, and was very relieved when he didn't. Although I was fully aware that he only agreed to have relations with me in order to honor Rachel's promise, I didn't care. All that was important to me was to have another son.⁴⁷⁹

Even though I was now past normal child-bearing age, I managed to conceive. To this son I gave the name, Issachar, who was followed by yet another son whom I named Zebulun, and finally by a daughter named Dinah.⁴⁸⁰ In the light of such good fortune, no-one now could accuse me of any misdoing. Even my husband realized that he could not possibly divorce the mother of so many sons.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Genesis 30:16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Niddah 31a

https://www.halakhah.com/niddah/niddah_31.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁸⁰ Genesis 30:17-21 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עב: ראובן והודואים ה [נתן אלהים שכרי]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/72.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁸¹ Genesis 46:15

NARRATOR

After Rachel's death in childbirth, Jacob came to love Leah with all his heart. He now appreciated her for what she was, a gentle, placid woman who honored her husband, who had never uttered a harsh word in her entire life and who was known for her good deeds.⁴⁸²

Leah died about the same time that Rachel's son, Joseph, disappeared. She was no more than forty-four.⁴⁸³ She was buried in the family tomb at Hebron, together with her aunt, Rebecca, whom she had never met, and Jacob's grandmother, Sarah.⁴⁸⁴

NARRATOR

⁴⁸² מדרש רבה ללחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ב [עקרות שנואות בפני עצמן]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁴⁸³ סדר עולם רבה פרק ב
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

⁴⁸⁴ The Book of Jubilees 21-24
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/36.htm>

RACHEL, JACOB'S SECOND WIFE

As the younger daughter of the family, it was my job to tend my father's sheep. Every evening, the shepherds of Haran would bring their flocks to the local well to drink.⁴⁸⁵ Only when all the flocks had gathered, were there enough of us to roll aside the huge boulder that covered the well.

One evening I arrived late, after the boulder had been returned to its place. While I was standing there, wondering what to do, a stranger appeared and, after effortlessly rolling aside the boulder, proceeded to water my flock.⁴⁸⁶ I could barely contain my curiosity. I asked the stranger who he was, from where he came and why he had come. In return for his kindness, I assured him that I and my family would do all in our power to help.⁴⁸⁷

I was staggered by his answer, for he was none other than Jacob, the son of our Aunt Rebecca, who had come all the way from Canaan. Hearing this, I couldn't help but burst into tears, for I knew how overjoyed father would be to receive news of his beloved sister.⁴⁸⁸ When Jacob bent to kiss me, I allowed him to do so. After all, he was a relative.⁴⁸⁹

I ran home to tell father the wonderful news. When he heard that his nephew was waiting by the well, he lost no time but hurried to bring him home, telling Jacob that he was welcome to stay for as long as a whole month.

RACHEL, JACOB'S SECOND WIFE

⁴⁸⁵ Genesis 29:6

⁴⁸⁶ Genesis 29:8-10

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יב [פגישת יעקב עם רחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

⁴⁸⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁸⁸ Genesis 29:12

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁸⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב יב [פגישת יעקב עם רחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

During that period, Jacob helped me tend the sheep.⁴⁹⁰ As a result of spending so much time together, we fell madly in love.⁴⁹¹ When Jacob asked me to marry him, I replied,

“Yes, of course I will.

But when you ask my father for my hand in marriage, be careful.

He is known to be a very hard negotiator and will easily get the better of you.”

When Jacob asked me what I meant, I explained,

“Father will never allow me to marry before Leah.”

To this Jacob answered, “Don’t worry.

I am more than a match for your father when it comes to deviousness.”

I admit to being taken aback.

“How can you say that? Honest people aren’t devious.”

This just shows how innocent I was.

“The law states that it is forbidden to cheat those who are honest,”

was his reply, “but permitted to cheat those who are not.”⁴⁹²

After the month was up, father suggested that Jacob stay on as head shepherd, for which he would be suitably recompensed. When the time came, he promised to send Jacob home laden with gifts for his family.⁴⁹³ However, instead of accepting father’s offer of a wage, Jacob offered to work seven years without pay in lieu of the bride price for me. To my great surprise and joy father agreed, saying it was better that I married a member of the family rather than a perfect stranger.

⁴⁹⁰ Genesis 29:12-15

⁴⁹¹ Genesis 29:18

Song of Songs 8:6

מדרש תנחומא (בובר) פרשת וישב סימן יט

<http://www.mayim.org.il/?parasha=%D7%94%D7%91%D7%94-%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%91%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D>

⁴⁹² Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 123a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_123.html

⁴⁹³ Genesis 29:15

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

Because of our great love for one another, the seven years flew by as if they were seven days. When Jacob demanded that father keep his part of the agreement, a wedding feast was arranged.⁴⁹⁴ Before it took place, father summoned Leah and me and informed us that Leah would be marrying Jacob, not me. Leah and I looked at each other in stupefaction. Whatever did he mean? Jacob would never agree to such a thing. And what about me? Did my feelings count for nothing? Then father explained his plan and the logic behind it. As he spoke, I could feel the joy dying inside me.

Jacob and I were well aware that father might renege on his agreement, so we had agreed on certain secret signs to confirm it was me in his bed. Now I faced a terrible dilemma. Should I keep silent? If I did, Jacob was bound to discover the deception and reject Leah, bringing shame down on all our heads. Only if I revealed the signs to Leah, would the deception work. This meant me losing the man I loved with all my heart. In the end I realized that no matter how much I loved Jacob, I couldn't bear the thought of my own sister being shamed in such a way.⁴⁹⁵

The wedding feast lasted seven days. At the end of the festivities Jacob entered the nuptial tent to await me, his intended bride. In the dark Leah took my place, leaving me crying my eyes out as I imagined my sister and my beloved Jacob in bed together, enjoying the delights which, by rights, should have been mine.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Genesis 29:18-22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8224#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה ע: נדרו של יעקב

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/70.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁹⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 123a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_123.html

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

⁴⁹⁶ Genesis 29:23

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

I dreaded to see Jacob's face the next morning, after he had woken to discover Leah by his side. How would he ever be able to trust me again? As I had feared, Jacob was beside himself with rage. He turned on father and shouted,

“How dare you! I have kept my side of our agreement by working seven years without pay in order to marry Rachel. So why have you not kept yours? Why did you deceive me?”

Father answered calmly,

“It is not our custom to marry off the younger daughter before the elder.”⁴⁹⁷

He then suggested a solution that only a man as avaricious as my father would ever have thought of. He said,

“Work for me for another seven years without pay.

Then you can have Rachel as well.”⁴⁹⁸

Jacob and I were speechless. How cruel! I was afraid that Jacob would refuse, as he had every right to do. However, after thinking it over, he grudgingly agreed,⁴⁹⁹ as a result of which it took another seven years before I entered the nuptial tent.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Genesis 29:25-26

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁹⁸ Genesis 29:27

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁴⁹⁹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵⁰⁰ Genesis 29:28

Even though Jacob and I loved one another deeply, after fourteen years of marriage I still had not conceived.⁵⁰¹ On the other hand, my sister, Leah, had already given birth to four stalwart sons.⁵⁰² Fearing that Leah's fertility would steal Jacob's heart away from me,⁵⁰³ I begged him,

“You must do something to give me children.
Weren't your parents in the same situation?
Just as your father prayed for your mother to become pregnant,
I beg you to do the same.
If I don't have a child, I shall be as good as dead.”⁵⁰⁴

To my dismay, instead of commiserating with me, Jacob became angry, saying,

“It's not my fault you haven't conceived.
You tell me to act as my father did, but my situation is completely different.
My father had no sons at the time he prayed, but I already have four.
It's obvious that you are the one who cannot have children, not me.”⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰¹ תנא דבי אליהו רבה י"ה

http://www.sefaria.org/Tanna_Debei_Eliyahu_Rabbah.18.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

⁵⁰² Genesis 30:1

⁵⁰³ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵⁰⁴ Genesis 30:1 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ו [ותקנא רחל באחותה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

מגילת איכה פרשה ג ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha3.htm>

⁵⁰⁵ Genesis 30:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ז [ויחר אף יעקב ברחל]

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

I was so taken aback at his lack of sympathy that it took me a while to recover. Then I retorted,
“Your grandfather, Abraham, already had a son with Hagar, Sarah’s servant, yet still he prayed to Yahweh to give Sarah a child of her own.”
Jacob replied, “It was not my grandfather who brought a rival into the house. My grandmother did so of her own volition.”
This left me with no choice but to do the same.
I said, “If that’s what is necessary for me to have children, then here is my servant, Bilhah.
Take her and she will bear us children that I can rear as my own.”⁵⁰⁶

Yet eventually I did become pregnant. No longer did I worry that Jacob might divorce me because I was childless.⁵⁰⁷ My long-awaited child was a son, a beautiful boy whom I named Joseph.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ Genesis 30:3 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לתורה חומש בראשית פרשה עא: בני לאה ה [בנה של בלהה שפחת רחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁵⁰⁷ Genesis 30:22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225/jewish/Chapter-30.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁰⁸ Genesis 30:24

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פו: יוסף הורד למצרים ה [וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/86.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

One day an old woman arrived in Haran with a message from Jacob's mother. Soon afterwards Jacob summoned Leah and me to the pastures where he was superintending our flocks. He announced that the time had come for him to return home to Canaan and asked us to accompany him.⁵⁰⁹ I burst out,
"Of course we will go with you. Why on earth should we stay here?
Our brothers will inherit the family property, not us.
Instead of providing us with dowries, our father has treated us like chattels, selling us to you in return for fourteen years of your labor.
The result of your hard work rightfully belongs to us and our children.
Feel free to do whatever you wish. We will abide by it."⁵¹⁰

It was clear to all three of us that Laban would never willingly let us go. If we left, it would have to be clandestinely, and Jacob devised a plan to ensure we did not leave empty-handed.⁵¹¹ Without going into detail, suffice it to say that by the time we left Haran, Jacob had become an exceedingly wealthy man.⁵¹²

The right opportunity presented itself when father was away from home, helping with the sheep-shearing. Before we left, I made sure to take the statues of our family's household gods, not because I believed in them, but to use as bargaining chips, if and when needed. As you can see, I was no longer the innocent I had been as a young girl.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ Genesis 31:3-4 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 36

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵¹⁰ Genesis 31:14-16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עד: יעקב עוזב את לבן ע"פ ציווי ה' ד [הלא נכריות נחשבנו לו כי מכרנו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/74.htm>

⁵¹¹ Genesis 30:37-42

⁵¹² Genesis 30:43

⁵¹³ Genesis 31:19 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:9

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

Father caught up with us at Mount Gilead.⁵¹⁴ A shouting match broke out between him and Jacob, each accusing the other of ingratitude.⁵¹⁵ Then father demanded to know why Jacob had stolen our household gods.⁵¹⁶ Jacob, who had no knowledge of what I had done, was completely taken aback.

“What do you mean, your household gods? I know nothing about them.

You are welcome to search our tents if you wish.⁵¹⁷

If any of my people have taken them,

I promise you that they will be severely punished.”⁵¹⁸

I shuddered. Had Jacob known that it was me who had stolen them, he would have thought twice before saying such a thing. Now, if father found them in my tent, Jacob would have no choice but to punish me, for he had given his word.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ Genesis 31:23

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵¹⁵ Genesis 31:26 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵¹⁶ Genesis 31:30

⁵¹⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵¹⁸ Genesis 31:32

⁵¹⁹ מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית ויצא פרשה עד ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_part_7.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35876/jewish/Vayeitzei-In-Depth.htm

Ecclesiastes 10:5 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16471/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

Father began his search.⁵²⁰ Meanwhile, I hurried to my tent, hid our household gods in my saddle bags and sat down on the saddle, treating it as a cushion.⁵²¹ When father entered, I said,

“Please forgive me for not rising, but I am too weak from menstruation.”
Never dreaming for a moment that I would sit on his household gods whilst in such an unclean condition, father hastily backed out of the tent.⁵²²

Eventually, after further bickering,⁵²³ father and Jacob reached an agreement. They built a cairn to demark each other’s territory,⁵²⁴ offered up a sacrifice to Yahweh as witness to their agreement and shared a meal in celebration.⁵²⁵ Early next morning, father blessed us, kissed us and returned home, and that was the last Leah and I saw of him.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁰ Genesis 31:33 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עד: יעקב עוזב את לבן ע"פ ציווי ה' ט [קללת יעקב כשגגה היוצאה מלפני השליט]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/74.htm>

⁵²¹ Genesis 31:34 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵²² Genesis 31:35

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵²³ Genesis 31:36 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵²⁴ Genesis 31:44-46 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵²⁵ Genesis 31:54 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8226/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

⁵²⁶ Genesis 32:1

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

The further south we travelled, the more likelihood there was of meeting Jacob's brother, Esau, a meeting Jacob dreaded. Now that he had come to claim the inheritance out of which he had cheated his brother, Jacob fully expected Esau to try and stop him. Therefore, when we saw Esau approaching with a large army, we prepared for the worst.⁵²⁷ To our great relief, instead of greeting Jacob as an enemy Esau ran to meet him, embracing and kissing his twin brother as though they had never argued.⁵²⁸

Nevertheless, Jacob still didn't trust his brother enough to follow him to his fiefdom of Edom.⁵²⁹ Instead, we travelled on to Beth-el, where Jacob learned of his mother's death. Overcome with grief, he reproached himself for not having made greater haste to reach her before she died so that she could see him and hear of all he had achieved.⁵³⁰

It was in somber mood that we wintered in Beth-el. However, with the coming of spring our spirits revived. We left Beth-el for the city of Ephrath, hoping to arrive before the full heat of summer was upon us. By this time I was pregnant again, eagerly awaiting the birth of my second child.⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Genesis 32:79 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8227#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית וישלח פרשה עו ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_part_8.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35877/jewish/Vayishlach-In-Depth.htm

⁵²⁸ Genesis 33:4 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8228#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית וישלח פרשה עה ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_part_8.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35877/jewish/Vayishlach-In-Depth.htm

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19:3

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵²⁹ Genesis 33:14 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8228#showrashi=true

⁵³⁰ Genesis 35:8-9 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230#showrashi=true

⁵³¹ Genesis 35:15-16 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומר בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב ז [לידת בנימין ומות רחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

NARRATOR

Before they reached their destination, Rachel died whilst giving birth to her second son, Benjamin.⁵³² Since one of the rewards of living a virtuous life was to live to a ripe old age, the rabbis were hard pressed to explain why a woman as virtuous as Rachel should have died so young. One explanation blamed Rachel for answering before her elder sister when Jacob asked Leah and Rachel to accompany him to Canaan.⁵³³ Another blamed Jacob's hasty assurance to Laban that whoever had stolen his household gods would pay with his life.⁵³⁴ A third blamed Jacob for delaying raising an altar to Yahweh at Beth-el, the place where he had fought and overcome an angel.⁵³⁵

The rabbis also sought an explanation as to why Rachel wasn't buried with the other Mothers in the family tomb at Hebron. One blamed Rachel for having more faith in an aphrodisiac than in Yahweh.⁵³⁶ Another claimed that she needed to be buried at the side of the road in order to bring comfort to her people as they marched off to exile in Babylon.⁵³⁷

NARRATOR

⁵³² Genesis 35:17 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב ה' [כל שבט ושבט נולדה תאומתו עמו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

⁵³³ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עד: יעקב עוזב את לבן ע"פ ציווי ה' ד' [הלא נכריות נחשבנו לו כי מכרנו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/74.htm>

⁵³⁴ מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HttpReportNum0006_L4

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עד: יעקב עוזב את לבן ע"פ ציווי ה' ט' [קללת יעקב כשגגה היוצאה מלפני השליט]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/74.htm>

⁵³⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשת בחוקותי פרשה לז: איש כי יפליא לנדור א' [נדרו ושלמו לה' אלהיכם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/37.htm>

⁵³⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עב: ראובן והדודאים ג' [תני נא לי מדודאי בנך]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/72.htm>

⁵³⁷ Midrash Aggadah P.159

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב י' [ותקבר בדרך אפרת]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

ZILPAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

My elder sister, Bilhah, and I were reared in the house of a wealthy citizen of Haran by the name of Laban, known for his avarice and cunning. He was always plotting and scheming how to increase his wealth, usually at the expense of someone else. As the daughters of slaves, we were put to work from an early age, first performing simple, menial tasks and later rising to the 'honored' position of maidservants to Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel.⁵³⁸

They weren't bad mistresses as mistresses go, until it came to having children. Both daughters shared the same husband, a Hebrew from Canaan named Jacob. Rachel was the favored wife, Leah the fecund one. You would have thought the opposite, seeing how often Jacob visited Rachel's tent. Because Rachel was barren, she had given Bilhah to her husband as a surrogate wife, so that my sister would have sons in Rachel's name. I never expected Leah to do the same, for she already had four. Therefore, when she summoned me and told me that this was precisely what she intended, I refused.⁵³⁹ She actually got down on her knees and begged me to reconsider, claiming that if I didn't bear her more sons, Jacob would cease visiting our tent altogether.⁵⁴⁰

Despite myself I felt rather sorry for her. That a mistress should sink so low as to beg a favor of her maidservant! Whoever had heard of such a thing? After keeping her waiting in suspense for a few days, I finally agreed. In this way, all four of us engaged in producing sons, taking it in turns to cohabit with our 'husband', or being visited at night as the mood took him. In my case the mood took Jacob fairly often. I soon found out why when he took to calling me 'Rachel' in bed. No doubt, in the dark, he couldn't differentiate between one slim body and the next.⁵⁴¹

ZILPAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

⁵³⁸ Genesis 29:24

⁵³⁹ Genesis 30:9

⁵⁴⁰ Midrash Lekach Tov, Genesis 30:8

פסיקתא זוטרתא (לקח טוב) בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Lekach_Tov%2C_Genesis.30.8.3?vhe=Midrash_Lekach_Tov_on_Torah_Vilna_1884&lang=en

⁵⁴¹ Midrash Aggadah, ed. Buber, Genesis 30

מדרש אגדה (בובר) בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט [כד]

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=33177&hilite=a4980f00-d2f0-409e-bdd8-4b5adc86636b&st=%d7%91%d7%9c%d7%94%d7%94&pgnum=90>

Midrash Aggadah, Genesis 29:24:1

מדרש אגדה (בובר) בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט [כד]

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Aggadah%2C_Genesis.29.24.1?vhe=Midrash_Aggadah_ed_Buber_Vienna_1894.&lang=en

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ט [בנה של זלפה שפחת לאה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

In the beginning I did all in my power to avoid having children.⁵⁴² I reasoned that since I was so much younger than Jacob, I was likely to live far longer. According to our laws, a childless widow enjoyed considerable independence, while a widow with sons was completely under their thumb.⁵⁴³ It was only as a result of constant pressure from Jacob's other wives, including my own sister, that I finally gave in and conceived.

Because I put on so little weight during pregnancy, everyone was surprised when I suddenly gave birth to a son.⁵⁴⁴ Leah named him Gad. My second son she named Asher.⁵⁴⁵

After many years in Haran, Jacob decided to return home to Canaan. On the way we were met by Jacob's twin brother, Esau. It says something about Jacob's regard for us, his two concubines, that in lining up his wives and sons in preparation for the meeting with Esau, he placed us in front, not because he thought us more important but because he considered us expendable!⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² בראשית רבתי פרשת ויגש

<https://www.responsa.co.il/default.aspx?action=advancedSearch!yes> (זלפה)

⁵⁴³ שכל טוב בראשית ל"א – פרשת ויצא

https://mg.alhatorah.org/Parshan/Seikhel_Tov/Bereshit/31.2#m7e0n6

⁵⁴⁴ שכל טוב (בובר) בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל ה-

https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Sekhel_Tov%2C_Bereshit.30.8.2?vhe=Sechel_Tob,_Berlin_1900-1901&lang=en

Midrash Sekhel Tov, Bereshit 30:7

https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Sekhel_Tov%2C_Bereshit.30.7.13?vhe=Sechel_Tob,_Berlin_1900-1901&lang=en

Midrash Sekhel Tov, Bereshit, Chapter 30:9 1-3

https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Sekhel_Tov%2C_Bereshit.30.9.3?vhe=Sechel_Tob,_Berlin_1900-1901&lang=en

Midrash Sekhel Tov, Bereshit, Chapter 30:12 1

https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Sekhel_Tov%2C_Bereshit.30.12.1?vhe=Sechel_Tob,_Berlin_1900-1901&lang=en

⁵⁴⁵ Genesis 35:26

⁵⁴⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה עח: יעקב, המלאך ועשו ח [יעקב מסדר את המחנות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/78.htm>

שכל טוב (בובר) בראשית פרשת ויצא - וישלח פרק לב כג 1-6

https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Sekhel_Tov%2C_Bereshit.32.23.2?vhe=Sechel_Tob,_Berlin_1900-1901&lang=en

Eventually even poor Rachel managed to produce a son, whom she called Joseph.⁵⁴⁷ Just as Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife, so Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. This did not make him very popular with his half-brothers, especially Leah's sons, who could not stand the sight of him.⁵⁴⁸ The only children who were prepared to have anything to do with him were mine and Bilhah's.⁵⁴⁹

One day young Joseph mysteriously disappeared. No-one mourned his disappearance, apart from his father, Jacob, and my soft-hearted sister, Bilhah. Many years later, we heard that he was alive and well, living in style in Egypt. Jacob immediately decided to join him, and⁵⁵⁰ on our arrival we were met by Joseph, now a great prince. When father and son met, Joseph burst into tears while Jacob mumbled a prayer of thanks into his beard. His first words were,

“If I were to die at this very moment, I would be quite satisfied.”⁵⁵¹

Inevitably Pharaoh demanded to meet the long-lost family of his grand vizier. Besides Jacob, Joseph took with him five of his weakest-looking brothers. Why the weakest-looking? Because, had they looked strong, Pharaoh would have forced them to serve in his army!⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁷ Genesis 30:22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225/jewish/Chapter-30.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁴⁸ Genesis 37:2-4

⁵⁴⁹ מדרש תנחומא בראשית פרשת וישב ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

⁵⁵⁰ Genesis 46:5-6

⁵⁵¹ Genesis 46:29-30 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8241#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת ויגש ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L4

⁵⁵² Genesis 47:1-2 Rashi commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8242/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-47.htm#lt=primary

As Joseph had foreseen, Pharaoh asked his brothers,
“What is your occupation?”

Following Joseph’s instructions, they replied,
“For generations we have been shepherds.”

This answer was designed to convince Pharaoh that we were not much use for anything, apart from following an occupation despised by his people, who worshipped sheep. As a result, he sent us to Rameses in the fertile Land of Goshen in the Nile Delta.⁵⁵³

Then Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was. Jacob told him he had recently celebrated his hundred and thirtieth birthday. All his days he had been a stranger in a strange land, never knowing a land of his own. Nevertheless, he thanked Pharaoh for inviting us to settle in Egypt and prayed that every year the Nile would overflow its banks and fertilize the fields, as indeed it did until Jacob’s death.⁵⁵⁴

NARRATOR

Like her sister, Bilhah, Zilpah too was regarded as one of the Mothers.⁵⁵⁵ She probably died in Goshen, surrounded by her two sons and their families, though the texts do not say.

⁵⁵³ Genesis 47:3-6 Rashi commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8242/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-47.htm#lt=primary

⁵⁵⁴ Genesis 47:7-12 Rashi commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8242/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-47.htm#lt=primary

מדרש תנחומא במדבר פרשת נשא כו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

NARRATOR

⁵⁵⁵ במדבר רבה פרשת נשא פרשה יב יז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_part_2.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L2

מדרש רבה מגילת שיר השירים [יפה את רעית]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/shir/6-2.htm>

BILHAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

When my mistress, Rachel, realized that she was unable to have children, she offered me to her husband, Jacob, as a surrogate wife.⁵⁵⁶ Unlike my sister, Zilpah, who did her best to avoid pregnancy,⁵⁵⁷ I welcomed the chance to become a mother.⁵⁵⁸ I bore Jacob two sons, Dan and Naphtali.⁵⁵⁹ Because of my obliging nature, my sons were treated the same as those of Jacob's two legitimate wives, while Zilpah's were not.⁵⁶⁰

I had given birth to Naphtali with Rachel supporting me from behind. As a result, Rachel loved him as though he was hers. She used to kiss him and say, "I wish I had a son just like you."⁵⁶¹ Eventually her wish came true and she gave birth to Joseph, a beautiful child like his mother.

BILHAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

⁵⁵⁶ Genesis 30:3 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225/jewish/Chapter-30.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ז' [ויחר אף יעקב ברחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁵⁵⁷ בראשית רבתי פרשת ויגש

<https://www.responsa.co.il/default.aspx?action=advancedSearch!yes> (זלפה)

⁵⁵⁸ בראשית רבתי פרשת ויגש

<https://www.responsa.co.il/default.aspx?action=advancedSearch!yes> (בלהה)

⁵⁵⁹ Genesis 30:6 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8225#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ז' [ויחר אף יעקב ברחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch. 19

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_I

⁵⁶⁰ בראשית רבתי פרשת ויגש

<https://www.responsa.co.il/default.aspx?action=advancedSearch!yes> זלפה +בלהה

⁵⁶¹ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs 8:1

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

To our great sorrow, she died during the journey from Haran to Canaan whilst giving birth to a second son, Benjamin. My master, Jacob, was heart-broken.⁵⁶² We all knew Rachel was the wife he loved most. Jacob buried her by the side of the road on the way to Ephrath, south of Bethlehem.⁵⁶³ The tombstone that he erected to mark her grave stands there to this day.⁵⁶⁴

As Rachel's surrogate, at her death it fell to me not only to nurse her baby and look after young Joseph but also to comfort Jacob for his loss. This I did to the best of my ability, until an unfortunate incident resulted in me being banished from Jacob's bed.⁵⁶⁵ My place was taken by Leah, to whom Jacob now devoted more attention. I rejoiced to see justice done to the wife who had provided Jacob with so many fine sons yet lived for so long in the shadow of her prettier sister.⁵⁶⁶

Of Jacob's four wives, only Zilpah and I lived to accompany Jacob to Egypt. The next seventeen years were the best years of our lives, years of prosperity and peace. Zilpah died, leaving me the only one of us who remained with Jacob till his dying day.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² מגילת רות פרשה ב [ז] וימת אלימלך איש נעמי

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/ruth-raba/rut-raba2.htm>

⁵⁶³ Genesis 35:19

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב ט [מקום קבורתה של רחל]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

⁵⁶⁴ Genesis 35:20

⁵⁶⁵ Genesis 35:22

⁵⁶⁶ מדרש רבה ללחומש בראשית פרשת ויצא פרשה עא: בני לאה ב [עקרות שנואות בפני עצמן]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/71.htm>

⁵⁶⁷ פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פיסקא ג - ביום השמיני

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/tohen.asp?id=374>

Pesikta Rabbati, Ba-Yom ha-Shemini P. 20

והיה מדי חודש בחודשו - מנצח בנגינות פ"ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/psiktarabati/psiktarabati02.pdf>

פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פיסקא ג - ביום השמיני

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.3?ven=Sefaria_Community_Translation&vhe=OYW&lang=he

It is said that while a good man's body may die, his spirit lives forever. Jacob was now a hundred and forty-seven and it was obvious that his time had come.⁵⁶⁸ He made his sons swear to bury him, not in Egypt but in Canaan, in the family tomb in Hebron.⁵⁶⁹ Then he blessed Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim,⁵⁷⁰ and finally his own twelve sons.⁵⁷¹ Having put his affairs in order, he turned his face to the wall, drew up his knees and gradually ceased breathing.⁵⁷²

NARRATOR

Thus passed the man whose determination to father twelve sons had caused so much heartache to his four wives. Thanks to these twelve sons, seventy souls settled in the Land of Goshen located in the eastern part of the Nile Delta, in Lower Egypt. From these seventy a nation gradually emerged.⁵⁷³

Bilhah was living at Qafratef when she heard of Joseph's death.⁵⁷⁴ Joseph had been like a son to her.⁵⁷⁵ She died soon after of a broken heart. Like Rachel, she was buried not in the family tomb in Hebron but next to her mistress on the way to Ephrath.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁶⁸ Genesis 47:28-29 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8242#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית סדר ויהי פרשה צו ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_part_12.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35881/jewish/Vayechi-In-Depth.htm

⁵⁶⁹ Genesis 47:29-30

⁵⁷⁰ Genesis 49:20

⁵⁷¹ Genesis 49:1-2

⁵⁷² Genesis 49:33

NARRATOR

⁵⁷³ Genesis 46:26-27

⁵⁷⁴ The Book of Jubilees 15

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/34.htm>

⁵⁷⁵ Genesis 37:10 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8232#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פד: יוסף ואחיו יא [והנה השמש והירח]

<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/84.htm>

⁵⁷⁶ The Book of Jubilees 15-16

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/34.htm>

Part 5

The Daughters and the Sons - Dinah Reuben and Judah

CHAPTER 12
THE RAPE OF DINAH
The Book of Genesis

Three of Jacob's children by his wife, Leah, appear in the following chapters. The first is Jacob's only daughter, Dinah, who was raped by a prince of Shechem. The second is Leah's eldest son, Reuben, who raped his father's concubine. The third is Leah's fourth son, Judah, who had relations with a woman he thought was a prostitute, but who turned out to be his daughter-in-law.

Dinah is the first to tell her story, which can be found in Genesis Chapter 34. Here it is embellished with details from the Midrash (commentary) entitled *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*.

DINAH, DAUGHTER OF JACOB

They say that nothing good ever came out of Shechem.⁵⁷⁷

One day my father and brothers left our camp to study the law, leaving me alone in my tent. You never dream that anything bad will happen to you in your own tent, so when I heard the sound of cymbals, I didn't think twice but went out to investigate. A group of women were dancing in a circle, shaking their tambourines. I stood and watched them as they danced and sang.⁵⁷⁸

Suddenly I sensed someone come up behind me. I turned to see a handsome young man, richly attired, staring at me. When he took hold of my hand and pulled me into my tent, I was so surprised I didn't even protest. Once inside, he pushed me roughly to the ground and proceeded to have his way with me.⁵⁷⁹

After he had finished, he tried to comfort me.⁵⁸⁰ He told me that his name was Shechem and that he was the king's son. Having seen me from afar, he had fallen in love with me and wanted to marry me. Bruised and bleeding, my clothes in rags, I looked at him in stupefaction. Was this how the men of Shechem went courting their brides?

CHAPTER 12 THE RAPE OF DINAH

DINAH, DAUGHTER OF JACOB

⁵⁷⁷ מדרש תנחומא וישב ב ג

https://www.sefaria.org/Idrash_Tanchuma%2C_Vayeshev.2.3?ven=Midrash_Tanhuma-Yelammedenu,trans.Samuel_A.Berman&vhe=Tsel_Midrash_Tanchuma&lang=he

Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev 2:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm20.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_102.html

⁵⁷⁸ קהלת רבה פרשה י א (ח)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת וישלח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L4

⁵⁷⁹ Genesis 34:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8229#showrashi=true

[מעשה שכם בדינה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rabai/80.htm>

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.21

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

⁵⁸⁰ Genesis 34:3 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8229#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.21

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

Seeing the unbelieving look on my face, he added,
“Look how much money your father squandered
on a small plot of land for an encampment!
If you marry me, you will acquire much more!”

There was no way I could face my father and brothers after what had happened. They would only blame me for leaving the protection of my tent. Indeed, they would probably blame me for my own rape. So, reluctantly, I allowed Shechem to lead me to the royal palace where, although I was treated like a princess, I was little more than a prisoner.⁵⁸¹

Shechem’s father went in person to my father to arrange our marriage.⁵⁸² Much to my surprise my father agreed, providing that all the males of Shechem underwent circumcision.⁵⁸³

Three days after the ceremony, shouts and screams brought me running to the window. I looked out to see my brothers, Simeon and Levi, slaughtering all before them with their swords.⁵⁸⁴ After killing every male in the city, my brothers came to take me back to my father’s tents. I refused to accompany them, knowing that I would be blamed for being raped.⁵⁸⁵ Only after Simeon promised to protect me did I agree.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה ז [השתדלותו של שכם לשאת את דינה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/80.htm>

⁵⁸² Genesis 34:4-12
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה ג [חמור מבקש את דינה מיעקב]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/80.htm>
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.21
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

⁵⁸³ Genesis 34:13-14
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה ח [תשובת בני יעקב לשכם]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/80.htm>

⁵⁸⁴ Genesis 34:25
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.21
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

⁵⁸⁵ Genesis 34:26
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 Ch.21
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>

⁵⁸⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה י [שמעון ולוי בשכם]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/80.htm>
Great Commentary on Genesis
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35877/jewish/Vayishlach-In-Depth.htm

Simeon kept his promise, even after he discovered that I was expecting a child which was obviously Shechem's. When the child turned out to be a girl, to hide the shame of my rape, my brothers wanted to have her put to death. Instead, my father prevailed upon them to hand her over to some cameleers on their way to Egypt, where she would be sold as a slave. He had a gold disc prepared, recording what had happened at Shechem, which I was ordered to hang around my daughter's neck.

Once this was done, my brothers snatched her out of my arms and handed her over to the waiting cameleers. I thought my heart would break.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁷ Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

CHAPTER 13
THE RAPE OF BILHAH
The Book of Genesis

In Genesis Chapter 35, we learn how Jacob's concubine wife, Bilhah, was raped by his eldest son and heir, Reuben.

This is the first of four examples in the Biblical text of the practice according to which the rape of a man's concubines demonstrates the usurpation of his power.

The second example is that of General Abner's rape of Rizpah, the concubine first of King Saul and then of his son, King Ishboshet, described in Chapter 38 of this work, based on II Samuel Chapter 3.

The third example is Prince Absalom's public rape of his father's ten concubines described in II Samuel Chapter 16, an account of which appears in Chapter 41.

The fourth and last example is Prince Adoniyahu's request of his half-brother, King Solomon, that their father's concubine, the bedwarmer Abishag, be given to him as his wife. The story, based on I Kings Chapter 2, appears in Chapter 44.

In this instance, Jacob's son, Reuben, was punished by having the kingship taken away from his descendants and transferred to the descendants of his younger brother, Judah (Genesis Chapter 49).

Extra material for Bilhah's story comes from the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Shabbath, Folio 55) and from the chronology, *The Book of Jubilees*.

BILHAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

The story I am about to tell you happened after the death of my mistress, Rachel, while my master, Jacob, and Rachel's sister, Leah, were away visiting Jacob's father, Isaac.⁵⁸⁸

One night I was woken by someone in my bed. Half asleep, I assumed it was Jacob, having returned earlier than planned. Only when he climbed on top of me and started having intercourse, did I realize it was a much younger man. Crying out in horror, I tried to pull myself free, though only when he finished was I able to do so. Pulling aside the cover, I caught the intruder by the arm to find myself looking into the face of Reuben, Leah's eldest son. I was so shocked that I let him go, whereupon he rose and left without a word.⁵⁸⁹

Can you imagine how I felt? Adultery is one of the most heinous crimes for which the penalty is death.⁵⁹⁰ I spent hours agonizing whether or not to tell Jacob. In the end I decided to do so, whatever the cost.⁵⁹¹

Reuben was summoned and confronted with my accusation. He, of course, denied everything, maintaining that he was completely innocent. He explained his presence in my tent by claiming that he had merely been moving Jacob's bed from my tent to that occupied by his mother, Leah. When asked why, he replied that it was to prevent his mother's further humiliation.

"It was bad enough that you preferred Rachel to my mother," he told Jacob, "let alone you favoring a mere servant."⁵⁹²

CHAPTER 13 THE RAPE OF BILHAH

BILHAH, JACOB'S CONCUBINE

⁵⁸⁸ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 33:1-2

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/33.htm>

⁵⁸⁹ Genesis 35:22

The Book of Jubilees Ch. 33:3-5

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/33.htm>

⁵⁹⁰ Leviticus 18:8

Leviticus 20:11

⁵⁹¹ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 33:6-8

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/33.htm>

⁵⁹² Genesis 35:22 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 55b

https://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_55.html

<http://www.daat.ac.il/encyclopedia/value.asp?id1=1969>

אינציקלופדיה יהודית

This Jacob could not deny. Somewhat shamefacedly, he turned to me and asked me if I was prepared to retract my accusation. When I refused, he told me that, if what I said was true, then I was to blame for allowing it to happen.⁵⁹³ Banished from his bed, it was only after Leah's death that we resumed marital relations.

⁵⁹³ The Book of Jubilees Ch. 33:9
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/33.htm>

CHAPTER 14
A LEVIRATE MARRIAGE
The Book of Genesis

Genesis Chapter 38 describes the pitfalls of a levirate marriage, in which the widow of a man who has died childless is obliged to marry his brother in order that she may bear a son who will continue her dead husband's name, unless released from doing so by her brother-in-law.

The law concerning this practice is stated in Deuteronomy Chapter 25 verses 5-9:

"5 If brothers reside together and one of them dies having no son the dead man's wife shall not marry an outsider. [Rather] her husband's brother shall be intimate with her making her a wife for himself thus performing the obligation of a husband's brother with her.

6 And it will be that the eldest brother [who performs the levirate marriage if] she [can] bear will succeed in the name of his deceased brother so that his [the deceased brother's] name shall not be obliterated from Israel.

7 But if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife the brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, "My husband's brother has refused to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel he does not wish to perform the obligation of a husband's brother with me."

8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him and he shall stand up and say "I do not wish to take her."

9 Then his brother's wife shall approach him before the eyes of the elders and remove his shoe from his foot. And she shall spit before his face and answer [him] and say "Thus shall be done to the man who will not build up his brother's household!"⁵⁹⁴

An entire tractate of the Talmud entitled 'Yebemoth' or 'Sisters-in-Law' is devoted to an elucidation of this law.

Leah's fourth son, Judah, took a Canaanite wife named Bat Shua who bore him three sons. The eldest married a woman named Tamar. After he died, leaving her childless, she was married to his younger brother. When he, too, died without her having conceived, the law decreed that she be married to the youngest. Fearing that her youngest son would die as a result of marrying a 'fatal woman', a woman who brought bad luck to all her husbands, Bat Shua took steps to ensure that he married someone else.

Faced with the prospect of living as a childless widow for the rest of her life, Tamar embarked on a course of action that was, to say the least, highly unexpected.

CHAPTER 14 A LEVIRATE MARRIAGE
INTRODUCTION

⁵⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 25:5-9

BAT SHUA, JUDAH'S WIFE

When a wealthy Hebrew came to Adullam to visit our neighbor, Hirah, my father, Shua, took advantage of the opportunity to arrange a marriage between us. Of course, as a woman, I had no say in the matter.⁵⁹⁵ However, when I saw Judah I thought myself lucky, for he was extremely strong with a marvelous physique.⁵⁹⁶ I thought myself even luckier when I discovered that my new husband was an easy-going man who was prepared to let me continue worshipping my gods. This was just as well, since his God, Yahweh, was very demanding, insisting that his worshippers keep an inordinate number of laws.

Judah's family didn't take at all kindly to him taking a Canaanite wife and more or less ostracized me.⁵⁹⁷ Therefore, at my insistence, we moved our tents to Adullam, where I bore Judah three fine sons - Er, Onan and Shelah.⁵⁹⁸ This led to an argument between us, because I wanted our sons to be raised as Canaanites, worshipping the gods of my fathers, while Judah insisted that they be brought up as Hebrews, in the worship of Yahweh. After depriving him of his conjugal rights for a few weeks, Judah gave in to my demands.

When our eldest son was of marriageable age, I sent Judah off to find him a suitable wife. I thought I had made it clear that I wanted him to marry a Canaanite woman like myself. What did he do? He returned with a foreign princess named Tamar, looking very pleased at having made such an advantageous match for Er.⁵⁹⁹

BAT SHUA, JUDAH'S WIFE

⁵⁹⁵ Genesis 38:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 50a

<http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

⁵⁹⁶ Genesis 49:8 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244/jewish/Chapter-49.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁹⁷ Malachi 2:11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16220/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁹⁸ Genesis 38:3-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

⁵⁹⁹ Genesis 38:6

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב י' [הוציאוהו ותשרף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

I was furious. Admittedly she arrived with a handsome dowry, but money isn't everything. My marriage to Judah had made me realize how important it was for husband and wife to share the same values, which, as far as I was concerned, meant a common faith. Er, however, was more than pleased at the wife chosen for him, for as much as I disliked Tamar, there was no denying she was very beautiful.

After their marriage, Er spent so much time with her that I was sure Tamar would soon become pregnant. Er assured me there was no likelihood of that, since whenever he lay with her he practiced coitus interruptus.⁶⁰⁰ This practice, much in use among us Canaanites, required the man to withdraw from the woman before spilling his seed, thus preventing conception. When I asked him the reason, Er replied that the last thing he wanted was for Tamar to have children and lose her looks.⁶⁰¹

I had to smile. Coitus interruptus was the technique I had insisted that Judah use after the birth of our third son. I had no intention of endangering my life by bearing any more children, or of ending up an old woman before my time through endless pregnancies.⁶⁰² Still, Er's sexual predilection certainly explained why Tamar looked more and more dispirited with every passing day.

Then tragedy struck. My beautiful son, who looked so strong, died of a heart attack.⁶⁰³ We had barely finished mourning him when Judah informed me that, according to the custom of his people, he intended marrying Tamar to our second son, Onan. He explained that any child born of their union would be considered Er's, not Onan's.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Genesis 38:7 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

⁶⁰¹ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34
http://halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

⁶⁰² Genesis 38:3-5 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

⁶⁰³ Genesis 38:7 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true
The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶⁰⁴ Genesis 38:8 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true
Deuteronomy 25:5-10

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשת ויקרא פרשה ב: אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן י [הקב"ה שיתף שמו עם ההולכים בדרכו]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/2.htm>

סדר עולם רבא פרק ב ב
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

I was aghast at the suggestion, while Onan refused to have anything to do with it. Quite unexpectedly Judah put his foot down and insisted on having his way. Unable to refuse his father, Onan did what Er had done before him, that is, practiced coitus interruptus.⁶⁰⁵ Tamar, who had looked so hopeful at the time of her marriage to Onan, again looked downcast.

And then tragedy struck again. One morning Tamar came running to us, crying that Onan was dead. Dead? Onan? It couldn't possibly be! Surely there must be some mistake?⁶⁰⁶

For weeks, no months, I walked around like a dead woman, feeling I had nothing to live for. It brought me little comfort to know that Judah had learnt his lesson and had no intention of risking our last son's life by marrying him to Tamar. Rather than telling her outright, Judah suggested that she return to her father's house until Shelah was old enough to marry her. So, suspecting nothing of our true intentions, Tamar returned to Mesopotamia. And that was the last I saw of her.⁶⁰⁷

Judah still hoped to find Shelah a bride from among his people, whereas I was adamant our son would marry one from mine.⁶⁰⁸ One day, when Judah, drunk as usual, was snoring his head off and would not wake for hours, Shelah and I stole out of our camp and made our way to the house of a Canaanite family in Adullam, for whose unmarried daughter I had already paid the bride price. There, Shelah was married in a quiet ceremony with only a few witnesses. After the ceremony we returned home with the bride. With my encouragement, Shelah lost no time in consummating his marriage.

⁶⁰⁵ Genesis 38:9 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב ה [יהודה היה הראשון שקיים מצות ייבום]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rab1/85.htm>

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶⁰⁶ Genesis 38:10

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

⁶⁰⁷ Genesis 38:11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב ה [יהודה היה הראשון שקיים מצות ייבום]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rab1/85.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 64a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_64.html

Babylonian Talmud: Niddah 64a

http://www.halakhah.com/niddah/niddah_64.html

⁶⁰⁸ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

When Judah recovered his senses and discovered that Shelah had taken a Canaanite bride, he was furious. However, there was nothing he could do about it, except rain down curses on my head. I simply ignored him, knowing he would eventually get over it. After all, what choice did he have? ⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁹ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 11
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

TAMAR, JUDAH'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

I was still very young when my mother informed me that my father had betrothed me to the son of a wealthy Hebrew family from Canaan.⁶¹⁰ I had hoped to marry a prince and my disappointment must have showed on my face, for my mother hastened to reassure me that, although he wasn't a prince, my future husband, Er, had excellent prospects. So, escorted by my father-in-law, Judah, I left my family and friends in Salem, not knowing whether I would ever see them again.

Their tents and flocks spread over a large area, the Hebrews comprised about sixty souls. In addition they had many servants. My father-in-law did not live with the family, but outside Adullam, to where he had moved after marrying the daughter of an Adullamite merchant. Judah and his business partner, Hirah, also from Adullam, reared sheep near the nearby town of Timnah.⁶¹¹

My husband, Er, proved to be a fine figure of a man, strong and upright like his father. Like any young girl, I looked forward to my wedding night with a mixture of excitement tinged with trepidation. Would my new husband find me attractive and give me many sons? On our wedding night my husband proved he found me attractive by lying with me time and again, but, just at the critical moment, would withdraw and spill his seed on my belly. This happened night after night.

At first, I was far too embarrassed to say anything. Eventually, with no-one else to turn to, I decided to confide in my mother-in-law, Bat Shua. Judah and Bat Shua made a strange couple. While Judah worshipped his God, Yahweh, and kept his laws, he allowed his wife to continue worshipping her Canaanite gods. Moreover, their sons were brought up in their mother's religion rather than in their father's.

Talking to Bat Shua proved to be a complete waste of time. When I explained my predicament, instead of commiserating with me and offering advice, she turned away with a small smile and said nothing. In the end I was forced to overcome my shyness and address Er directly. I asked him if I had done anything to displease him that would explain why he was acting in such an unnatural manner. Didn't he want us to have a child to carry on his name? Er laughed and replied that of course he wanted sons, just not with me, adding it would be a shame to ruin such a beautiful body through pregnancy.⁶¹²

TAMAR, JUDAH'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

⁶¹⁰ Genesis 38:6

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶¹¹ Genesis 38:1 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

⁶¹² Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

My torment came to an end the night that, whilst on top of me, Er suddenly clutched at his chest and rolled over dead.⁶¹³ Horrified, at first I couldn't move. Only after recovering from the shock, did I run to inform my in-laws. Whereas Bat Shua shrieked in grief, Judah uttered not a word. Only the frozen expression on his face revealed the depth of his grief.

Although, as custom required, I outwardly mourned my dead husband,⁶¹⁴ inwardly I was relieved. No longer would I have to participate in an act that I considered shameful. I fully expected my father-in-law to send me back home. Judah, it appears, had other plans. He informed me that, according to the customs of his people, he intended marrying me to his second son, Onan.⁶¹⁵ Any child conceived as a result of our union would be considered Er's.⁶¹⁶

Up till then I had barely exchanged a word with Onan and had no idea what he was like. I hoped that he would not turn out to be like his brother, but my hopes were dashed to the ground when he refused to lie with me. Somehow or other my father-in-law must have found out, for the next thing I knew he was shouting at Onan, telling him to perform his duties as a husband and give him a grandson.⁶¹⁷ Onan did what Er, his brother, had done before him. Every time we had intercourse, he would withdraw so that his seed spilt on my belly. No longer could he be accused of not performing his marital duties.⁶¹⁸ When I pleaded with him to cease such an unnatural practice, he told me that he had no intention of fathering a child who would not bear his name.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹³ Genesis 38:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶¹⁴ סדר עולם רבא פרק ב ב

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

⁶¹⁵ Genesis 38:8 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

⁶¹⁶ Deuteronomy 25:5-10

⁶¹⁷ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶¹⁸ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

[יהודה היה הראשון שקיים מצות ייבום]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

⁶¹⁹ Genesis 38:9

I became increasingly desperate. How would I ever conceive the child I longed for? You must understand that, in our culture, a childless woman is considered as good as dead.

I don't know how long this sad state of affairs would have continued, had not fate intervened a second time, when, one morning, I awoke to find Onan dead at my side. He must have died in the night. I didn't hear a thing.⁶²⁰

This was altogether too much of a coincidence. I was now in the unfortunate position of having lost two husbands, one after the other, without conceiving a child by either. I was in danger of becoming an 'unlucky' woman, one eventually forbidden to remarry because of the misfortune she brought to every husband.⁶²¹

After the family ceased mourning Onan, my father-in-law drew me aside and told me he had come to a decision. I was to return to my father's house and remain there till his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry me.⁶²² I returned home to Salem where I dutifully lived as a widow, waiting for Judah to recall me to Canaan.⁶²³

I waited and waited but heard nothing. Eventually I begged my father to find out what was going on. The messenger he sent reported back two items of news - one bad and one good. The bad news was that Shelah had been married to a Canaanite girl of his mother's choosing. The good news was that Bat Shua was dead.⁶²⁴

⁶²⁰ Genesis 38:10

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

⁶²¹ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 64b

http://halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_64.html

Babylonian Talmud: Niddah 64a

http://www.halakhah.com/niddah/niddah_64.html

⁶²² Genesis 38:11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

⁶²³ סדר עולם רבא פרק ב ב

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

⁶²⁴ Genesis 38:12

סדר עולם רבא פרק ב ב

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%91

Who would marry me now, a childless widow who had buried two husbands? A daring plan came into my head, the execution of which required my return to Canaan. I dared confide in no-one apart from my poor mother, whose initial reaction was exactly as I had foreseen. Aghast, she wanted no part in it! Eventually, unable to think of an alternative, she agreed to help, arranging an escort and money for board and lodging.

I stayed at an inn in Adullam, secure in the knowledge that because of my habit of being veiled at all times, no-one could possibly recognize me.⁶²⁵ Upon learning that Judah and Hirah were away at Timnah, supervising the sheep-shearing, I prepared to carry out my plan.

I knew that, every evening, Judah would return to his lodgings in Timnah. My plan consisted of following the custom of all Canaanite brides-to-be, according to which they sat by the city gate for seven days, dressed in bridal array, selling themselves to all comers for money to donate to their gods. Disguised as such a bride, my plan was to sell myself to Judah as he returned to his lodgings in Timnah so that he would have relations with me and hopefully give me the son for whom I so longed.⁶²⁶

In almost every city, the first imposing building by the city gate was said to be the former home of Judah's great grandfather, Abraham. Abraham had been so eager to welcome visitors, that in order to be the first to do so, he had made a practice of setting up his tent at the entrance to his camp. Timnah was no exception. Everyone who entered the town bowed respectfully in the direction of the building that bore Abraham's name. I reasoned that if I stationed myself in front of this building, Judah would be sure to notice me.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

⁶²⁶ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶²⁷ Genesis 38:14 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב ז [שכרה של תמר]

Sure enough, Judah entered the city at sunset, before the gates were shut for the night. I had failed to take into account the fact that, in the gathering dusk, he might not see me. Therefore, when he walked right past me, without so much as a glance in my direction, I was sure that my plan had failed. However, to my great relief, he stopped and retraced his steps.⁶²⁸ Seeing my veil, he must have realized I was not a common whore - they don't bother covering their faces, or much else for that matter.⁶²⁹

The smell of wine on Judah's breath was overpowering and explained the conversation we had, which revealed just how little he knew of Canaanite customs, despite having been married to a Canaanite wife.⁶³⁰

When he asked me if I was a Hebrew, I replied that I had converted, which Judah had insisted I do before marrying Er.

Then he asked me if I was married, which anyone familiar with the custom of Canaanite brides-to-be prostituting themselves in honor of their gods prior to their marriage, would never have asked.

Next he asked me if I was betrothed, again a question no Canaanite would ask of a bride-to-be. I decided to answer truthfully, "No."

Finally he asked me a question that only a devout Hebrew would ask. "Are you at the time of month when it is forbidden to have relations?" Again I answered truthfully, "No."⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פה: יהודה ותמר ה [צניעותה של תמר]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

⁶²⁹ Genesis 38:15 Rashi commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב ה [צניעותה של תמר]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

⁶³⁰ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶³¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

Then it was my turn. When I asked Judah how he intended to pay me, ⁶³² he promised to send me a goat.⁶³³ Upon my demand for some sort of surety, he asked me what I would accept. I looked him up and down and replied,

“Your signet ring, your cloak and your staff.”

Judah was so eager to lie with me that he didn't even bother to haggle over the price.⁶³⁴

After the deed was done, my unsuspecting father-in-law continued on to his lodgings in Timnah, while I returned to Adullam.⁶³⁵ I have no idea whether Judah ever tried to redeem his pledges. If he did, then it was in vain, for I was no longer in Timnah.⁶³⁶

⁶³² Genesis 38:16

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶³³ Genesis 38:17 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

⁶³⁴ Genesis 38:18 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פה: יהודה ותמר ט [מידה כנגד מידה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶³⁵ Genesis 38:19

⁶³⁶ Genesis 38:20-23 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

After three months the result of my resourcefulness started to show.⁶³⁷ I let it be known that I was Judah's widowed daughter-in-law and didn't even try to hide my pregnancy.⁶³⁸ The gossips lost no time in reporting this to Judah, who was furious at the stain on the family name and wanted to have me put to death.⁶³⁹

This was no laughing matter, for, besides being a king my father was also the high priest of our people,⁶⁴⁰ and the punishment for a priest's daughter having a child outside marriage was especially harsh. By becoming pregnant, not only had I shamed myself but also my father. I could expect to be burned alive.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 34b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_34.html

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פה: יהודה ותמר י [הוציאוה ותשרף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

⁶³⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פה: יהודה ותמר י [הוציאוה ותשרף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

⁶³⁹ Genesis 38:24

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶⁴⁰ Genesis 14:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8209/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב י [הוציאוה ותשרף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 32b

http://halakhah.com/nedarim/nedarim_32.html

⁶⁴¹ Genesis 38:24 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

Leviticus 21:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9922/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 50-51

http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_50.html

http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_51.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 52a

http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_52.html

I lost no time in preparing my proof as to the paternity of my unborn child. When Judah's men arrived at the inn to arrest me, I handed them the signet ring, cloak and staff, saying,

“These belong to the man who made me pregnant.

Ask my father-in-law if he recognizes them.”⁶⁴²

I didn't accuse him outright because I didn't want to shame Judah in public. After all, he was the father of my child.⁶⁴³

Needless to say, instead of being arrested⁶⁴⁴ I was taken to the tent I had shared with my two dead husbands to await the birth of my child. By the ninth month I was unusually big and could barely waddle around. This was explained when I gave birth to twin boys, Zerah and Perez.⁶⁴⁵

Although I was recognized as the mother of Judah's sons, Judah swore to have nothing more to do with me. I leave you to guess whether or not he kept his vow.⁶⁴⁶

Poor Judah! He had always prided himself on the fact that no woman had ever got the better of him. It was particularly galling for him to admit how both Bat Shua and I had been able to deceive him so easily.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² Genesis 38:25

[מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב יא [הכר נא למי החותמת]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

⁶⁴³ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_43.html

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶⁴⁴ Genesis 38:26 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 12

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁶⁴⁵ Genesis 38:27-30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true

⁶⁴⁶ Genesis 38:26 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8233#showrashi=true

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 10

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b

http://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

⁶⁴⁷ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – 4 The Testament of Judah 13

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

CHAPTER 15
THE IMPATIENCE OF SITIS
The Book of Job

Although the Book of Job is included in the third and last division of the Hebrew Bible called ‘The Writings’, the story of Job is inserted here because of the tradition identifying Dinah as Job’s second wife. This tradition can be found in the *Great Commentary on Genesis*, one of the two earliest commentaries on the books of the Bible, compiled around the 6th century CE. It can also be found in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 15) and in a pseudepigraphic work entitled *The Testament of Job*.

According to *The Testament of Job*, Job was a descendant of Esau, originally known as Jobab, a rich ruler of the land of Uz (Ausitis), located east of Canaan, on the northern edge of the Arabian Desert. Therefore, in this retelling of his story, Job is associated with Edom, the land southeast of Canaan, where Esau and his people settled.

Job's first wife was a princess named Sitidos or Sitis. Her narrative, together with that of the unnamed wife of Job’s brother, Nahor, are based both on the Book of Job and *The Testament of Job*, while that of Dinah and Job's daughter, Jemima, is based solely on *The Testament of Job*.

The story starts with a dream in which Job learns that Yahweh has allowed Satan to test his faith by taking away all he loves and values.⁶⁴⁸

CHAPTER 15 THE IMPATIENCE OF SITIS
INTRODUCTION

⁶⁴⁸ Job 1 8:12

SITIS, JOB'S FIRST WIFE

Born a princess in our land of Uz, I was given in marriage to the richest man in the land, a man named Job. ⁶⁴⁹ After our marriage, I lived in great luxury. No expense was spared to make me happy. ⁶⁵⁰ You might have thought that a man as rich as Job would have taken many wives, but this was not the case. Job wouldn't look at another woman. I considered myself very lucky to have made such a match. ⁶⁵¹

Besides being very rich, my husband was also extremely devout. He did not worship the gods of Uz, but the God of the Hebrews who lived in the land of Canaan. ⁶⁵² Living at that time of great immorality and lawlessness, ⁶⁵³ it was difficult to find someone as sincere and honest as Job, who did only what was right. ⁶⁵⁴

SITIS, JOB'S FIRST WIFE

⁶⁴⁹ Job 5:11

⁶⁵⁰ The Testament of Job Ch. 6:10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁵¹ Job 31:1

מדרש תנחומא לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח ה

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אבות דרבי נתן פרק שני (ה)

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/mahshevt/avot/2-2.htm>

⁶⁵² Great Commentary on Genesis 57:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_15.html

⁶⁵³ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

⁶⁵⁴ Job 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Testament of Job Ch. 1:8

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

Encouraged by my husband's example, I too practiced charity on a large scale, feeding the poor throughout the land. I regularly dispatched camels laden with food to feed those living in the most distant parts of Uz,⁶⁵⁵ whilst daily providing food to the poor in our vicinity.⁶⁵⁶

I bore Job seven sons and three daughters.⁶⁵⁷ We were a closely-knit family. Every day our sons took it in turns to host their brothers and sisters.⁶⁵⁸ Every day my pious husband offered up sacrifices to Yahweh, to atone for any crime they might have unwittingly committed.⁶⁵⁹

One night, Job awoke from a dream, shaking all over and his face deathly white. Refusing to tell me what the dream was about, he calmed down eventually and went back to sleep. I thought no more of the matter.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁵ The Testament of Job Ch. 6:11

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁵⁶ The Testament of Job Ch. 6:12

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁵⁷ Job 1:2

⁶⁵⁸ Job 1:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

⁶⁵⁹ Job 1:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Testament of Job Ch. 4:1-6

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁶⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15b – 16a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

On the day that it was the turn of our eldest son to host the rest of the family, one of my husband's herdsmen staggered into our house, covered in blood, his clothes in rags. Gasping that a band of Sabaeans had fallen on our herds, killed all the herdsmen and made off with the cattle, he keeled over, dead.⁶⁶¹

Job immediately armed our men and prepared to give chase.⁶⁶² Just then one of our shepherders arrived in a similar condition to the first man. Reporting that a bolt of lightning had killed all our sheep and shepherders, he, too, fell to the ground, dead.⁶⁶³

A third man arrived, covered in blood, to tell us that three bands of Chaldeans had attacked the camel herds, taking all the camels and killing all the camel-keepers. The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he fell down, dead.⁶⁶⁴

Worse was to follow. A fourth messenger came to inform us that a great storm had obliterated the house of our eldest son, with all our children and grandchildren inside.⁶⁶⁵ All had died. Like the previous messengers, as soon as he had blurted out his news, he dropped down, dead.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶¹ Job 1:13-15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

⁶⁶² מדרש רבה - חומש ויקרא מצורע פרשה יז ד

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⁶⁶³ Job 1:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

⁶⁶⁴ Job 1:17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

⁶⁶⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 24:4-5

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

⁶⁶⁶ Job 1:18-19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Testament of Job Ch. 4:27

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

I cannot begin to describe our anguish. Tearing our clothes and pulling out our hair, I wailed while Job prayed,

*“Yahweh gives and Yahweh takes away. Blessed be Yahweh.”*⁶⁶⁷

The final blow was when boils broke out all over Job’s body.⁶⁶⁸ Afraid of infecting others with his disease, he fled the city. I hurried after him, concerned not only for his welfare but also for his sanity, only to find him sitting on a pile of dung. He was in an awful state. His boils had suppurred and pus dripped onto the ground. When I saw him take the worms that had fallen off his body and replace them on his boils, I was certain that he had lost his mind.⁶⁶⁹

Seeing my husband sitting among the ashes, using a shard of broken pottery to scratch himself, I realized that it fell to me to find some way for us to survive.⁶⁷⁰ First I approached our friends and relatives.⁶⁷¹ All those who had professed to be our friends turned their backs on me, while our relatives shut their doors in my face. Convinced that we must have done something terrible to deserve such a fate, none of them was prepared to help.

⁶⁶⁷ Job 1:20-21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16403/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Testament of Job Ch. 4:28

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁶⁸ Job 2:7

The Testament of Job Ch. 5:1-5

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁶⁹ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:6-8

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁷⁰ Job 2:7-8

⁶⁷¹ מדרש תהילים כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.26.2?lang=he

The Testament of Job Ch. 5:16-19

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

Left with no choice, I sought work in the houses of those who, once, had not been worthy to tend our sheep. ⁶⁷² For a while I was able to earn enough money to feed us both, but when my employer discovered I was feeding Job, he halved my wages so that I could only feed myself. Realizing that, in his condition, my husband could never go to the market to beg for bread, I continued to share the paltry amount I was able to buy with Job. ⁶⁷³

Close to starvation, I begged a baker for some bread. When he refused to give me any without some form of payment, I pleaded with him, saying,

“How can I possibly pay?

Haven’t you heard that we have lost everything?

Can’t you take pity on us just this once?”

His reply was that he was willing to sell me three days’ worth of bread for my hair. I was horrified. A woman’s hair is not only her pride and joy, but something of such great value that only her husband is allowed to see it. However, the loss of my hair seemed a small price to pay for saving Job from starvation, so I eventually agreed. In full view of the public, the baker took up a knife and cut off my hair, thus shaming me even further.

⁶⁷² The Testament of Job Ch. 5:12

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-of-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁷³ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:14-15

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-of-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

Clutching three loaves of bread, I hurried off to feed my husband. ⁶⁷⁴
Overcome with emotion, I burst out,
“Job, how long do you intend to sit here
with your smelly, maggot-ridden boils,
waiting for a miracle to happen?
Everyone has forgotten you.
All the pain and suffering I underwent to bear our children
has been for nothing.
Here I am, forced to go from house to house begging for work as a servant. ⁶⁷⁵
The trouble I’ve had to procure food for you
and now I can barely feed us both.
See what this has led to.
Look! I’ve sold my hair just so that you can have something to eat.
Here, take these three loaves and enjoy them, for I have no strength left.” ⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁴ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:16-24

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁷⁵ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:1-4

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁷⁶ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:5-15

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

Before Job could reply, I added,
“How can you carry on like this?
Why don’t you put an end to your suffering, here and now?
Why don’t you bless Yahweh ⁶⁷⁷ and pray to Him to strike us both dead?”
With these words I threw myself to the ground, crying bitter tears. ⁶⁷⁸

Job looked at me and said gently,
“I know you’re upset, but you know very well I can’t do that.
We must accept both good and bad without complaint,
for all comes from Yahweh.” ⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ מדרש איוב עמוד 20 יד

<https://hebrewbooks.org/33181>

⁶⁷⁸ Job 2:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16404/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

The Testament of Job Ch. 6:16-18

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁷⁹ Job 2:10

Great Commentary on Genesis 19:12

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

The Testament of Job Ch. 6:19-31

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

JOB'S SISTER-IN-LAW

When I married Nahor, I was sure that I was marrying into money, for he was the brother of a very rich man named Job.⁶⁸⁰ How wrong I was! For, although Job was very wealthy, he believed in helping only the poor and sick, not any of his deserving relatives. The number of times I sent Nahor to ask Job for help! He always came back with the same answer.

“You’re fortunate to have a roof over your heads,
clothes on your bodies and food on the table.
What more do you want?”⁶⁸¹

When misfortune overtook my arrogant brother-in-law and my even more objectionable sister-in-law, I couldn’t help but gloat. First they lost their herds and flocks. Then their eldest son’s house caved in, killing all their children and grandchildren. The final straw was when Job was stricken with a plague of boils. Even I couldn’t help feeling sorry for them by then.⁶⁸²

Naturally we were the first people to whom Job’s wife turned for help. I sent her away empty-handed, explaining that we could barely feed ourselves and our children, let alone anyone else. What else did she expect, after the way her husband had treated us? Anyway, I was sure that someone would help her. At all events she did not return.⁶⁸³

I didn’t see Sitis for the next seven years. I heard that she had found work as a servant, so presumed she was earning enough to keep herself and her husband⁶⁸⁴ who, rumor had it, was living outside the city on a dung heap. Then one day Job’s friends turned up at our house, asking where he was. Nahor offered to show them the way to the dung heap, and I hurried after.⁶⁸⁵

JOB'S SISTER-IN-LAW

⁶⁸⁰ Job 1:1-3

⁶⁸¹ The Testament of Job Ch. 3:1-37

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁸² Job 1:1-19

The Testament of Job Ch. 4:7-28

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁸³ Job 19:13-19

⁶⁸⁴ The Testament of Job Ch. 5:11-15

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁸⁵ The Testament of Job Ch. 7:8-10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

By the time we arrived, a huge crowd had gathered.⁶⁸⁶ Not wishing to approach because of the smell, Nahor pointed Job out to his friends. Seeing him sitting there, they exclaimed,

“This cannot possibly be Job!”⁶⁸⁷

When we assured them that it was, they were horrified. Sinking to their knees, they tore at their clothes and cast earth on their heads as though in mourning.⁶⁸⁸

A long conversation took place, with Job’s friends trying to convince him that he must have done something wrong to deserve such punishment,⁶⁸⁹ and Job insisting that he had been unjustly treated.⁶⁹⁰ Day after day they continued arguing. It gradually became our main source of entertainment. We even placed wagers as to who would win the debate.

⁶⁸⁶ The Testament of Job Ch. 7:11

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁸⁷ The Testament of Job Ch. 7:12

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁸⁸ Job 2:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16404/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁶⁸⁹ The Testament of Job Ch. 10:1-2

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁹⁰ Job 19:1-5

SITIS, JOB'S FIRST WIFE

When I heard that Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu, had arrived in the city, I ran to find them. I threw myself down at their feet, crying,

“Do you remember what I used to look like and how I used to dress?

Well, look at me now, dressed in rags!”

Squirming with embarrassment, his eyes filled with tears, Eliphaz took his sumptuous cloak and placed it round my shoulders.

I continued,

“I beg you to help me dig out the bodies of my children

from under the ruins of our house,

so that I can give them an honorable burial.

Since we lost everything no-one else will help.”⁶⁹¹

My husband's friends were just about to order to their servants to do as I asked, when Job stopped them, saying,

“Don't bother trying to find our children.

They're no longer there.

They're with their maker.”⁶⁹²

We looked at him uncomprehendingly.⁶⁹³

SITIS, JOB'S FIRST WIFE

⁶⁹¹ The Testament of Job Ch. 9:1-6

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁹² The Testament of Job Ch. 9:7-8

⁶⁹³ The Testament of Job Ch. 9:9-10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

Job sighed and asked his friends to help him to his feet. Supported on both sides, he recited a prayer and told us to look towards the east. There, in the sky, were all our children grouped around a blaze of light. ⁶⁹⁴

Suddenly a great calm came over me, as all my trials and tribulations were left behind. Prostrating myself, I thanked Yahweh for His mercy. ⁶⁹⁵

NARRATOR

When Sitis didn't appear for work the next morning, her master sent his servants to find her. The sound of lowing drew them to the barn, where they found her lifeless body lying in the hay. Everyone present started to weep, for she had been a kindly soul. No-one had done more for her poor husband than she. Without her braving her master's fury to bring Job a morsel of bread every day, he would have died long before.

Word of her death spread quickly throughout the city. The servants wrapped her emaciated body in a shroud, and buried her next to where her children's bodies lay under the rubble. Though such a woman deserved far more, this was all they could do. There was not a single poor person in the city who did not shed a tear of pity that day. ⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴ The Testament of Job Ch. 9:11-13

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

The Testament of Job Ch. 5:10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁹⁵ The Testament of Job Ch. 9:14

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

NARRATOR

⁶⁹⁶ The Testament of Job Ch. 9:16-20

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

JOB'S SISTER-IN-LAW

So how did it all end?

After Sitis's funeral, the debate between Job and his friends continued. Even after twenty-seven days of incessant argument, Job's friends were still unable to convince Job that he was at fault, while Job was equally unable to convince them that he was innocent of all wrong doing.

Job's friends decided that enough was enough and prepared to depart.⁶⁹⁷ Before they could do so, the youngest among them, Elihu, who up till then had been silent, demanded to have his say. You could tell he was angry. He was angry with Job for insisting on his innocence, and angry with his friends because they had not succeeded in convincing Job that he was in the wrong.⁶⁹⁸ Finally even Elihu fell silent.⁶⁹⁹

Everyone looked at Job, expecting him to respond as formerly. Imagine our surprise and disappointment when he said nothing. He just sat there, staring into space. Seeing that the show was over for the day, we all drifted off home.

When we returned the next day, it was to find Job fully recovered from his disease and his friends building an altar to Yahweh.⁷⁰⁰ Naturally we were agog to know what had happened, but they wouldn't tell us. We watched until the sacrifices were over and then went home.

Now that Job had recovered he was able to re-enter the city, after which he set about reclaiming his fields and rebuilding his flocks and herds. Naturally we, his family and friends, rushed round to his house to tell him how sorry we were for what had happened, and how we regretted not being able to help him in his hour of need. We all made sure to bring him a gift, in the hope that we would receive far more in return.⁷⁰¹

JOB'S SISTER-IN-LAW

⁶⁹⁷ The Testament of Job Ch. 10:3

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁹⁸ The Testament of Job Ch. 10:4-5

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁶⁹⁹ Job 32-37

⁷⁰⁰ Job 42:7-9

⁷⁰¹ Job 42:10-11

The Testament of Job Ch. 10:24-26

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

It made me sick to my stomach when I heard that his flocks and herds had grown so numerous that they had to be taken to distant pastures to graze,⁷⁰² and that he was now twice as rich as before. Everything that man touched seemed to turn to gold! Much of his wealth was disbursed, as formerly, to the poor and needy. Nahor and I never saw any of it.⁷⁰³

As a rich widower, Job could have had any wife he chose. I would have offered myself had I not been married to his good-for-nothing brother. The woman he eventually married was a Hebrew named Dinah. As far as I was concerned, she was even worse than her predecessor.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² Job 42:12

⁷⁰³ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:1-3
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷⁰⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 19:11-12
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Great Commentary on Genesis 57:4
https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15b
http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf
The Testament of Job Ch.11:4
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

DINAH, JOB'S SECOND WIFE

After the incident in Shechem I returned to my father's tents, where I lived under the protection of my brother, Simeon. Eventually I left Simeon and married a man named Job.⁷⁰⁵

Married before, his first wife and children had died under tragic circumstances. When Job asked for my hand in marriage, I explained that we Hebrews only married converts who fulfilled the basic requirements of our religion. Therefore, if he wanted to marry me, he would have to undergo circumcision. I would have asked the same of any man.⁷⁰⁶

I bore Job fourteen sons and three daughters. My daughters more than made up in beauty what they lacked in numbers.⁷⁰⁷ On his deathbed Job summoned our children and told them about his first family. It was a secret he and I had hidden from them for years.⁷⁰⁸

DINAH, JOB'S SECOND WIFE

⁷⁰⁵ Great Commentary on Genesis 57:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15b

http://halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_15.html

⁷⁰⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה ג [חמור מבקש את דינה מיעקב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/80.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת נח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

⁷⁰⁷ Job 42:13-15

Great Commentary on Genesis 57:4

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 16b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

⁷⁰⁸ The Testament of Job Ch. 1:1-7

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

JEMIMA, DAUGHTER OF JOB AND DINAH

I was one of three daughters born to a couple named Job and Dinah. My father was a rich Edomite sheikh,⁷⁰⁹ my mother a destitute Hebrew outcast, whose ancestors originated from Mesopotamia. Their story is a very romantic one, for who else but a man like my father, who never failed to extend his protection to the weak and helpless, would marry a woman like my mother, who had only her beauty and her goodness to recommend her? Even more surprising was the fact that she was his only wife. I often dreamed of marrying such a man but, alas, found none to compare.

Our parents nursed a secret, one we learned only when our father was about to die. He revealed that, once, he had another family. After losing everything he owned, his children had died in a terrible storm and his first wife, Sitis, had died of starvation.⁷¹⁰

Deeply shocked, we did not know what to say and listened in silence as our father proceeded to bequeath to us his wealth. Since he often confided in me about his business affairs, I more or less knew its extent. And here he was, dividing it all up among our brothers, leaving nothing for us, his daughters!⁷¹¹

Immediately he finished speaking, I burst out saying,
“Father, what about me and Keziah and Keren-happuch?
Why haven’t you given us anything?”⁷¹²
Father replied,
“Don’t be angry!
I haven’t forgotten you.
I have set aside something for each of you,
something worth far more than what your brothers have received.”⁷¹³

JEMIMA, DAUGHTER OF JOB AND DINAH

⁷⁰⁹ Genesis 36:31-34

⁷¹⁰ The Testament of Job Ch. 1:1-7

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹¹ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:5-8

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹² The Testament of Job Ch. 11:9

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹³ Job 42:15

The Testament of Job Ch. 11:10

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

With these words he gave me the key to his treasury and told me to bring him the gold casket which was stored there. When I returned, he opened it and took out three belts, the like of which we had never seen. They were so dazzling that we had to look away. Father gave each of us a belt, telling us to wear it at all times so that it would bring us luck. ⁷¹⁴

Kassiah, who tended to sarcasm, complained,
“How can a belt be worth more than what you have given to our brothers?
How can we live on a belt?” ⁷¹⁵
Father reassured her by saying,
“Not only will you have enough to live on,
but it will provide you with far more than you need. ⁷¹⁶
Put it on now, so that you will be able to see the angels take me when I die.”
⁷¹⁷

As the eldest I realized that it was up to me to set an example. I tied the belt round my waist as father had requested and, right away, was filled with an overwhelming urge to sing and dance in praise of Yahweh, just like the angels in our holy scriptures. ⁷¹⁸ Determined not to be outdone, Keziah followed suit. The moment she tied on her belt, her usually covetous expression was suddenly transformed into one of exaltation. ⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁴ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:11-14
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹⁵ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:15
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹⁶ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:16
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹⁷ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:22
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹⁸ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:23-24
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷¹⁹ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:25-26
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

This left our sister, Keren-Happuch, who, after tying on her belt, began declaiming in a foreign tongue. Although we did not understand a word, we could sense that it, too, was in praise of Yahweh.⁷²⁰

For three days our father lay on his death bed.⁷²¹ On the fourth he rose, went to a chest and took out an incense burner for Keziah, a tambourine for Keren-Happuch and a lyre for me. After returning to his bed, he told Kezia to wave her incense burner, Keren-Happuch to shake her tambourine and me to play on my lyre, explaining that it was our duty to honor the angels as they came to take his soul.

Suddenly a gold chariot appeared at the side of our father's bed. His soul rose up out of his body and stepped into the chariot, where it was welcomed by an angel with a kiss. Then the chariot disappeared. It was the most amazing thing I have ever seen, or that I would ever see in my entire life.⁷²²

When word spread of father's death, all the poor, orphaned and sick came to his funeral. Had it not been for father, most of them would have perished long ago. As his body was lowered into the grave my father looked as though he was asleep. I thought that if anyone deserved to sleep the sleep of the just, it was my father, Job.⁷²³

⁷²⁰ The Testament of Job Ch. 11:27-29

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷²¹ The Testament of Job Ch. 12:4

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷²² The Testament of Job Ch. 12:5-9

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

⁷²³ The Testament of Job Ch. 12:15

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>

CHAPTER 16
THE DESCENT TO EGYPT
The Book of Genesis

In this chapter we learn what happened to Rachel's son, Joseph, after he disappeared. It explains how the Hebrews, who had migrated from Mesopotamia to Canaan, came to be in Egypt, setting the stage for the defining events in Jewish history described in the chapters which follow. The narrative appears in Genesis Chapters 39-46.

Six women relate the story of Joseph's adventures in Egypt:

Zuleika or Zelicah, the wife of an Egyptian official named Potiphar, and one of her friends. Zuleika's story can be found in Chapter 44 of *The Book of Jasher*. Her infatuation with Joseph furthers the story by leading to his meeting with Pharaoh.

Asenath, an abandoned baby adopted by the High Priest of On and his wife, and one of her servants. Asenath's story appears in *Joseph and Asenath*, a Greek narrative dating from between 200 BCE and 200 CE. Asenath became the wife of Joseph and the mother of his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, founders of two of the tribes of Israel.

Dinah, the disgraced daughter of Jacob who, in Chapter 12, told us how she was raped and forced by her brothers to give up the illegitimate daughter resulting from her rape, in this chapter describes how she was finally reunited with her daughter. Asenath's identification as Dinah's illegitimate daughter by the prince of Shechem is derived from *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*. Dinah's last years are taken from the Biblical chronology, *The Book of Jubilees*.

Serach, daughter of Asher, Jacob's son by Zilpah, is the last to tell her tale. As the longest-lived woman in the Bible, this is the first of a number of occasions in which she participates in this narrative. Here she tells us how she broke the news to Jacob that his favorite son, Joseph, whom he had thought long dead, was in fact very much alive.

ZULEIKA, POTIPHAR'S WIFE

My husband, Potiphar, who held high office in Pharaoh's palace, was far too busy with Pharaoh's affairs to manage our household, so he hired a steward, an outstandingly handsome Hebrew youth named Joseph, who brought order to our household but disorder to my heart.⁷²⁴

After Joseph's appointment, my husband's affairs began to thrive.⁷²⁵ As a rule, slaves are a nuisance, aren't particularly scrupulous and are often immoral. Not our Joseph.⁷²⁶ It turned out that our new steward was deeply religious.⁷²⁷ During the seven years he worked for us, he insisted on wearing the coarsest of clothes and ate hardly anything at all.⁷²⁸ He refused wine, fasted for three days every week and, even on the days that he ate, insisted on giving half to the sick and poor. Convinced of his piety, Potiphar and I rejoiced that we had found such a man. Indeed, I felt quite motherly towards him and treated him like one of my children, going to his room every night to wish him sweet dreams.⁷²⁹

CHAPTER 16 THE DESCENT TO EGYPT

ZULEIKA, POTIPHAR'S WIFE

⁷²⁴ Genesis 39:1

Book of Jasher 44:1-10

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷²⁵ Genesis 39:2-3

Book of Jasher 44:11-13

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷²⁶ Great Commentary on Genesis

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פו: יוסף הורד למצרים ג [ויקנהו פוטיפר איש מצרי]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/86.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 118b

<http://halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

⁷²⁷ Genesis 39:2 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8234/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true

⁷²⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פה: יהודה ותמר א [יורד יהודה מאת אחיו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/85.htm>

⁷²⁹ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

Then something happened that made me suspect that Joseph's virtuous behavior was too good to be true. One evening I entered his room to wish him good night, only to discover Joseph combing his hair in a tiny mirror. I must admit I was shocked. Who would have thought that a youth as pious as Joseph would be concerned about his appearance? ⁷³⁰ Not that he didn't have reason. Joseph, at the age of eighteen, was a very handsome youth whose beauty was almost unearthly. ⁷³¹

From that moment on I ceased regarding Joseph as some kind of holy man and saw him for who he was - an attractive youth in whose company I constantly found myself, thanks to my busy husband. Was it any wonder that, in no time at all, I became utterly infatuated with our handsome steward? ⁷³²

Certain that Joseph would be flattered by my attentions, I invited him to lie with me. What was his reply?

“I owe your husband everything.

The only thing he hasn't given me is you, his wife.

Is this the way you expect me to show my gratitude – by betraying his trust?

My conscience won't allow it!” ⁷³³

⁷³⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פד: יוסף ואחיו ז' [יוסף נענש מידה כנגד מידה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/84.htm>

⁷³¹ Genesis 39:6 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8234/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פו: יוסף הורד למצרים

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/86.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 36b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_36.html

Book of Jasher 44:14

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷³² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ג' [ותשא אשת אדוניו את עיניה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

⁷³³ Genesis 39:7-10

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 56a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_56.html

Book of Jasher 44:44-46

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

Unprepared for such a refusal, I responded,
“But you have nothing to fear from Potiphar,
for he’s convinced you aren’t interested in sex.
Even if someone were to tell him you had seduced me,
he would never believe them.”⁷³⁴
In reply Joseph had the effrontery to tell me to control myself!

Joseph seemed to think that if he could persuade me that my cause was hopeless, I would lose heart and stop bothering him. Little did he understand feminine psychology! Didn’t he realize that his unexpected refusal merely inflamed my lust?

I made up my mind to try again.⁷³⁵ I tried everything - seduction,⁷³⁶ aphrodisiacs,⁷³⁷ flattery,⁷³⁸ bribery⁷³⁹ and cunning.⁷⁴⁰ Nothing worked.

⁷³⁴ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety: 4
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁷³⁵ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:2
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁷³⁶ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety:9
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 109b
http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

⁷³⁷ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety:6
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁷³⁸ Book of Jasher 44:15-22
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷³⁹ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety:3
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>
11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety:9
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁷⁴⁰ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety:4
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

The nearest I came to success was when I cornered him in my bedroom. Before I embraced him, I hastily covered the image of my god with a sheet. Joseph's reaction was to say,

“You may be able to hide your actions from your god with a sheet, but how can I hide my actions from Yahweh, Who is everywhere?”⁷⁴¹

The days passed, with me trying to entice Joseph into my bed and Joseph avoiding me at all costs. When I finally realized that there was no way I could change his mind, I became really ill.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ה [טעונו של יוסף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rabai/87.htm>

Parshat Vayeishev In-Depth

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35878/jewish/Vayeishev-In-Depth.htm

⁷⁴² Book of Jasher 44:26

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

ZULEIKA'S UNNAMED FRIEND

I belonged to a circle of young women who, married to men of substance, had little to do to fill our time. One was the wife of Pharaoh's chief steward. Bored, like the rest of us, from time-to-time Zuleika would entertain us in her sumptuous palace. Months had passed since she had last attended our gatherings. We had just begun to wonder why, when news reached us that Zuleika was ill. Naturally we made haste to visit her.

When we arrived, we were shocked to see how thin and haggard she had become, not at all like her normal plump, beaming self.⁷⁴³ We took to visiting her every day. After all, what else did we have to do?⁷⁴⁴ We asked her,

“Zuleika what on earth is wrong with you? You lack nothing.

Your husband enjoys Pharaoh's favor and can give you anything you want.”

She gave us no answer, but sighed and gazed out of the window.⁷⁴⁵

One day we found her dressed and awaiting our arrival. This in itself was an improvement, for recently she had kept to her bed all day. Snapping her fingers, she gave orders for her steward to serve us fruit - pomegranates or oranges, I forget which. An incredibly handsome youth entered the room with knives and a bowl of fruit. Unable to take our eyes off him, instead of cutting the fruit we cut our fingers. There was blood everywhere!⁷⁴⁶

ZULEIKA'S UNNAMED FRIEND

⁷⁴³ Book of Jasher 44:36-37

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁴⁴ Book of Jasher 44:38

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁴⁵ Book of Jasher 44:27

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁴⁶ Midrash Tanhuma

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl04.htm>

Joseph and Zuleika

<http://www.omphaloskepsis.com/Library/JAZ.pdf>

Book of Jasher 44:28-32

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

After he had left the room, Zuleika explained,
“If this is the effect my steward has on you
after only one moment in his company,
can you imagine what it’s like being with him all day long?
Yet he persists in rejecting all my advances.”⁷⁴⁷
I answered, “He’s only a slave.
Why don’t you order him to have sex with you?”⁷⁴⁸
She replied, “You think I haven’t tried?
I’ve promised him everything but he absolutely refuses.
Is it surprising that I’m so depressed?”⁷⁴⁹

We left, shaking our heads. Now we knew why Zuleika had preferred to remain at home all these past months. If the truth be known, each of us would have given anything to be in her place.

⁷⁴⁷ Book of Jasher 44:33
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁴⁸ Book of Jasher 44:34
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁴⁹ Book of Jasher 44:35
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

ZULEIKA, POTIPHAR'S WIFE

The day that the Nile overflowed its banks was a national holiday. My husband and I usually spent the day worshipping in the temple, accompanied by all the members of our household. Realizing that this was my chance to be alone with Joseph, I excused myself from joining my husband by claiming ill-health and asked that Joseph remain behind to attend me.⁷⁵⁰

By now I was desperate. Since neither seduction, aphrodisiacs, flattery, bribery nor cunning had succeeded in persuading Joseph to have relations with me, I decided to try force. First, I threatened him with imprisonment. When there was no response, I seized a knife and threatened to kill him. Joseph merely remarked that Yahweh would save him.⁷⁵¹

Then I threatened to kill Potiphar, so that I would be free to marry him. Aghast, Joseph replied,

“It’s bad enough that you want me to commit adultery,
but now you want me to become an accessory to murder too?”⁷⁵²

I played my last card, crying out,
“I’ll hang myself, or throw myself down a well or over a cliff
if you don’t agree to sleep with me.”

Startled, Joseph replied, “What’s wrong with you? Think of your children.”

My reaction was completely different to what he must have expected.

“If you care so much for me and my children, then you must love me!

It’s enough for me to know that you care.

At least I can hope that one day you will give yourself to me.”⁷⁵³

ZULEIKA, POTIPHAR'S WIFE

⁷⁵⁰ Genesis 39:11 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8234/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ז' [איקונין של אביו ראה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 36a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_36.html

Book of Jasher 44:47-48

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁵¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר י' [גם במאסר עמד יוסף בניסיון]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

Book of Jasher 44:53

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁵² מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ה' [טעונו של יוסף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety 5

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

⁷⁵³ 11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety 7

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

In a last, desperate act, I grabbed him by his tunic, shouting, “Make love with me!” only to find myself holding a torn piece of cloth as he fled from my presence.⁷⁵⁴

Only now did it occur to me that, when questioned about the hole in his tunic, Joseph might reveal what had happened, so I decided to get my story in first.⁷⁵⁵ When Potiphar came home, I quickly arranged for us to have intercourse. After we had finished, I revealed to my husband that our steward had tried to do the same, and that it was only because I had fought him off that he had failed.⁷⁵⁶

I held out the piece of cloth, crying,
“See! This is a piece of his tunic, torn when I tried to stop him.
You have to punish him,” I pleaded, tears running down my cheeks.
“Not only has he had the effrontery to raise his eyes to his mistress,
but has proved ungrateful for all you have done.”⁷⁵⁷

When Potiphar saw the piece of cloth, he didn’t doubt for a moment that I was telling the truth. He didn’t even bother to check what I had said, but ordered Joseph to be whipped.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁴ Genesis 39:12

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ח [ויצא החוצה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

Book of Jasher 44:53-54

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁷⁵⁵ Genesis 39:13-15 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8234/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true

Book of Jasher 44:55-60

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁷⁵⁶ Genesis 39:19 Rashi commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8234/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישב פרשה פז: יוסף בבית פוטיפר ט [יוסף נאסר]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/87.htm>

⁷⁵⁷ Genesis 39:16-18

Book of Jasher 44:61

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁵⁸ Book of Jasher 44:62

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Even so, eventually Joseph's cries of innocence must have sown a seed of doubt in Potiphar's mind, for he ordered our servants to take Joseph to the priests for judgment.⁷⁵⁹

NARRATOR

Accused of attempted rape, Joseph protested his innocence, asking for his tunic to be brought in evidence. When the priests saw that the front of the tunic was torn, they realized that Zuleika must have been pulling Jacob towards her, instead of grabbing his tunic from behind as he fled.⁷⁶⁰

To preserve the reputation of the wife of Pharaoh's chief official, they said nothing but ordered Joseph thrown into prison.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁹ Book of Jasher 44:63-68

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

NARRATOR

⁷⁶⁰ Book of Jasher 44:69-75

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

⁷⁶¹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 4:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Book of Jasher 44:76-80

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/jasher.html#CH44>

11 The Testament of Joseph Concerning Sobriety: 8

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0801.htm>

ASENATH, JOSEPH'S WIFE

I was an abandoned baby who had the good fortune to be adopted by a rich but childless couple. My father, the High Priest of On, often told me the story of how, one day, as he was leaving the temple of On, he heard a baby crying. That baby was me. He instructed his servants to bring me to him. Noticing a gold disc hanging from a chain round my neck, he remarked,

“She must be the daughter of a great man.

Take her to my house and find a wet nurse to look after her.”

From then on, he and his wife had raised me as their daughter. I lived in seclusion in a suite of seven rooms on the top floor of my parent's town house in On, attended by my maidservants.⁷⁶²

At the time my story begins, I was about eighteen years of age and still unmarried. Tall, beautiful and graceful, it was said that I was the fairest in the land. I was so renowned for my beauty, that all the young sons of the nobility, and even royalty, sought my hand in marriage. The only man in whom I was interested was Pharaoh's eldest son. I knew that he wanted me as his wife and that, because I wasn't the daughter of a king, his father objected.⁷⁶³

One day my father summoned me, took my hand and said,

“My child, I have good news.

The greatest man in Egypt after Pharaoh is coming to visit us.

Pharaoh holds him in the highest esteem.

Like you, he is devout, discriminating and unmarried,

a man of great wisdom and knowledge,

and obviously favored by the gods.

My intention is to offer you to him as his wife.”⁷⁶⁴

ASENATH, JOSEPH'S WIFE

⁷⁶² Joseph and Aseneth 2

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁶³ Joseph and Aseneth 1

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁶⁴ Joseph and Aseneth 3

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

I knew exactly who he was talking about. Everyone had heard of Joseph, the Canaanite slave who had risen to the highest position in the land. I was furious, so furious that at first I could not speak. Only after I had mastered my emotions did I reply,

“How can you even think of doing such a thing?
Would you hand me over to a man who was once a fugitive and a slave?
Isn't Joseph a shepherd's son from the land of Canaan,
and wasn't he abandoned by his own family?
Is this not the same man who had intercourse with his mistress,
as a result of which his master had him thrown in prison?
No! I will only marry Pharaoh's son who one day will rule the earth!”⁷⁶⁵

I witnessed Joseph's arrival from my upstairs window. My parents and all the other members of our household were outside, waiting to greet him. The gates opened and Joseph entered, seated in a chariot made of gold, drawn by four white horses. Dressed in a white tunic and purple robe, there was a crown on his head, a royal scepter in one hand and an olive branch in the other.⁷⁶⁶

When I saw Joseph's face, I felt as if I had been struck by a bolt of lightning. My stomach turned over, my legs went limp and my whole body trembled. I had never seen such beauty and splendor in a man. What a fool I had been to tell my father I would never marry him! Now I would give anything just to be his slave.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁵ Joseph and Aseneth 4
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁶⁶ Joseph and Aseneth 5
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁶⁷ Joseph and Aseneth 6
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

The next thing I knew, my mother came to escort me downstairs to meet our guest who, it appeared, had seen me peering out the window. I felt so ashamed that I could barely look him in the eye.

My father said, "Asenath, you may address Joseph as your brother."
I said to Joseph, "Welcome, brother. May God bless you and favor you."
Joseph replied, "And you."
Then my father said, "You may kiss your brother."
As I stepped nearer, Joseph raised his hand to stop me, explaining,
"Forgive me. My religion does not allow me to kiss any woman,
except those of my family.
Although your father has permitted me the rights of a brother,
I cannot treat you as my sister, because you are not of my faith."
I was so upset that I cried out loud and stared at Joseph, tears in my eyes.
Seeing this, Joseph must have taken pity on me.
He placed his right hand on my head and intoned,
"Yahweh, I beg You to bless this woman
as if she were one of Your chosen people." ⁷⁶⁸

Overjoyed to hear such words, in spite of my happiness I felt very frightened. For, from the moment I had heard Joseph speaking of his God, my body had turned ice cold.

Soon after our conversation Joseph left, promising to return a week later.⁷⁶⁹ I don't really understand what happened during the days that followed. The only way I can describe it, is that I underwent some sort of religious conversion.

⁷⁶⁸ Joseph and Aseneth 8
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁶⁹ Joseph and Aseneth 9
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

ONE OF ASENATH'S UNNAMED MAIDSERVANTS

I was one of seven maidservants who attended our mistress, the daughter of Pentephres, the priest of On. An only child, she was spoiled and arrogant. We were hard pressed to satisfy her every whim. I shall never forget when she changed so completely that it was difficult to believe she was the same person.

It began the day Pharaoh's vizier paid us a visit. I don't know exactly what passed between them, but after he left, my mistress locked herself in her room and refused to let us in. Standing outside with my ear to the door, I listened to her groans, before calling out,

"Mistress! Whatever's the matter?

Open the door and let us in.

Perhaps we can help."

The answer from the other side of the door was,

"I've a violent headache and am resting in bed.

I haven't the strength to open the door. Go to bed!"

The next morning she still refused to open the door. Somewhat alarmed, I consulted Asenath's mother who, accustomed to her daughter's tantrums, merely shrugged her shoulders and told me not to worry. Asenath would soon get over whatever it was that had annoyed her. Then she and our master left for their country estate, leaving us to deal with the situation alone.

The next thing we knew, Asenath started throwing her most valuable possessions out of the window into the courtyard below. These included her most expensive robes and jewelry. To this sort of behavior we were accustomed, but when I found broken pieces of her household gods on the ground beneath her window, I was really scared. For this was sacrilege, subject to the direst of punishments.

After this there was no sound of movement in her room for the next six days. Each day we banged on the door, begging her to let us in and feed her. Our entreaties were in vain. All we could hear was muttering coming from the other side of the door. This, at least, told us that she was still alive.⁷⁷⁰

ONE OF ASENATH'S UNNAMED MAIDSERVANTS

⁷⁷⁰ Joseph and Aseneth 10

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

And then, suddenly, it was over. ⁷⁷¹ Asenath opened the door and told us to come in. She was in a terrible state, thin as a wand, her hair in a mess and wearing a filthy, black robe. We stood there, rooted to the ground in shock. She told us to prepare a bath and dress her in her wedding gown. ⁷⁷²

From that day forth, our mistress treated us with the utmost consideration, more like friends than maidservants. We gladly continued to serve her, even after her marriage to Pharaoh's vizier.

⁷⁷¹ Joseph and Aseneth 11
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁷² Joseph and Aseneth 14
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

ASENATH, JOSEPH'S WIFE

On Joseph's return, I went out to welcome him, dressed as a bride. A change must have come over him too, for he embraced me in full view of my servants.⁷⁷³ Despite his protests, I insisted on washing his feet myself, saying,

“From now on, only I will wash your feet.”⁷⁷⁴

My parents returned from their country estate to find me sitting with Joseph, dressed in my wedding gown. Beside himself with joy, my father said to Joseph,

“To-morrow I will invite the nobility of Egypt to celebrate your wedding, and Asenath will become your wife.”

Joseph replied, “Before our wedding can take place, as Pharaoh's vizier, I must first obtain his blessing.

Therefore, you must accompany Asenath and myself to Pharaoh's palace.”⁷⁷⁵

Naturally Pharaoh was greatly relieved that his son, heir to the throne of Egypt, would no longer be able to pester him to marry a commoner, even if she was the daughter of the High Priest of On. Therefore, without hesitation, he gave his gracious consent to our union and we were married in the greatest splendor.⁷⁷⁶

Within a short space of time I bore Joseph two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

⁷⁷⁷

ASENATH, JOSEPH'S WIFE

⁷⁷³ Joseph and Aseneth 19

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁷⁴ Joseph and Aseneth 20

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁷⁵ Joseph and Aseneth 20

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁷⁶ Genesis 41:45

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Ch. 6:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Book of Jubilees:10

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/40.htm>

Joseph and Aseneth 21

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

⁷⁷⁷ Genesis 41:50-52

Joseph and Aseneth 21

<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

Fourteen years had passed since Joseph had predicted a great famine and, now, his prediction had finally come true. Fortunately for the people of Egypt, Joseph had made sure that there was enough grain in Pharaoh's granaries to feed everyone, even foreigners from other lands who came to buy.⁷⁷⁸ Among them were Joseph's brothers.⁷⁷⁹ He recognized them immediately for they had hardly changed, whereas he had grown from a boy into a man.⁷⁸⁰

Joseph did not reveal his identity immediately. By using an interpreter to communicate with his brothers, he pretended he did not speak their language.⁷⁸¹ He even accused them of being spies. When they protested their innocence, he demanded that they prove their story by bringing him their youngest brother, Benjamin, who had remained in Canaan with their father. His brothers reacted as though he had condemned their father to death.⁷⁸²

When Joseph saw Benjamin, he was so overcome that he had to leave the room. He explained to me that they shared the same mother.⁷⁸³ After composing himself, he returned and ordered a meal to be served, seating his brothers according to age. I could see them whispering amongst themselves, no doubt asking each other how could Joseph possibly know such a thing.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁷⁸ Genesis 41:48-59, 56-57

Sefer ha-Yashar Ch. 50:8

https://archive.org/stream/cu31924088174754/cu31924088174754_djvu.txt

⁷⁷⁹ Genesis 42:1-5

⁷⁸⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 88a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_88.html

Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 27b

http://www.halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_27.html

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_39.html

⁷⁸¹ Genesis 42:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8237/jewish/Chapter-42.htm#showrashi=true

⁷⁸² Genesis 42:14-16

⁷⁸³ Genesis 43:29-30

⁷⁸⁴ Genesis 43:33-34

My husband was not yet finished. Before he revealed who he was, he wanted to test his brothers one last time, so he arranged for one of our goblets to be hidden in Benjamin's sack of grain, sending our steward to arrest him.⁷⁸⁵ When Joseph sentenced Benjamin to slavery, one of his brothers volunteered to take his place - anything to avoid leaving Benjamin in Egypt, for it would kill their father. This proved that they had learned their lesson. Never would they treat Benjamin as they had once treated Joseph, in spite of the fact Benjamin was now his father's favorite, just as Joseph had been before him.⁷⁸⁶

Joseph could take no more. After ordering all our servants to leave the room, he drew a deep breath and said in fluent Hebrew,

“I am Joseph, your brother.”

There was absolute silence. Then they all started talking at once. Joseph's reunion with his brothers was the most moving thing I have ever seen.⁷⁸⁷

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph had been reunited with his family, he suggested they all come to live in the most fertile land that Egypt could offer, the land of Goshen.⁷⁸⁸ Joseph's father, Jacob, arrived with almost seventy members of his family.⁷⁸⁹ Joseph was there to meet them in person.⁷⁹⁰

Eventually Joseph took me and our sons to meet his family. When we arrived in Goshen, his brothers were waiting to welcome us. They led us to their father's tent, where he sat with his two concubine-wives at his side, looking every bit like the father of a great tribe. Helped by his wives, Jacob rose to his feet to kiss us and bless us. I felt proud to be the daughter-in-law of such a man.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁵ Genesis 44:1-14

⁷⁸⁶ Genesis 44:33-34

⁷⁸⁷ Genesis 45:1-4

⁷⁸⁸ Genesis 45:16-20

⁷⁸⁹ Genesis 46:26-27

⁷⁹⁰ Genesis 46:29

⁷⁹¹ Joseph and Aseneth 22
<http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/translat.htm>

NARRATOR

Asenath was considered one of the devout women converts to the Israelite faith.⁷⁹² The fact that a man as important as Joseph had been prepared to marry a non-Israelite convert, encouraged his people to act more kindly towards them. Joseph was not the only leader of his people to make such a marriage. Moses married Zipporah, Joshua married Rahab and Boaz married Ruth.⁷⁹³

NARRATOR

⁷⁹² מדרש תדשא עמוד 67

<http://hebrewbooks.org/21342>

<http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?aits=1&req=21342&st=%u05D0%u05E1%u05E0%u05EA>

⁷⁹³ מדרש רבה מגילת קהלת פרשת ח א י ובכך ראיתי רשעים קבורים ובאו

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/kohelet/8-2.htm#8>

DINAH, DAUGHTER OF JACOB

After Job's death, I waited to see my daughters married before returning to Canaan, hoping to discover the fate of the daughter who had been so cruelly taken from me at birth. So much had changed since I had left. My half-brother, Joseph, had disappeared in mysterious circumstances, leaving my father inconsolable. No-one knew what had become of my daughter.

A terrible famine now began to ravage the land. It was decided to send some of my brothers to Egypt where, it was rumored, Pharaoh's viceroy had the foresight to store grain during the preceding years of plenty. Perhaps the Egyptians would sell us some, to tide us over until the rains came. All my brothers, apart from the youngest, Benjamin, set out on the long journey south.⁷⁹⁴

It was several weeks before we saw them again. The story they had to tell was unbelievable. Arrested as spies, in order to establish whether or not they were telling the truth, the viceroy had demanded to see Benjamin. To ensure their return, he had Simeon imprisoned as a hostage.⁷⁹⁵

Hearing this, our father broke down. It was pitiful to see. He cried out,
"Isn't it enough that I have lost Joseph and Simeon?
Must I lose Benjamin too?
Will there be no-one left to remind me of my beloved Rachel?"⁷⁹⁶

Now, we all knew that out of the thirteen of us, Jacob preferred the two sons of Rachel, just as he always preferred their mother to his other wives. It didn't make us feel better to be reminded of the fact.⁷⁹⁷ It was Judah who finally convinced our father to let Benjamin accompany them to Egypt, promising to bring the boy back alive.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁴ Genesis 42:1-5

⁷⁹⁵ Genesis 42:29-35

⁷⁹⁶ Genesis 42:36-38

⁷⁹⁷ Genesis 42:37-38

⁷⁹⁸ Genesis 43:1-10

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

When I heard that my uncles had returned from Egypt, where they had gone to buy grain, I ran out to meet them, hugging and kissing each one in turn. To my surprise, they told me there was a favor they wanted to ask of me. I must admit to being somewhat mystified. What favor could a young girl like me perform for such respected men as my uncles?

They sat me down and gave me a harp. At first I thought they wanted me to play for them, until they explained that they wanted me to sing a special song to my grandfather, one they would teach me.⁷⁹⁹

After learning the words and the melody, I went to Grandfather's tent to sing to him. As usual, Jacob was looking forlorn, as he had done all the time I had known him. I knew that he mourned one of my uncles who had disappeared as a child. Seated before him, I began to finger the strings of my harp. Then I added the words my uncles had taught me:

“Uncle Joseph is alive and well in Egypt, where he has become a great ruler.”

I sang these words over and over again, as softly and sweetly as I could. At first Grandfather appeared not to hear, but, gradually, the vacant look on his face was replaced by one of interest and then by a look of joy. His eyes shining with unshed tears, he turned to me and said,

“My child, your singing has brought me great comfort.

A talent such as yours should never die.

Please carry on singing to me.”⁸⁰⁰

As I resumed my singing, my uncles entered the tent, dressed in sumptuous garments and bearing all manner of gifts. The flaps to the tent were drawn aside, so that Grandfather could see the horses, chariots and servants that they had brought back with them from Egypt, waiting patiently outside.

After my uncles affirmed the words I had sung to Grandfather, I saw that he was quite overcome with emotion. Eventually he said,

“It is enough for me that my son, Joseph, is still alive.

I will go and see him before I die.”⁸⁰¹

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

⁷⁹⁹ The Book of Jasher 90-93

https://archive.org/stream/cu31924088174754/cu31924088174754_djvu.txt

⁸⁰⁰ The Book of Jasher 94-99

https://archive.org/stream/cu31924088174754/cu31924088174754_djvu.txt

⁸⁰¹ The Book of Jasher 100-105

https://archive.org/stream/cu31924088174754/cu31924088174754_djvu.txt

DINAH, DAUGHTER OF JACOB

The story of how the viceroy of Egypt broke down when he saw Benjamin ⁸⁰² and revealed that he was our long-lost brother, Joseph, is so well known, that I won't repeat it here. ⁸⁰³ The outcome was that Pharaoh invited us to Egypt to survive the famine. ⁸⁰⁴

One could call this a happy ending, but the best was yet to come. When Joseph introduced me to his wife, an Egyptian woman named Asenath, the daughter of a provincial governor and high priest named Pentephres, there was something about her that didn't make sense. She didn't look Egyptian, more like once of us.

When I questioned her, she told me that she was not the natural daughter of Pentephres, but a foundling. Then she showed me the disc she had been wearing when she was found. I could not believe my eyes. It was the same gold disc that I had hung round her neck when she was taken from me so many years before. ⁸⁰⁵

Overcome with emotion, I could barely speak. In the midst of my tears, I explained the source of the disc and told her that I was her real mother. It was a terrible shock, both for Asenath and for Joseph, for my daughter had married her own uncle. Fortunately, at that time, there were no laws against such a union.

And so, after so many years of heartache, I was reunited with my daughter, the daughter of my shame, now the wife of the man who held the highest position in Egypt. As for my brothers, they didn't know where to put themselves, they were so embarrassed.

DINAH, DAUGHTER OF JACOB

⁸⁰² Genesis 43:29-30

⁸⁰³ Genesis 45:1-15

⁸⁰⁴ Genesis 45:16-18

⁸⁰⁵ מדרש אגדה (בובר) בראשית פרשת מקץ פרק מא סימן מה [מה] צפנת פענח
http://www.responsa.co.il/searchg/%D7%93%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%94%20%D7%A9%D7%9B%D7%9D_page2.aspx

תשובה ל"כתב חידה"

http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pagefeed/hebrewbooks_org_50386_44.pdf

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

NARRATOR

The following years were the happiest Dinah had ever known, surrounded by her daughter, Asenath, half-brother, Joseph, and grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim. In accordance with her last request, when she died, her brother, Simeon, took her bones to Canaan, burying them next to the graves of her two aunts, Rachel and Bilhah, on the road to Ephrat.⁸⁰⁶

NARRATOR

⁸⁰⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת ישלח פרשה פ: מעשה דינה י [שמעון ולוי בשכם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rab1/80.htm>

The Book of Jubilees 15-16

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/34.htm>

Part 6
The Exodus from Egypt

CHAPTER 17
PRINCE MOSES
The Book of Exodus

Time and again in the Bible it is stated that Jacob's descendants are Yahweh's chosen people, for whom He is willing to perform miracles that will astonish the world. In return, He asks only that they worship no other god and keep His 613 laws. The following chapters tell the story of a Hebrew child who became an Egyptian prince, a humble shepherd, the mouthpiece of Yahweh, a leader of men, a law-giver and the greatest of the Jewish prophets.

Shifra and Puah, two Hebrew midwives, narrate how they disobeyed Pharaoh's order to kill all new-born Hebrew males (Exodus Chapter 1).

Jochebed tells us how she and her husband, Amram, hid the infant Moses for as long as possible, before setting him afloat in a basket of bulrushes on the River Nile (Exodus Chapter 2, embellished by details from Tractate Sotah, Folio 12 of the *Babylonian Talmud*).

Miriam, sister of Moses and a prophetess in her own right, continues the story, explaining how she arranged for her mother to be hired by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse her baby brother (Exodus Chapter 2).

Bithia, or Batya, is the name of the Egyptian princess who raised Moses. Her name appears in *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*. The tradition that she was a leper derives from the *Great Commentary on Exodus*, which provides details of Moses's childhood.

The story of Tharbis, Moses's little-known Ethiopian wife, is taken from Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*.

SHIFRA AND PUAH, TWO HEBREW MIDWIVES

Like my mother before me, I was a midwife, as was my friend, Puah.⁸⁰⁷ As midwives, it was our job to cut the umbilical cord, straighten the baby's limbs, bathe it, rub salt on its skin so that it would harden and, finally, swaddle it tightly.⁸⁰⁸ Puah and I divided the work between us. Puah whispered words of encouragement in the mother's ear and cooed to the new-born child, while I straightened the new-born's limbs and helped stillborn babies to breathe.⁸⁰⁹

As long as I can remember midwives have helped to deliver babies, especially in difficult cases.⁸¹⁰ Yet in Egypt, where the numbers of our people rapidly increased, Puah and I were rarely called in to help.⁸¹¹ Most of our women preferred to give birth by themselves, with friends or relatives helping out.⁸¹² We also faced competition from Egyptian midwives. Whereas our laws prevented Puah and me from providing midwifery services to Egyptian women, there was no law preventing Hebrew women from availing themselves of the services of Egyptian midwives, though those who did so took a great risk.

CHAPTER 17 PRINCE MOSES

SHIFRA AND PUAH, TWO HEBREW MIDWIVES

⁸⁰⁷ Exodus Chapter 1:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

⁸⁰⁸ Ezekiel Chapter 16:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16114/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

⁸⁰⁹ Exodus Chapter 1:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות [המילדות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

מדרש קהלת רבה סדרא תנינא פרשה ז ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

⁸¹⁰ Genesis Chapter 35:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8230/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב ח [כל שבט ושבט נולדה תאומתו עמו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

⁸¹¹ Exodus Chapter 1:15,19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

⁸¹² I Samuel Chapter 4:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15833/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

I once heard an argument between two Egyptian midwives, in which one called the other “a Jewish midwife, the daughter of a Jewish midwife.”

The other retorted by saying,

“I hope you suffer as many misfortunes
as I have dumped Hebrew children into the river.”

As a result of attitudes like this, most of our women avoided Egyptian midwives. The few who hired them took the precaution of ensuring that there were other Hebrew women present to protect their new-born babies.⁸¹³

By now we were no longer free but slaves, forced to build the massive monuments for which Egypt was so famous.⁸¹⁴ Recently, owing to the increase in the number of bricks we were required to produce, there had been a decrease in the number of Hebrew babies born.⁸¹⁵ To meet their quota of bricks, our women had fallen into the habit of sleeping in the fields near the building site at night, instead of returning home to their husbands.

To solve the problem, a plan was devised whereby our women went down to the river to fill their pitchers partly with fish and partly with water. After cooking the fish and boiling the water, they joined their husbands, helped them to wash, eat and drink, before having intercourse with them under the stars. Just before giving birth, they disappeared into the nearby orchards to deliver their babies themselves.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹³ Babylonian Talmud: Avodah Zarah 26a
http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Avodah_Zarah.pdf

⁸¹⁴ Exodus Chapter 1:13-14 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9:1
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸¹⁵ Exodus Chapter 1:11 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html
Parshat Shemot In-Depth Exodus 1:1-6:1
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

⁸¹⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

One day Puah and I were summoned to appear before Pharaoh. We were terrified. What could Pharaoh want with two insignificant Hebrew midwives like us?
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He began by asking, “I have heard it said that you are the most knowledgeable of your people’s midwives. Is this true?”

I answered,

“Great Pharaoh, it is true that we are very experienced at what we do.”

Pharaoh replied, “Is that so?”

For example, do you know that when a woman squats to deliver her child, her thighs are as cold as ice?”

“No, great Pharaoh,” I replied.

“Do you know that a male child is born facing down, while a female child is born facing up?”

“No, great Pharaoh,” I answered again, unable to believe my ears.

I thought I knew everything about midwifery, but Pharaoh had obviously studied under an expert.⁸¹⁸

Then he finally got to the point.

“It is my wish that all new-born Hebrew males be put to death.

Females may live. See to it!”⁸¹⁹

Both of us were struck dumb. Then Puah, who was something of a hothead, reacted by crying out,

“How can you ask us to do anything so wicked?”

I gasped with shock. Before Pharaoh had her dragged off to be executed, I stepped forward and begged,

“Please, great Pharaoh, take no notice.

She’s just a foolish woman who doesn’t know what she’s saying.

Besides, I need her to carry out your orders.”⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁷ Exodus Chapter 1:15

⁸¹⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות יד [ציווי פרעה למיילדות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

⁸¹⁹ Exodus Chapter 1:16 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

⁸²⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו [המיילדות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Pharaoh's plan was quite ridiculous. Whoever had advised him on this course of action was a fool. He should have given an order to kill all new-born females, not males. Then, in time, there would be no babies born at all! Instead, he left Hebrew females alive to reproduce in great numbers, since, in our patriarchal culture, one man could impregnate any number of women.⁸²¹

Needless to say, Puah and I had no intention of carrying out Pharaoh's order. Not only did we allow the males to live, but we even supplied their mothers with food and drink. In fact, we took special care of the males, fearing that, if any of them died, we would be blamed for their deaths. As a result, there was not one case of infant mortality among our people.⁸²²

It didn't take long before Pharaoh discovered what we were up to. When called to account, we had our excuse ready. In an injured tone we explained that, unlike Egyptian women, Hebrew women are as skilled as we midwives in delivering their babies and rarely ask for help.

To my amazement he accepted this sorry excuse. When I think about it, it's a miracle we escaped with our lives.⁸²³

⁸²¹ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות יד [ציווי פרעה למיילדות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸²² Exodus Chapter 1:16-17 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות טו [ותחזיין את הילדים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸²³ Exodus Chapter 1:18-19 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9862/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true
[כִּי חִיּוֹת הַנְּחָשׁ ... וַיִּיטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדוֹת]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

JOCHEBED, THE MOTHER OF MOSES

When my grandfather, Jacob, led our tribe from Canaan to Egypt in search of a livelihood, my mother gave birth to me as she was crossing the border.⁸²⁴ My life was uneventful until I married my nephew, Amram,⁸²⁵ to whom I bore two children, a daughter named Miriam and a son named Aaron.⁸²⁶

Learning of Pharaoh's order to murder all new-born Hebrew males, Amram announced,

“What's the point of having children, if our sons are destined to die?

It's best we live apart so that we don't have any more sons,
rather than experience the agony of watching their deaths.”

His decision came too late. I was already pregnant with our third child.⁸²⁷

Since the other Hebrew husbands took Amram's lead in everything, they too began living apart from their wives. If it wasn't for little Miriam, I don't know what would have happened. She was such a precocious child that she persuaded her father to change his mind.⁸²⁸ Miriam and Aaron were so eager to see us reunited that they escorted me to Amram, dancing and singing all the way.⁸²⁹

JOCHEBED, THE MOTHER OF MOSES

⁸²⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 120a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_120.html

⁸²⁵ Exodus Chapter 2:1

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות יט [וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את בת לוי]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸²⁶ Exodus Chapter 6:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9867/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 58b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_58.html

⁸²⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו [המילדות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸²⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו [המילדות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

פסיקתא רבתי עמוד 9-388

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/39324>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸²⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

Six months later, our third child was born. The whole house filled with light. Taking it as a good omen that he was born already circumcised, we named him Tuvia meaning 'good'.⁸³⁰

The Egyptians operated a network of informers among our people who would report every marriage to the authorities. Nine months later, Egyptian soldiers would arrive at the newlyweds' house to execute their new-born son.

The Egyptians had thought up a clever ruse to flush out hidden Hebrew babies. On their patrols they would bring with them a baby from an Egyptian home. When the Egyptian baby cried or babbled, the Hebrew babies would respond, revealing both their existence and their location. This enabled the Egyptians to enter the house, seize the baby and throw it in the Nile.⁸³¹

Because I had been three months pregnant at the time Amram and I were reunited, I had three months grace before the Egyptians arrived to take my new-born son.⁸³² During that time Amram and I agonized over what to do.⁸³³ When we could wait no longer, we decided to place our faith in destiny.

⁸³⁰ Exodus Chapter 2:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כ [הולדת משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸³¹ Song of Songs Chapter 2:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16446/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸³² Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

Babylonian Talmud: Niddah 38b

http://www.halakhah.com/niddah/niddah_38.html

Babylonian Talmud: Rosh HaShana 11a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9:4

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸³³ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו כ [הולדת משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

I prepared a basket out of bulrushes. Why bulrushes and not wood you ask? On encountering a hard object, wood might easily split open, whereas bulrushes, being soft and pliable, yield but don't break. I waterproofed the basket by coating the outside with a layer of mud, followed by a layer of pitch to hide the smell. After gently placing Tuvia in the basket, I covered him with my most valuable possession - my bridal shawl. Then I placed the basket among the reeds by the riverbank,⁸³⁴ telling Miriam to keep watch nearby.⁸³⁵

The next thing I knew, Miriam came running home, calling me to accompany her down to the river, where Pharaoh's daughter had found a baby that needed feeding. I immediately realized she meant Tuvia.⁸³⁶

We ran down to the river, where the distraught princess was vainly trying to pacify the crying child.⁸³⁷ Thrusting him into my arms, she ordered me to feed him. Naturally Tuvia immediately took my nipple and started sucking noisily. Looking very relieved, Pharaoh's daughter told me to take the baby home and nurse him.⁸³⁸ She had no idea that she was handing him over to his own mother. In this way I ended up not only having my son back, but being paid to feed him.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁴ Exodus Chapter 2:3

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כא [תבת גומא]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸³⁵ Exodus Chapter 2:4

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸³⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו כה [משה סירב לינוק מן המצריות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸³⁷ Exodus Chapter 2:8

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸³⁸ Exodus Chapter 2:9

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸³⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו כה [משה סירב לינוק מן המצריות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

After breastfeeding Tuvia for two years,⁸⁴⁰ I had no choice but to return him to Pharaoh's daughter who, it must be admitted, treated him like her own son.⁸⁴¹ Among our people it is said that, although it was me who bore Tuvia, it was Bithia who reared him,⁸⁴² and therefore he was called by the name she gave him, Moses, which is Egyptian for 'drawn from the water'.⁸⁴³

NARRATOR

The story is told of a rabbi who, during a particularly long and boring sermon, woke his dozing pupils by suddenly announcing,

“Once there was a woman in Egypt
who gave birth to 600,000 children at the same time.”

When asked to explain, he replied that this superwoman was Jochebed who, by giving birth to Moses, had actually been responsible for saving 600,000 Hebrew lives.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו כו [משה בבית פרעה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸⁴¹ Exodus Chapter 2:9-10
מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כו [משה בבית פרעה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸⁴² I Chronicles Chapter 4:17-18 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16524/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html
Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 13a
<http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

⁸⁴³ Exodus Chapter 2:10
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9:6
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II
מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא – פרשת ויקרא פרשה א: נבואתו של משה ג [עשרת שמותיו של משה (ד"ה)
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/1.htm>
Parshat Shemot In-Depth Exodus 1:1-6:1
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

NARRATOR

⁸⁴⁴ מדרש רבה – מגילת שיר השירים פרשה ד [עיניך יונים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/shir/4-2.htm>

MIRIAM, THE SISTER OF MOSES

Born with the power of prophecy, I experienced my first vision just before my baby brother, Tuvia, was born, when I predicted that he would become a great man.⁸⁴⁵ Of course, because I was only seven years old and a girl, no-one paid much attention.

When little Tuvia was born, the whole house filled with light. My father kissed my forehead and exclaimed,
“Miriam, your vision has come true!”⁸⁴⁶

We managed to hide him till he was three months old, then, unable to keep him a secret any longer, we crept down to the river where my mother placed Tuvia in a little covered basket and set it among the reeds.⁸⁴⁷ As she did so, my father smacked me about the head, saying,
“Where is your vision now?”⁸⁴⁸

MIRIAM, THE SISTER OF MOSES

⁸⁴⁵ מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל לספר שמות [טו, כ]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/mehilta/shmot15.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸⁴⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות כב [ותתצב אחותו מרחוק]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸⁴⁷ Exodus Chapter 2:3

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות כא [תבת גומא]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁴⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות כב [ותתצב אחותו מרחוק]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a – 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 13a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_13.html

A stubborn child, I paid no attention. Convinced of the truth of my vision, I kept watch nearby.⁸⁴⁹ From my hiding place among the reeds, I saw Pharaoh's daughter come down to the river to bathe and, after finding the basket, heard her ask for a wet nurse.⁸⁵⁰

I ran to fetch my mother⁸⁵¹ who was ordered to take care of Tuvia until he was weaned,⁸⁵² after which she returned him to the princess. So you see, my vision did come true after all!⁸⁵³

⁸⁴⁹ Exodus Chapter 2:4
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁵⁰ Exodus Chapter 2:7 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות כה [משה סירב לינוק מן המצריות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁵¹ Exodus Chapter 2:8 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁵² Exodus Chapter 2:9 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁵³ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

BITHIA, THE ADOPTIVE MOTHER OF MOSES

Although born a princess of Egypt, all my father's power and wealth were unable to protect me from the scourge of leprosy. As a result, I was forced to live in seclusion, apart from the maidens who served me. Naturally I never married, nor bore any children. After so many years as a leper, albeit a rich one, I was more or less resigned to my fate.⁸⁵⁴

The leprosy made it painful to bathe in warm water, so I used to bathe in the cool waters of the River Nile.⁸⁵⁵ One day, noticing a basket among the reeds, I ordered my maidens to bring it to me.⁸⁵⁶ And then a miracle happened. The moment I touched the basket, my leprosy was cured!⁸⁵⁷

When I removed the lid, to my astonishment I found myself staring at a beautiful male child.⁸⁵⁸ Drawing aside the embroidered shawl that covered him, I saw that he was circumcised. I realized that he must be a Hebrew child, hidden among the reeds to save him from my father's cruel decree.

BITHIA, THE ADOPTIVE MOTHER OF MOSES

⁸⁵⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כג [בת פרעה מצילה את משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 48

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁸⁵⁵ Exodus Chapter 2:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9:5

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁵⁶ Exodus Chapter 2:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁵⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כג [בת פרעה מצילה את משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 48

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

⁸⁵⁸ Exodus Chapter 2:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

[הצלתו של משה] מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כד

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah Folio 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

Overwhelmed by compassion, I made up my mind to save him.⁸⁵⁹ My maidens, no less astonished than me, both at my miraculous recovery and at the discovery of the child, tried to dissuade me.

“Your Highness, when a king issues a decree,
the first to obey should be his own children and members of his household.

If you rescue this Hebrew child, you will be breaking your father’s law.”⁸⁶⁰

I silenced them with a withering look. How could I allow the source of a miracle to die?

The baby began to cry with hunger. The longer he cried, the more desperate I became. It was at this point that I spied a young Hebrew girl hiding among the reeds. I asked her if she knew where I could find a wet nurse. She told me her mother was still nursing a child and offered to call her.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁹ Exodus Chapter 2:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כד [הצלתו של משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁶⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כג [בת פרעה מצילה את משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

⁸⁶¹ Exodus Chapter 2:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כה [משה סירב לינוק מן המצריות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

The girl ran off and soon reappeared accompanied by her mother. ⁸⁶² When I saw that the child was prepared to suckle at the woman's breast, I ordered her to take him home, nurse him and return him to me after he was weaned. For this I would pay a handsome sum. ⁸⁶³

I loved Moses as my own son. He was so beautiful that it was difficult to turn your eyes away. Even my father was fond of him. One day, whilst sitting on his lap, Moses made a grab at my father's crown. Although it was done in all innocence, my father's astrologers took it as a bad omen and said,

“This is the child we warned you about.

If you do not kill him, he will grow up and take away your crown.”

I was horrified. I told them it was the act of an innocent child, nothing more. I begged my father not to listen.

One of the astrologers, a Midianite priest named Jethro, suggested a test. He said,

“The princess is right.

The boy is only a child and could have behaved quite innocently.

Test him by placing before him two bowls,
one filled with gold coins and one with red-hot coals.

If he reaches for the gold,

it will prove that he knows what he is doing and deserves to die.

But if he reaches for the coals,

then, clearly, he doesn't know what he's doing and deserves to live.”

No more eager to see my son killed than me, my father agreed.

⁸⁶² Exodus Chapter 2:8

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁶³ Exodus Chapter 2:9

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_12.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

With mounting horror I watched as Moses stretched out his hand toward the bowl of coins. At the last moment he hesitated and reached for the burning coals instead. Like any young child, he put one in his mouth, burning his poor little tongue. As a result, Moses suffered from a speech impediment for the rest of his life.⁸⁶⁴

Snatching him up to protect him from further harm, from then on I watched over Moses like a hawk. After formally adopting him, I presented him to my father as my legitimate son, heir to the throne of Egypt. Only then could I be certain that my son was safe.

When we were attacked by the Ethiopians the same astrologers who had warned my father against Moses, now decided that he was the only one who could save us. It was only after Moses had left for Ethiopia that I learned the truth. The reason why the astrologers had insisted on my son leading the Ethiopian campaign was because they had hoped he would be killed in battle!

⁸⁶⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כו [משה בבית פרעה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

English Translation

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/daughter-of-pharaoh-midrash-and-aggadah>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 9:6

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 40

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

Great Commentary on Exodus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

THARBIS, MOSES'S FIRST WIFE

My story begins at a time when my father was waging war with the Egyptians. A rumor reached us that an Egyptian army was on its way to Ethiopia, led by an Egyptian prince named Moses.

This Moses turned out to be very cunning. Instead of transporting his army by river, as everyone expected him to do, he marched his troops across a region known for its venomous snakes. These snakes possessed the most alarming properties. Not only were they able to rise up out of the ground, but they even flew through the air! To protect his men, Moses had brought along a number of ibis birds, the natural enemies of all snakes but harmless to humans. The ibis were released, ridding the region of snakes, and the Egyptian army was able to continue on its way unharmed.

As they continued their march south, the Egyptian soldiers did as our army had done, conquering the cities and killing their citizens. Realizing they could expect no mercy, those of our people who survived their depredations withdrew to the safety of our capital, Sheba. Built on an island at the confluence of two branches of the Nile, with strong retaining walls to protect it from the river tides, it could only be reached by boat.

The Egyptian army encamped on the riverbank opposite the city. From time to time, detachments would cross the river on rafts and try to scale our walls. Every time we managed to repel them. Moses almost always led the attack himself, and I grew increasingly impressed by his courage and ability.

Eventually I thought of a plan which would bring peace to both our countries and save us all. When I suggested it to my father, he agreed it was worth trying. I sent one of our most dependable and experienced negotiators to discuss terms with Moses. Moses accepted our offer, on condition that we surrendered the city and returned the booty we had taken. The agreement took immediate effect. What was the agreement? That Moses and I would marry, thereby uniting our two kingdoms.

After our wedding and the consummation of our marriage, Moses gave thanks to his God and returned to Egypt with his booty. That was the last I saw of my handsome and resourceful Egyptian prince - much to my sorrow. ⁸⁶⁵

THARBIS, MOSES'S FIRST WIFE

⁸⁶⁵ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 10:1-2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

CHAPTER 18
EXILE AND RETURN
The Book of Exodus

In this chapter, an Israelite wife named Shlomit reveals how she was raped in her sleep by her husband's Egyptian overseer. Her story, as it appears in the *Great Commentary on Exodus*, is an expansion of the episode described in Exodus Chapter 2, in which Moses kills an Egyptian overseer to save a Hebrew slave from a vicious beating. To escape punishment, Moses is forced to flee to Midian. The fate of the son who was born of Shlomit's rape by the Egyptian is related in Leviticus Chapter 24.

Zipporah, Moses's Midian wife, describes her marriage to Moses (Exodus Chapter 2). When Moses decided to return to Egypt, on the journey it was Zipporah who saved her husband's life (Exodus Chapter 4).

A collection of rules for the interpretation of the Book of Exodus, containing non-legal material, entitled the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, provides an explanation as to why Zipporah and her two sons did not take part in the Exodus.

Serach, the daughter of Jacob's son, Asher, reappears to tell us how, as a result of her longevity, she was the only person able to determine whether or not Moses was the one chosen by Yahweh to lead his people to freedom.

Bithia, Moses's adoptive mother, describes her reunion with the son she had not seen for years.

SHLOMIT, THE CAUSE OF MOSES'S EXILE

It was all a horrible mistake. Every morning at the crack of dawn, the Egyptian overseers would wake our men for work. Not content with calling the men from outside our houses, they would walk in as though they owned the place.

Late one evening, after we had retired for the night, the overseer responsible for waking my husband, Dathan, appeared and told him he was required for the night shift. After they left, I went back to sleep. I vaguely remember being woken by Dathan as he climbed into bed and had intercourse with me, before I drifted off to sleep again.

Then I heard Dathan say, "What did the Egyptian want?"
I jerked awake. "What Egyptian? There's no Egyptian!"
"The one I met coming out of the house just now."
I looked at him in horror, as the implication of what he had said sunk in.
It must have been the Egyptian overseer
who had lain with me while I was half-asleep.
By now Dathan's suspicions were aroused. "Did he touch you?"
I burst into tears. I begged his forgiveness.
I explained that I was so sleepy that
I didn't realize who was in bed with me. ⁸⁶⁶

Although it was well-known that the overseers often raped us women while our husbands were at work, people blamed me for what had happened, saying that I shouldn't have been so friendly. It was asking for trouble. Some even claimed that I had been a willing party to my own rape! ⁸⁶⁷

When the Egyptian realized his crime had been discovered, he did not hesitate to make my husband's life a misery, threatening to kill him if he went to the authorities. ⁸⁶⁸

CHAPTER 18 EXILE AND RETURN **SHLOMIT, THE CAUSE OF MOSES'S EXILE**

⁸⁶⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כח [משה תקן להם את השבת למנוחה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

<http://hebrewbooks.org/33212>

⁸⁶⁷ מדרש שכל טוב - שמות עמוד 18

⁸⁶⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כח [משה תקן להם את השבת למנוחה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

In the end Dathan was saved by the most unlikely person – Prince Moses himself – who happened to be passing as the Egyptian was beating the life out of him. Dathan described how the prince looked first one way and then the other, to check that no-one was looking, before striking the Egyptian a mighty blow that killed him on the spot. After burying the Egyptian in the sand, the prince swore Dathan to secrecy and left.⁸⁶⁹

Dathan, of course, couldn't be trusted to keep his mouth shut even for a second.⁸⁷⁰ Once word got out, the prince was forced to flee the country.⁸⁷¹

Nine months after the episode with the Egyptian, I bore a child. It was clear to both Dathan and me who was the father. My poor son! Our people would have nothing to do with him, claiming that as the son of the only Hebrew woman willing to have illicit relations with an Egyptian, he would turn out to be just as bad as me.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ Exodus 2:11-12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות כח [משה תקן להם את השבת למנוחה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Exodus 2:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁸⁷⁰ Exodus 2:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות ל [הויכוח בין משה לדתן ואבירם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸⁷¹ Exodus 2:14-15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות לא [וישמע פרעה ויברח משה מפני פרעה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 11:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

⁸⁷² מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה לב: פסולי קהל ה [בשביל ד' דברים נגאלו ישראל ממצרים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/32.htm>

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

He tried converting to our faith. Even this did not help, for when he tried to enter the encampment of the tribe of Dan, to which our family belonged, he was refused entry.⁸⁷³ I decided to bring the matter before the tribal elders. To my utter dismay, they said my son could never be one of us because he was a bastard.⁸⁷⁴

It seemed so unfair. Was this any way to treat a man who, through no fault of his own, was conceived out of an act of rape? If anyone was to blame, it was me for having been so naïve, not my son.

Unwanted, by the Egyptians for being part-Hebrew and by the Hebrews for being part-Egyptian, with nowhere to go, my son swore by the Holy Name, a curse so powerful that it resulted in his death.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ Numbers 2:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9930/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁸⁷⁴ Leviticus 24:11

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9925/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true

[מהיכן יצא המקלל?]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/32.htm>

⁸⁷⁵ Leviticus 24: Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9925/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

I was the eldest of seven daughters born to Jethro, the High Priest of Midian, a man highly respected, not only because of his position, but also because of his extensive knowledge of all religions, necessary among a people who worshipped many gods.

As time went on, my father underwent a crisis of faith and ceased worshipping our Midianite gods. Realizing he could not continue to serve as Midian's High Priest, he returned all the insignia of office and asked to be replaced. For this he was excommunicated and all of us placed under a ban. No one was allowed to work for us or, indeed, to have any contact with us whatsoever. With no-one else to tend our flocks, we girls were compelled to tend them ourselves, harried daily by the other shepherds.⁸⁷⁶

Our country of Midian received very little rainfall. In fact, because of the climate, most of our people lived in caves. Throughout the land, shepherds would compete over water for their flocks, sometimes coming to blows.⁸⁷⁷

Every evening, my six sisters and I would bring our flocks to the local well to drink, before penning them up for the night. One particular evening we were the first to arrive and were able to fill the troughs with water, undisturbed.⁸⁷⁸ We were just about to lead our animals to drink, when the other shepherds arrived and chased us away. Suddenly a stranger appeared out of nowhere, drove the shepherds off with his staff and helped us water our flocks.⁸⁷⁹

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

⁸⁷⁶ Exodus 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Exodus

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl06.htm>

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

⁸⁷⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 11:2

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁷⁸ Exodus 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁸⁷⁹ Exodus 2:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 11:2

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

Because our animals were the first to drink instead of the last, we arrived home much earlier than usual. When Father asked the reason for our early return, I explained,

“An Egyptian helped us.

He chased off the other shepherds and helped us water our flocks.”⁸⁸⁰

“So,” my father responded, “where is the stranger now?”

I told him that we had left him by the well.

“What!” exclaimed my father.

“Why did you leave him there?

Invite him home for a meal.

It’s the least he deserves.”⁸⁸¹

Before he finished speaking, I had flown out of the house to fetch the stranger before he disappeared.⁸⁸²

All that the stranger would tell us was that his name was Moses, that he was from Egypt – which we knew, anyway, from his attire – and that he sought work. To my delight, my father offered him a job as a shepherd.

⁸⁸⁰ Exodus 2:18-19

⁸⁸¹ Exodus 2:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 11

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁸² ילקוט שמעוני – שמות פרק ב סימן קסט [ב, כ]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=2&perek=2&mefareash=shimoni

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות לב [משה על יד הבאר ובנות יתרו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

We didn't talk very much, Moses and I, but from the looks that passed between us, it was soon obvious to everyone that we were in love. Therefore, it came as no surprise to anyone when he asked for my hand in marriage. My father replied,

“If you want to marry Zipporah, you must agree to two things.

First, you must promise not to leave Midian without my consent.”

Moses agreed.⁸⁸³

My father continued,

“Second, your first son must be brought up in the religion of my ancestors.

Any others may worship whom they please.”

Again Moses agreed.⁸⁸⁴

Time passed and I bore Moses two sons. The first Moses named Gershom, the second, Eliezer. We were surprised, for these were Hebrew names, not Egyptian ones.
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⁸⁸³ Exodus 2:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות לג [משה בבית יתרו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

⁸⁸⁴ מכילא דרבי ישמעאל - פרשה וישמע יתרו מסכתא דעמלק פרשה א עמוד 193

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38109>

⁸⁸⁵ Exodus 2:22

Exodus 18:3-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

After our marriage,⁸⁸⁶ Moses was placed in charge of my father's most prized possession - his flocks.⁸⁸⁷ My husband became a very skilled and conscientious shepherd.⁸⁸⁸ One day, while he was out in the pastures tending our flocks, a tiny kid ran away. Moses chased it to a shady place where he found it eagerly lapping from a pool of water. Night was approaching and the kid was very tired, so Moses hoisted it onto his shoulders and carried it back to the flock. This was one of many stories told about my compassionate husband.⁸⁸⁹

Then came the day that our lives changed forever, the day on which Moses returned from the pastures with the strangest of looks on his face. Reluctant at first to talk, eventually he told us that he was a Hebrew who, after killing an Egyptian, had been forced to flee Egypt. Having learned that a new Pharaoh sat on the throne, he wished to return to Egypt to be reunited with his family.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁶ Exodus 2:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

⁸⁸⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות לג [משה בבית יתרו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 11

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁸⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ב: הקדשתו של משה ב [ומשה היה רועה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/2.htm>

⁸⁸⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ב: הקדשתו של משה ב [ומשה היה רועה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/2.htm>

Great Commentary on Exodus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl06.htm>

⁸⁹⁰ Exodus 2:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9863/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Exodus 4:19

Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 64b

http://www.halakhah.com/nedarim/nedarim_64.html

When Moses asked my father's permission to leave and told him where he was going, my father laughed ironically and said,
"What! Your people can't wait to leave Egypt,
yet you want to go back there?"
Moses replied, "Father-in-law, I can assure you that I wouldn't go back unless there was a good reason.
Don't worry. I will take care of your daughter and grandsons, I promise."⁸⁹¹
To this Father had nothing to say but,
"Go with my blessing. Go and return in peace."⁸⁹²

We set off with Moses leading the way, grasping his staff in one hand and the halter of our donkey in the other.⁸⁹³ On the journey Moses didn't say much, nor did I expect him to. My husband had always been somewhat taciturn. We finally reached the inn where we were to spend the night and where I had the strangest dream.⁸⁹⁴

Before I tell you about it, there's something I need to explain. I knew from Moses that the Hebrews attached great importance to the circumcision of every newborn male.⁸⁹⁵ Since my father had insisted that Gershom be raised according to our religion, unlike Eliezer, he had not been circumcised.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹¹ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ד: משה ויתרו ד [מתי הלך משה אל יתרו?] <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/4.htm>

⁸⁹² Exodus 4:18
מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות ג [יתרו נפרד ממשה לשלום] <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/5.htm>

⁸⁹³ Exodus 4:20 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9865/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true
מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ה: שנות השעבוד ה [משה שב למצרים] <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/5.htm>
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 13:1
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁹⁴ Exodus 4:24 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9865/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

⁸⁹⁵ Genesis 17:10-14

⁸⁹⁶ מכילא דרבי ישמעאל - פרשה וישמע יתרו מסכתא דעמלק פרשה א עמוד 193
<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38109>
Midrash Agadah
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

In my dream, a shining figure was transformed into a huge snake that opened its jaws and started swallowing Moses. First, it swallowed the upper part of his body, then regurgitated it and swallowed the lower part. The dream was so vivid and so frightening that it woke me up.

I knew immediately what I had to do. I found a flint and used it to cut off Gershom's foreskin, just as I had seen Moses do when he circumcised Eliezer. I threw the foreskin down at Moses's feet and cried,

"May this foreskin expiate your sin!"

Then I turned to Gershom who, poor child, was screaming with pain. Only after I tended his wound, did his screams abate.

When people asked me why I acted as I did, I explained that I did so to save Moses's life, otherwise, according to my dream, he would surely have died.⁸⁹⁷

After this traumatic episode we continued on to Egypt without further event. A large crowd of Hebrews met us at the border, led by Moses's older brother, Aaron.⁸⁹⁸ Aaron was reputed to be the nicest, kindest person you could ever wish to meet.⁸⁹⁹ Therefore, what followed came as a complete surprise.

Aaron asked, "Moses, where have you been all these years?"

My husband answered, "In Midian."

"Who are the woman and children with you?"

"My wife and sons."

"And where are you taking them?"

"To Egypt."

⁸⁹⁷ Exodus 4:25-26 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9865/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ה: שנות השעבוד ה [צפורה מלה את בנה בדרך]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/5.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 32a

http://www.halakhah.com/nedarim/nedarim_32.html

⁸⁹⁸ Exodus 4:27

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 2 Chapter 13:13

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_II

⁸⁹⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה ה: שנות השעבוד י [פגישתם של משה ואהרן בהר האלוהים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/5.htm>

Great Commentary on Exodus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

I was sure that Aaron would turn and greet us warmly. After all we were family. Instead, he cried out,

“Our suffering is bad enough!

Do you want them to suffer too?

I beg you to send them home where they will be safe.”

Moses tried to reason with him, but my brother-in-law was adamant. Eventually Moses turned to me and the boys and, in a resigned tone, said,

“It seems there is no alternative.

You will have to return home.”⁹⁰⁰

⁹⁰⁰ מכילא דרבי ישמעאל - פרשה וישמע יתרו מסכתא דעמלק פרשה א עמוד 193

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38109>

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל על שמות יח פסוק ב

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%99%D7%97

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

By now I was a very old woman, respected for my wisdom and experience. The last of my generation, I alone was privy to a family secret that originated with Father Abraham. Just as I was beginning to believe that I would take it to my grave something happened to prove that not for nothing had I been entrusted with such a secret.

One day some of our elders came to me with news of a Hebrew from the tribe of Levi who had returned from exile and, together with his brother, was performing miracles. At first I was skeptical and told them in no uncertain terms,

“Don’t be fooled. This is not the savior we’ve been waiting for.”

Then they added,

“He also said, ‘When God has taken notice of you’.

What can that mean?”

I looked at them in amazement and replied,

“This is indeed the man who will save us,
for I heard the same words from my father.”⁹⁰¹

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

⁹⁰¹ Exodus 4:28

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות פרשת שמות פרשה ה: שנות השעבוד יג [וישמעו כי פקד ה']

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/5.htm>

English Translation

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/serah-daughter-of-asher-midrash-and-aggadah>

BITHIA, THE ADOPTIVE MOTHER OF MOSES

Moses did not remain my father's heir for long. Another son was born to my father who took precedence over mine. It was during his reign that Moses was accused of murder and disappeared before he could be executed.

Having resigned myself to the fact that I would never see my son again, I was overjoyed when he suddenly reappeared. No longer was he an Egyptian prince but a Hebrew man of religion. He told me he had returned to free his people and lead them out of Egypt.

By now I was an old woman, far too old to accompany him even had I wanted to. The new Pharaoh was as obdurate as my father when it came to the Hebrews. I asked Moses how he intended to persuade Pharaoh to let his people go. He replied that it was not in his hands, but in the hands of his God, Yahweh.

NARRATOR

Moses had returned as a man with a mission, determined to force Pharaoh to free his people from slavery. However, the new Pharaoh was, if anything, worse than his predecessor where it came to the Hebrews, whose lives were now harsher than ever. It was obvious that, by himself, Moses could do nothing. Such a mission could only be accomplished with divine help. This help took the form of nine plagues that were inflicted on the Egyptian people: the transformation of the waters of the Nile into blood; infestations of frogs, lice and flies; a plague that affected the livestock; boils that affected humans; hailstones, locusts and three days of darkness.

But Pharaoh was a very stubborn man. No sooner had each plague disappeared, than he reneged on his promise to let the Hebrews go. Nine times this happened. However, the tenth and last plague, the killing of the first-borns, was a different story altogether.⁹⁰²

One night, Yahweh killed every first-born in Egypt except for Pharaoh, who remained alive to witness the miracle of the crossing of the Reed Sea. No family was left unharmed, from Pharaoh in his palace to the humblest prisoner in his cell. Only the Hebrews, who had been warned to mark their houses with lamb's blood, were spared.⁹⁰³

BITHIA, THE ADOPTIVE MOTHER OF MOSES

NARRATOR

⁹⁰² Exodus 5 - 12

⁹⁰³ Exodus 12:29-30

CHAPTER 19 THE EXODUS

The Book of Exodus
The Book of Numbers

Overwhelmed by the death of his first-born son and by the tragedy that had befallen his entire people, Pharaoh finally gave permission for the Israelites to leave. And so the stage is set for the greatest events in the history of the Jews - the Exodus from Egypt, the covenant between Yahweh and His chosen people and, finally, the gift of Yahweh's laws. The journey will not be without difficulty, division, disappointment and danger, yet it will also involve an awesome encounter with the divine.

Serach, daughter of Asher and Joseph's niece, appears again in our narrative. By now she has become the repository of the nation's memories. As such, only she knows the whereabouts of Joseph's coffin, essential so that his bones can be conveyed to Canaan for burial. The legend appears in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sotah, Folio 13a).

Miriam, Moses's sister, recounts the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Reed Sea, as described in Exodus Chapters 12-15.

Finally Elisheba, the wife of Moses's brother, Aaron, describes how Yahweh provided the Israelites with water, bread (manna) and meat (quail) during the journey to Mount Sinai. This is based on Exodus Chapters 15-17.

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

Before he died my Uncle Joseph had made us swear to bury him in Canaan the moment the opportunity presented itself. So, immediately after Pharaoh granted us permission to leave Egypt, the first thing Moses did was to search for his remains.⁹⁰⁴

Meeting with no success, he asked me if I remembered what had happened to Joseph's body when he died.

"Of course I remember," I said.

"To bless its waters, the Egyptians placed his body in a metal coffin and sank it in the Nile."

Off went Moses to the riverbank and shouted,

"Joseph, the time has come to carry out Yahweh's promise to Father Abraham.

If you want to be freed with the rest of us, show yourself

so that we can take you with us to Canaan.

We can't wait any longer.

If you don't show yourself soon, then we will have to leave without you."

Lo and behold, Joseph's coffin quickly rose to the surface and we were able to take it with us.⁹⁰⁵

CHAPTER 19 THE EXODUS

SERACH, DAUGHTER OF ASHER

⁹⁰⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b

http://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_9.html

⁹⁰⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות בשלח פרשת פרשה כ: היציאה ממצרים יט [ארונו של יוסף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/20.htm>

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל מדרש ההלכה לספר שמות ממכילתא, שמות, פרק יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/mehilta/shmot13.htm>

English Translation

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/serah-daughter-of-asher-midrash-and-aggadah>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 13a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_13.html

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

The Egyptian people were beside themselves with grief. They had never dreamed that the God of mere slaves could wreak such vengeance, let alone kill them in such numbers. In some houses there were as many as five to ten people lying dead.⁹⁰⁶ We were immediately expelled from the country,⁹⁰⁷ barely given time to bake our unleavened dough.⁹⁰⁸ The Egyptians were so eager to see the back of us that they shoved gold and silver into our hands.

“Just go!” they said.⁹⁰⁹

We left Goshen and assembled at Ramses. Having lived in Goshen for generations, even in our misery it was hard to leave.⁹¹⁰ We marched out of Ramses in full view of the Egyptians⁹¹¹ who were busy burying their dead,⁹¹² all 600,000 of us, men women and children.⁹¹³ Accompanying us were 40,000 proselytes from different nations, who refused to remain behind and, in addition, came our flocks and herds.⁹¹⁴

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

⁹⁰⁶ Exodus 12:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁰⁷ Exodus 12:33 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁰⁸ Exodus 12:34 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁰⁹ Exodus 12:36 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹⁰ Genesis 47:11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8242/jewish/Chapter-47.htm#showrashi=true

Exodus 12:40-41 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹¹ Numbers 33:3

⁹¹² Numbers 33:4-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9961/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹³ Exodus 12:37

⁹¹⁴ Exodus 12:38 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

Midrash Tanhuma

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl04.htm>

From Ramses we walked to our second campsite, Succoth, an Egyptian city near the border with Canaan.⁹¹⁵ During daylight a pillar of cloud preceded us to show the way, while, at night, a pillar of fire provided enough light for us to continue our journey in the dark.⁹¹⁶ From Succoth we continued to Etham at the edge of the desert. Here we set up camp.⁹¹⁷

From Etham we should have continued east along the coast through neighboring Philistia, but instead we turned south. Moses confided in me that the farther we were from Egypt the better, for he was sure that the moment we encountered any difficulty the people would be tempted to return.⁹¹⁸ Therefore, we travelled a round-about route by way of the desert to the Reed Sea, a marshy stretch of land where reeds grew in profusion.⁹¹⁹ We camped between Migdol and the sea at a place called Pi hahiroth.⁹²⁰ It was here that Pharaoh and his army caught up with us.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁵ Exodus 12:37 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9873/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹⁶ Exodus 13:21-22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9874/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 23b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_23.html

⁹¹⁷ Exodus 13:20

Numbers 33:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9874/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹⁸ Exodus 13:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9874/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

⁹¹⁹ Exodus 13:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9874/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²⁰ Exodus 14:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²¹ Exodus 14:9

Naturally we were very frightened and resorted to what our people always did in such circumstances - some of us prayed to Yahweh,⁹²² while others found someone to blame, saying to Moses,

“Is there a shortage of graves in Egypt that you have brought us here to die?
What have you done?

Isn't this exactly what we said would happen if we left Egypt?

Didn't we beg you to leave us to serve the Egyptians?

We would rather serve them than die here in the desert.”⁹²³

Moses did his best to reassure us, saying we need only trust in Yahweh.⁹²⁴

By the time we reached the shores of the Reed Sea, it was already dusk. This particular night, instead of disappearing as usual, the pillar of cloud moved to the rear, hiding us from the Egyptians.⁹²⁵ When Moses pointed with his staff towards the sea a strong east wind arose, continuing to blow all night.⁹²⁶ In the light cast by the pillar of fire, we were astonished to see the sea beginning to part, piling up on either side like stacks of grain, creating a path to the opposite shore.⁹²⁷

⁹²² Great Commentary on Exodus

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl06.htm>

Exodus 14:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²³ Exodus 14:11-12

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²⁴ Exodus 14:13-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²⁵ Exodus 14:19-20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²⁶ Exodus 14:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹²⁷ Exodus 15:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

Moses called us to follow him but no one moved. We were far too frightened. Then a lone figure stepped forward and started walking after Moses. It was Nachshon, the son of Aminadab, Elisheba's brother.⁹²⁸ Seeing this, the rest of us gingerly stepped onto the seabed, trying to ignore the massive walls of water towering on either side.

By dawn, we were half-way across.⁹²⁹ Behind us, the pillar of cloud descended and turned the seabed into mud,⁹³⁰ then the pillar of fire baked it as hard as rock.⁹³¹ It was now that the Egyptians charged after us, the hoofs of their horses slipping and sliding on the baked surface of the seabed. Those standing in the chariots were tossed around so savagely that their bones broke. To make matters worse, flames suddenly leapt up from the ground, burning the chariots and all those in them.⁹³²

⁹²⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה יג: קרבנות הנשיאים ד [בזכות נחשון שקידש שם שמים זכה להקריב ראשון]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/13a.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה יג: קרבנות הנשיאים ז [קרבנו של נחשון בן עמינדב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/13a.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 37a

http://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_37.html

⁹²⁹ Exodus 14:22

⁹³⁰ Exodus 15:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³¹ Exodus 15:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³² Exodus 14:23-25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת יתרו יד [הקב"ה הטביע סוס ורוכביו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/23.htm>

After we reached shore, once again Moses pointed his staff at the sea, whereupon its waters flowed back, flooding the path we had taken.⁹³³ The Egyptian cavalry was tossed up and down in the waters,⁹³⁴ the riders still in their stirrups.⁹³⁵ All were drowned.⁹³⁶

Seeing the bodies of the Egyptian dead strewn along the opposite shore, we realized that no longer did we have anything to fear from Pharaoh and his army.⁹³⁷

⁹³³ Exodus 14:26-27 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³⁴ Exodus 15:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³⁵ Exodus 15:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³⁶ Exodus 14:28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

⁹³⁷ Exodus 14:30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 118b

<https://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

After celebrating our rescue in song, we continued our journey.⁹³⁸ From the Reed Sea we walked for three days without finding water.⁹³⁹ On the fourth day we arrived at a place called Marah, where, to our great dismay, the water in the wells was far too bitter to drink.⁹⁴⁰

As usual it did not take long before people began to complain.⁹⁴¹ I don't know what would have happened had not Moses thought of a solution. He instructed our strongest men to stir the water with long poles, thus purging it of its bitterness and enabling us to drink.⁹⁴²

From Marah it took us the better part of a month to reach our next campsite, a desert oasis named Elim, by which time our supplies were dangerously low.⁹⁴³ Discovering that Elim's twelve springs were no more than muddy pools and its seventy palm trees too parched to bear fruit, the people were so angry that they wanted to stone Moses.⁹⁴⁴ Yet this didn't seem to upset my brother-in-law who, in his usual way, calmed them by telling them to trust in Yahweh.⁹⁴⁵

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

⁹³⁸ Exodus 15:1

Exodus 15:20

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל - מדרש הלכה לספר שמות פרק טו [טו, כ] ותקח מרים הנביאה -

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/mehilta/shmot15.htm>

⁹³⁹ Exodus 15:22

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת יתרו ב [חטאם של ישראל בים סוף]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/24.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת יתרו ד [משמעותו של מדבר שור]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/24.htm>

⁹⁴⁰ Exodus 15:23

⁹⁴¹ Exodus 15:24

⁹⁴² Exodus 15:25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁴³ Exodus 15:27 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9876/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁴⁴ Antiquities of the Jews Book 3:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁴⁵ Antiquities of the Jews Book 3:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

Two weeks later our store of food was finished.⁹⁴⁶ The next day a miracle occurred. In the evening we were provided with ‘meat’, while in the morning we were provided with ‘bread’. The ‘meat’ arrived in the form of a flock of quail that, exhausted from their long flight, dropped to the ground throughout the camp, while the ‘bread’ was something as white and delicate as a thin layer of frost. Composed of a substance the size of coriander seed, it was sticky and sweet as honey. We did not know what to call it, for we had never seen anything like it, so we called it ‘manna’, meaning ‘what is it?’⁹⁴⁷

Our destination was Mount Sinai. At Rephidim we encountered a hostile tribe of nomads called the Amalekites. Famous for their camels, the Amalekites were known to be fearless fighters. Realizing we had no choice but to face them in battle, Moses appointed Joshua, the son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim, as head of the army.⁹⁴⁸

Leaving Joshua to fight the battle on the ground using conventional methods, Moses took up his position on the summit of a nearby hill to fight it supernaturally. Whenever our soldiers started to retreat, he would raise his hands in the air, whereupon they would halt and resume the fight.⁹⁴⁹ Since Moses was unable to keep his hands raised for long, my husband, Aaron, and Miriam’s son, Hur, held them up for him.

⁹⁴⁶ Exodus 16:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9877/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 87b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_87.html

⁹⁴⁷ Exodus 16:10-15, 31 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9877/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

Numbers 11:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 75a and b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 38a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

⁹⁴⁸ Exodus 17:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9878/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 2:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁴⁹ Exodus 17:11

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 2:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

It took our army till sunset to route the enemy,⁹⁵⁰ whereupon the Amalekites' strongest fighters were beheaded, while the weakest were left alive.⁹⁵¹ After such an unexpected outcome, none of the other tribes in the region dared to attack.⁹⁵²

Leaving Rephidim in a penitent mood, three months after leaving Egypt we reached Mount Sinai. For the first time we set up camp with a feeling of comradeship, as opposed to all the previous occasions when complaints and disagreements had threatened to split us apart.⁹⁵³

⁹⁵⁰ Exodus 17:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9878/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Ta'anith 11a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Taanith.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 2:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁵¹ Exodus 17:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9878/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁵² Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 2:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁵³ Exodus 19:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

CHAPTER 20

THE COVENANT WITH YAHWEH

The Book of Exodus
The Book of Leviticus
The Book of Numbers
The Book of Deuteronomy

In this chapter Miriam describes the never-to-be-forgotten meeting with Yahweh and the gift of His laws, as related in Exodus Chapters 19-20 and 24, with additional details taken from the *Great Commentary on Exodus*.

Elisheba reveals how quick the people were to doubt Moses's return from Mount Sinai, and the tragic result. Her account is based on Exodus Chapters 32-4.

Once the crisis of the golden calf had been resolved, Moses soon found himself with another dilemma on his hands, when a man named Korah led a mutiny. The story of the mutiny and its shocking end, as described in Numbers Chapter 16, is related by the unnamed wives of Korah and his easily influenced supporter, On.

Korah's satirical story is taken from a collection of Biblical folk tales entitled *Yalkut Shimoni*, while his trick questions are derived from the *Great Commentary on Exodus*.

Elisheba tells us of the deaths of her two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, as related in Leviticus Chapter 10.

From Zipporah, Moses's second wife, we learn of her reunion with her husband, an event described in Exodus Chapter 18.

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

The day after our arrival at Mount Sinai, Moses climbed the mountain.⁹⁵⁴

On his return, he announced a covenant between us and Yahweh, according to which Yahweh promised to favor us above all other peoples if we observed His laws.⁹⁵⁵ Our leaders replied that we would only agree to such a covenant, if we heard its terms from Yahweh Himself.⁹⁵⁶ Our request having been agreed to, Moses had fences erected round the mountain lest, in our curiosity and eagerness, we approached it too soon. He warned us that if we so much as touched the mountain we would die, and that only when we heard the blast of a ram's horn could we safely draw near.⁹⁵⁷

The next three days were spent in preparing ourselves for the most unbelievable event of our lives. This involved refraining from sexual intercourse and undergoing ritual purification.⁹⁵⁸

The sixth day after our arrival at Mount Sinai was the fateful day for our meeting with Yahweh. Rudely awakened by the blast of a ram's horn, we stumbled out of our tents to find ourselves in the middle of a fierce storm. Amid rolls of thunder and cracks of lightning, we assembled in the center of the camp, shaking with fear. Above us, enveloped by a thick cloud, towered the mountain from where we were about to hear Yahweh's Word.⁹⁵⁹

CHAPTER 20 THE COVENANT WITH YAHWEH

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

⁹⁵⁴ Exodus 19: 3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 86a

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_86.html

⁹⁵⁵ Exodus 19:4-8

⁹⁵⁶ Exodus 19:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁵⁷ Exodus 19:12-13

⁹⁵⁸ Exodus 19:9-11, 14-15

⁹⁵⁹ Exodus 19:16

It was now that Moses appeared to lead us out of the camp. Moses walked in front, followed by Aaron, then our elders with the rest of us bringing up the rear. As we drew near, the mountain quaked violently and blazed with fire.⁹⁶⁰ Instead of fading away, the blasts of the ram's horn grew louder. This was to accustom us to the volume of Yahweh's voice.⁹⁶¹

Peering into the gloom illuminated only by the flickering light of our torches, coughing from the smoke billowing out from the mountain, wincing at every deafening blast of the ram's horn and huddled together for safety, slowly we advanced towards the mountain.⁹⁶²

Suddenly those in front of us came to a halt.

"What's happening?" we whispered.

The answer was that they dared not go any further.

In the end we begged Moses, "You tell us what Yahweh's terms are.

We will listen to you. But if we go any closer we will surely die."⁹⁶³

In spite of the din, when he spoke, Moses's voice was surprisingly clear.⁹⁶⁴

He reproached us, saying as he always did on such occasions,

"Have faith in Yahweh. He has no intention of killing you.

It's best you hear from Him directly."⁹⁶⁵

In the end we agreed to remain at a distance while Moses disappeared into the cloud.⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶⁰ Exodus 19:17-18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁶¹ Exodus 19:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁶² Exodus 20:15

⁹⁶³ Exodus 20:16

Deuteronomy 5:20-24 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9969/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁶⁴ Exodus 19:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9880/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁶⁵ Exodus 20:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁶⁶ Exodus 20:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Rabbeinu Bechaye

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/36209/jewish/Yitro-In-Depth.htm

Then Yahweh began to speak. While He did so there was a breathless hush. Not a bird twittered, not a fowl flew, not an ox lowed - no living creature uttered a sound. Even the sea ceased its roar. Not an angel stirred his wings, not a seraph continued his hymn of praise. The whole world fell silent as Yahweh thundered,
“I am your God!”⁹⁶⁷

This was followed by a recital of what came to be known as ‘Yahweh’s Ten Laws’. Yahweh spoke without a pause. His voice had no echo. Nor did He confine Himself to Hebrew but spoke in seventy languages at once.⁹⁶⁸ At the sound of His voice we automatically took a step backwards, whereupon an unknown force propelled us forward.⁹⁶⁹ With every word, it was as if we died and were reborn.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁷ Great Commentary on Exodus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/36209/jewish/Yitro-In-Depth.htm

Great Commentary on Exodus

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl06.htm>

⁹⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 5:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9969/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Deuteronomy

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/53120/jewish/Vaetchanan-In-Depth.htm

Exodus 20:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Rosh Hashanah 27a

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/53120/jewish/Vaetchanan-In-Depth.htm

⁹⁶⁹ Exodus 20:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 88b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_88.html

⁹⁷⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat 88a

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/36209/jewish/Yitro-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 88b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_88.html

Then Yahweh explained each law individually, demanding our agreement to each. We answered “Yes” to the positive laws and “No” to the negative ones.⁹⁷¹ He concluded by ordering us never to forget that it was He, and He alone, Who had brought us forth from slavery in Egypt and had chosen us as His people, provided we kept His laws.⁹⁷²

Suddenly, it was quiet. The clouds began to clear. The sun began to shine. The birds began to chirp. In complete silence we left the mountain and crept back to our tents, afraid to make a sound that would disturb the sanctity that surrounded us. I don’t think any of us ever forgot what we had just seen and heard.

We hardly noticed when Moses set off to climb the mountain again, this time accompanied only by his protégé, Joshua,⁹⁷³ leaving Aaron and my son, Hur, in charge.⁹⁷⁴ From where we stood, all we could see was a fire burning on the mountain peak.⁹⁷⁵ There Moses spent the next forty days and nights.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷¹ Exodus 20:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁷² Exodus 20:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9881/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Deuteronomy 5:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9969/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁷³ Exodus 24:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9885/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁷⁴ Exodus 24:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9885/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 11b

https://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_11.html

⁹⁷⁵ Exodus 24:17

⁹⁷⁶ Exodus 24:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9885/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

As time passed and Moses did not return,⁹⁷⁷ some thought that he had been killed by wild animals, others that he had died and gone to heaven. The more sensible among us advised the people to wait and see.⁹⁷⁸ Those who were convinced that he would never return, approached Aaron and said,

“This Moses who brought us out of Egypt and showed us the way,
we don't know what has become of him.
We need other gods to lead us.”⁹⁷⁹

It was now that tragedy struck. Miriam's son, Hur, tried to remonstrate with them, at which point he was murdered by the mob. They even threatened to kill my Aaron.⁹⁸⁰ Terrified, he turned to me and said,

“The women are fond of their jewelry.
Perhaps they will hesitate to donate it to make an idol and, in the meantime,
Moses will return.”

He failed to realize that the men were so impatient that they donated their own jewelry instead.⁹⁸¹

So poor Aaron, fearing for his life, melted down their jewelry and used the gold to make a calf. The most eager to help were the converts who had accompanied us from Egypt, who now regretted their conversion to the worship of such an unreliable God as Yahweh. When the calf was finished, the converts announced that from this time forth, we were to worship it instead of Yahweh.⁹⁸²

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

⁹⁷⁷ Exodus 24:12-18

⁹⁷⁸ Antiquities of the Jews Book 3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

⁹⁷⁹ Exodus 32:1

⁹⁸⁰ Exodus 32:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 7a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_7.html

Parshat Ki Tisa In-Depth Exodus 30:11-34:35

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39522/jewish/Ki-Tisa-In-Depth.htm

⁹⁸¹ Exodus 32:2-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

Midrash Tanchuma

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39522/jewish/Ki-Tisa-In-Depth.htm

⁹⁸² Exodus 32:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

Helpless to prevent what was happening, Aaron reminded the people that in order to worship the calf, they would need an altar on which to offer up sacrifices. He promised to build one the following day.⁹⁸³ To expedite its construction, again the converts offered their help, which Aaron refused as diplomatically as possible by saying,

“As your High Priest, it is my task to build it.”

His real motive was to stall for time until Moses’s return, for obviously it would take one person much longer to build an altar than it would many.⁹⁸⁴

Once the altar was finished, Aaron could no longer delay the inevitable if he hoped to remain alive. We were forced to watch as the converts sacrificed to the golden calf, held a celebratory feast and then, to our utter disgust, honored their new god by indiscriminate coupling.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸³ Exodus 32:5

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁸⁴ Midrash Tanchuma

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39522/jewish/Ki-Tisa-In-Depth.htm

⁹⁸⁵ Exodus 32:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

After forty days and nights, those of us who had remained faithful to the worship of Yahweh gasped with relief when we saw Moses descending the mountain, carrying two stone tablets in his arms.⁹⁸⁶

When he set eyes on the calf and saw our people worshipping it, he was so angry that he flung the stone tablets down the mountain, whereupon they smashed into a thousand pieces.⁹⁸⁷ After melting down the calf, Moses ground the gold into fine powder, which he scattered in the stream from which we drank. Then he ordered us to drink the water.⁹⁸⁸

The stomachs of those who had secretly rejoiced when the calf was made filled with water and they died of edema. All those who had embraced and kissed the calf died of a mysterious illness. Finally, all those who had offered up sacrifices and burned incense on the altar died by the sword, their sentence carried out by the members of Aaron's tribe, the Levites, the only tribe that had refused to worship the gold calf and therefore the only tribe free of blame.⁹⁸⁹

⁹⁸⁶ Exodus 32:15

⁹⁸⁷ Exodus 32:19 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true
Deuteronomy 9:15-16

⁹⁸⁸ Exodus 32:20 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true
Deuteronomy 9:21
Babylonian Talmud: Avodah Zarah 43b-44b
http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Avodah_Zarah.pdf

⁹⁸⁹ Exodus 32:20 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 66b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

Afterwards Moses asked Aaron,
“Why on earth did you commit such a crime against Yahweh?”⁹⁹⁰
Aaron replied, “Don’t be angry with me.
You know what the people are like –
straying from the right path at every opportunity.⁹⁹¹
Because you had disappeared
and they didn’t know whether or not you would return,
they demanded that I make them another god to worship.
I tried to stall for as long as possible,
but in the end had no choice but to give in to their demands,
otherwise what happened to poor Hur would have happened to me.”⁹⁹²

Moses returned to the mountain to persuade Yahweh to give us a second set of tablets. He returned on the Day of Atonement, holding them in his arms.⁹⁹³ They repeated what Yahweh had told us on the mountain. The first tablet contained the laws concerning our relationship with Him, the second those concerning our relationships with each other.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹⁰ Exodus 32:21 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹¹ Exodus 32:22 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹² Exodus 32:23-24 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9893/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹³ Exodus 34:29 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9895/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹⁴ Malachi 1:6
Great Commentary on Deuteronomy
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/53120/jewish/Vaetchanan-In-Depth.htm
Mechilta
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/53120/jewish/Vaetchanan-In-Depth.htm
Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 31a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל מסכת דבחדש פרשה ח
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/mechilta-shmot/mechilta-shmot01.pdf>

As a result of having been in Yahweh's presence, Moses's face shone so brightly, that it hurt our eyes to look at him.⁹⁹⁵ Therefore, he covered his face with a cloth, removing it only to speak. This added to our awe of him and significance to what he had to say.⁹⁹⁶

From that time forth, Moses pitched his tent at a distance from the rest of us. This tent he called the Sanctuary.⁹⁹⁷ Every time Moses entered his tent, a pillar of cloud would descend and take up position at the entrance. We knew that, from its depths, Yahweh was talking to Moses, face to face, as a friend.⁹⁹⁸ Whenever we saw the cloud, we would all bow down in worship of the Divine Presence.⁹⁹⁹

Afterwards, Moses would come to us and teach our elders what he had learned.¹⁰⁰⁰ Whenever Moses left our camp to return to his tent, we would gaze after him admiringly, thinking how lucky he was to have the confidence of Yahweh.¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹⁵ Exodus 34:33,30 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9895/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹⁶ Exodus 34:33-35 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9895/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹⁷ Exodus 33:7 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9894/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹⁸ Exodus 33:9 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9894/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

⁹⁹⁹ Exodus 33:10 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9894/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰⁰ Exodus 33:11 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9894/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰¹ Exodus 33:8 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9894/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 33b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

THE WIFE OF THE CONSPIRATOR, KORAH

No-one could pull the wool over my husband's eyes for very long. When Korah first realized how impossible it was to uphold all of Moses's laws he invented a story to illustrate how ridiculous they were.

“There's a widow living in my neighborhood who once owned a field.
When she came to plough, Moses told her,
'It's forbidden to yoke an ox and a donkey together to plough.'¹⁰⁰²
When she came to sow, Moses told her,
'It's forbidden to sow your field with more than one crop.'¹⁰⁰³
When she came to bring in the harvest, Moses told her,
'Be sure to leave behind the gleanings
and the hay growing round the edge of the field for the poor.'
When she came to fill her silo, he told her,
'Now you have to donate part of your crop to the priests.'
Being a devout woman, she obeyed.¹⁰⁰⁴

What did this poor woman do?
She sold her field and bought two sheep,
hoping to use the wool to clothe herself and her daughters
and to sell the lambs that would be born.
No sooner had the sheep given birth than Aaron came and said,
'The law states that you must give me the firstborn lamb.'
Again, being a devout woman, she obeyed.

THE WIFE OF THE CONSPIRATOR, KORAH

¹⁰⁰² Deuteronomy 22:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9986/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰³ Leviticus 19:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 18:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9982/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

When the shearing season arrived and she sheared her sheep,
Aaron came and said,
‘Now you must give me the wool from the first shearing.’¹⁰⁰⁵
She said to herself, ‘I’m sick and tired of this man.
I shall slaughter my sheep and eat them.’
As soon as she had slaughtered them, Aaron came and said,
‘Now you must give me the choicest parts of the sheep.’¹⁰⁰⁶
The woman said to herself,
‘What! Even the slaughter of my animals has not saved them from him?’
At this point she declared them sacrosanct.
Aaron said to her,
‘If they are sacrosanct, then all the meat belongs to me.’¹⁰⁰⁷
Then he took away the carcasses, leaving her weeping her heart out.
All this Moses and Aaron did in the name of Yahweh...’¹⁰⁰⁸

People found this story so hilarious, that they asked Korah to repeat it again and again.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 18:4 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9982/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰⁶ Deuteronomy 18:3 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9982/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁰⁷ Numbers 18:14

¹⁰⁰⁸ Yalkut Shimoni
http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

Matters grew more serious when Moses appointed a less-qualified candidate than my husband as head of the Kehath clan.¹⁰⁰⁹ When Korah told me that he hadn't, as he had hoped, been elected clan chief, I said,

“See what Moses has done! He's made himself our leader,
appointed his brother, High Priest, and his nephews, deputy High Priests.
He's ordered everyone to make donations to the priests
and to give a tenth of everything we own to the Levites.¹⁰¹⁰
He's ordered you to shave off all your hair,
ostensibly to purify you but in reality to make you as bald as him.
He's made a laughingstock of you and treats you like dirt!”¹⁰¹¹

Mildly Korah pointed out that Moses had also shaved off his own hair, as well as that of his sons.¹⁰¹²

¹⁰⁰⁹ Numbers 3:30

Exodus 6:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9867/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ב [קרה מפתה את גדולי ישראל לחלוק על משה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰¹⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ד [תואנותיו של קרח]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰¹¹ Numbers 8:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9936/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ד [תואנותיו של קרח]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰¹² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

I retorted,
“As our leader, Moses doesn’t need his looks to gain power, but you do.
He hates you so much that in order to make you look ridiculous
he’s even prepared to make his own children look ridiculous too! ¹⁰¹³
He’s also ordered you to attach a fringe of blue wool
to each corner of your undershirt.
If blue wool is so important, why limit it to one thread?
Surely every one of our elders should be clothed entirely in blue?
Moses must have invented the whole ridiculous custom. ¹⁰¹⁴
He’s planned everything for his own aggrandizement,
so that he will go down in history while you will be forgotten.” ¹⁰¹⁵

I ended by telling Korah that something had to be done to stop our power-hungry leader and suggested he put forward his own candidacy for the position of High Priest.

¹⁰¹³ מדרש אגדה פרשת קרח עמוד 114

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=33178&st=&pgnum=114>

¹⁰¹⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰¹⁵ Judges 16:30

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

My husband was an astute politician. He knew that, without public support, he didn't stand a chance of being elected. So he decided to call a meeting, to which he invited all those whom he thought would be sympathetic to his cause.¹⁰¹⁶ Then off he went to drum up support among the tribe of Reuben, which was camped nearby.¹⁰¹⁷

First to join him were two hundred and fifty elders who resented Moses's authority.¹⁰¹⁸ Next were Dathan and Abiram, Moses's sworn enemies, who opposed him on almost every issue. Not only had they denounced him to the Egyptians, forcing him to flee the country, but they had also disobeyed his order not to gather surplus manna.¹⁰¹⁹ Lastly, Korah approached his friend, On, who could always be counted on to follow his lead.

Korah was a skilled public speaker, with great powers of persuasion, which he now put to good use.¹⁰²⁰ In an injured tone, he told his audience that Moses had acted most unfairly by appointing a less qualified candidate than himself to the position of Kohathite clan chief. This was the reason he had decided to oppose Aaron's candidacy for the position of High Priest.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁶ Numbers 16:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ב [קרח מפתה את גדולי ישראל לחלוק על משה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

¹⁰¹⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ה [יעקב בקש שלא ייזכר במחלוקת קרח]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

¹⁰¹⁸ Numbers 16:2

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ג [קרח מלגלג על המצוות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

תנחומא – במדבר פרשת קרח ב
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰¹⁹ Torah Sheleimah

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰²⁰ מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח א
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰²¹ Numbers 16:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח א [קרח יורד מגדולתו]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – במדבר פרשת קרח א
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

After the meeting they all trooped off to find Moses who, as usual, was deep in conversation with his brother, Aaron. As the rebels' spokesman, Korah said, "What arrogance, claiming all the power for yourselves! Having made yourself our leader, Moses, how dare you choose your brother to be High Priest! I demand the right to be considered for the position too."¹⁰²²

Then Korah repeated the arguments I had used to question Moses's rule. On my advice, he had dressed all his supporters in blue undergarments. He turned to Moses and said,

"I am no less qualified than Aaron for the position of High Priest. According to our laws, does a blue undergarment require blue fringes or not?" Moses replied that it did.

Korah responded, "If a white undergarment needs blue fringes to make it holy, then, surely, an entirely blue undergarment doesn't require any fringes at all!"

Hearing this, everyone burst out laughing.¹⁰²³

After the laughter died down, Korah asked Moses another trick question.

"If a house is filled with scrolls of the law, does it still need a *mezuzah* on its doorpost?"

Moses replied that it did.

Korah laughed in reply and retorted,

"If the entire book of the law, consisting of 275 chapters, is not enough to make the house holy, then how can two chapters in the *mezuzah* make it so?"¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰²² Numbers 16:2-3

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Section 38:16
<http://targum.info/pj/pjnum16-18.htm>

¹⁰²³ Numbers 15:38

Numbers 16:1 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰²⁴ מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר פרשת קרח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ג [קרח מלגלג על המצוות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

My husband then turned to the crowd of onlookers and announced dramatically,

“It wasn’t Yahweh who commanded us to obey these ridiculous laws.

Moses invented them himself!”¹⁰²⁵

Then he turned back to Moses and said,

“Under your rule our lives are harder than they were in Egypt.

We were better off there.

We demand your resignation!”¹⁰²⁶

Moses looked at him in horror and, as if in supplication, threw himself to the ground.¹⁰²⁷ He had good reason to be afraid. There was a rumor going around that, having divorced his wife, Zipporah, he was having an affair with a married woman, which was why he had set up his tent outside our camp.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ג [קרה מלגלג על המצוות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרה ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰²⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ד [תואנותיו של קרה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרה ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰²⁷ Numbers 16:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרה ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰²⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

In a conciliatory voice Moses said,
“I didn’t ask to be leader or for Aaron to be High Priest.”¹⁰²⁹
I wish all of you could be high priests.
Unfortunately we only have only one God, one Sanctuary, one set of laws,
one altar and one High Priest.”¹⁰³⁰
He continued, “As for your demands, there’s nothing I can do right now.
Tomorrow I will give you an answer.”¹⁰³¹

The next morning Moses climbed the mountain. Upon his return he announced,

“Anyone who wants to can put forward his candidacy
for the position of High Priest.
However, before you decide to do so, know this.
Each candidate must attempt to perform the incense sacrifice.
The incense contains a deadly poison,
which will kill anyone except the candidate Yahweh has chosen.”¹⁰³²

¹⁰²⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ד [תואנותיו של קרח]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰³⁰ Numbers 16:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Midrash Tanchuma

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45592/jewish/Korach-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰³¹ Numbers 16:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰³² Numbers 16:6-7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Uncertain whether to believe Moses or not, Korah and I returned to our tent, where my husband fell asleep. When he awoke, he told me that he had just had a wonderful dream. In his dream he had seen a long line of his descendants. Surely, he reasoned, he could only have so many descendants if he survived the test.¹⁰³³

More confident than ever, my husband spent the whole night canvassing support, saying,

“I don’t want the high priesthood for myself.

I want it so that I can serve you, the people.

Not like Moses who has appropriated all the best jobs for himself and his family.”

With this argument Korah succeeded in winning many to our cause.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³³ Numbers 16:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ה [קרו לכם מחתות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰³⁴ Numbers 16:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת קורח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח י [וישלח משה לקרוא לדתן ולאבירם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

THE WIFE OF THE WOULD-BE CONSPIRATOR, ON

My husband On wasn't bad as husbands go, just not very bright. His friend, Korah, was far more astute and had no trouble in persuading On to do whatever he wanted. When Korah decided to challenge Aaron for the High Priesthood, On was one of his first supporters.¹⁰³⁵

From the beginning I had my reservations. After all, Moses usually made the right decisions. If he nominated his own brother, surely he had good reason.¹⁰³⁶ No one could deny that Aaron was supremely suited for the role.¹⁰³⁷ Besides, Korah was an arrogant man who thought his wealth and status gave him special privileges.¹⁰³⁸ His wife was even worse. She was always stirring up trouble.¹⁰³⁹

When my husband asked me what I thought, I told him in no uncertain terms,
“What do you care who is High Priest?
You will have to obey him whoever it is.”
On looked worried and replied,
“What can I do?
I've already agreed to join them.
Korah's supporters are bound to come looking for me.”

I sighed. Once again it was up to me to save my impulsive husband from a predicament of his own making.

“Don't worry,” I said.
“I know just how to get you out of this mess.”

THE WIFE OF THE WOULD-BE CONSPIRATOR, ON

¹⁰³⁵ Numbers 16:1-2

¹⁰³⁶ Numbers 16:3

¹⁰³⁷ Exodus 4:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9865/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

[משה נענש על שסירב ללכת בשליחות ה']

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/3.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

Rashi

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/35803/jewish/Shemot-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰³⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰³⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

I gave him some wine, both to calm him and to make him so drowsy that he would fall asleep. Then I put him to bed in our tent and sat at the entrance, unpinning my hair so that it hung loose like that of a prostitute.

When Korah's supporters came looking for On and saw me sitting there with my hair loose, they were so embarrassed that they turned and fled.¹⁰⁴⁰ I remained at my station until I was sure they would not return. Meanwhile, my husband continued to snore loudly, blissfully unaware.

The quiet was suddenly broken by the sound of screaming. On came running out of the tent, demanding to know what was happening. We watched in astonishment as people streamed past our tent, shouting at the tops of their voices. In answer to our questions they pointed behind them, to where smoke was billowing up from the ground, and told us that the screams came from Korah and his supporters, who were being swallowed alive in the bowels of the earth.¹⁰⁴¹

Of the original conspirators, only my husband was left alive.

¹⁰⁴⁰ מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 109b - 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰⁴¹ Numbers 16:32-35

NARRATOR

While On's wife was held up by the people as an example of a wise woman, Korah's wife, by giving her husband such bad advice, was regarded as very foolish.¹⁰⁴²

As for Korah's dream, what he failed to take into account was the fact that, at the last moment, his sons had second thoughts about joining their father's mutiny and, therefore, survived. The long line of descendants that Korah had seen in his dream was theirs, not his.¹⁰⁴³

A legend relates how a traveler visited the place where Korah and his supporters had been swallowed up by the earth. Smoke was still billowing up from two cracks in the ground. The traveler swore he could hear voices repeating over and over again,

“Moses was right and we were wrong.”¹⁰⁴⁴

NARRATOR

¹⁰⁴² Proverbs 14:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16385/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

¹⁰⁴³ Numbers 16:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9944/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר פרשת קרח פרשה יח: פרשת קורח ה [קחו לכם מחותות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/18.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

¹⁰⁴⁴ מדרש תנחומא - במדבר פרשת קרח יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 110a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_110.html

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

How can I ever forget the day our Sanctuary was dedicated? It started off so well. It was a Sunday - the first day after Yahweh's creation of the world. It was the first time the tribal chiefs brought an offering, the first time the priests performed their duties, the first time a sacrifice was made in public, the first time fire came down from heaven to consume the sacrificed animal, the first time we tasted its flesh, the first time the High Priest blessed our people, the first time the Divine Presence filled the Sanctuary and lastly, the first of the month! ¹⁰⁴⁵

By this time Aaron and I had four sons. From birth, the two eldest had been foreordained for the priesthood. Neither Nadab nor Abihu had married, not for lack of admirers, but because they claimed that none of our women were good enough to marry into a family of princes and priests. I rather think they expected to marry into royalty. In addition, they didn't hide their impatience to replace Moses and Aaron, whom they regarded as decrepit old men. ¹⁰⁴⁶

Although I knew they were headstrong, I never expected them to be so foolish as to take the lead in dedicating the Sanctuary. Instead of waiting for Moses's command, they lit their censers and sprinkled incense on the altar. Instantly flames leapt up around them and burned them to death. ¹⁰⁴⁷

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

¹⁰⁴⁵ Leviticus 9:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9910/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 87b

http://halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_87.html

Babylonian Talmud: Megillah 10b

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39684/jewish/Shemini-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁴⁶ Great Commentary on Leviticus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39684/jewish/Shemini-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁴⁷ Leviticus 10:1-2, 5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9911/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

Midrash Tanchuma

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39684/jewish/Shemini-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 10b

<http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Aaron and I stood rooted to the ground, unable to take in what had just happened. As though from afar I heard Moses say, “Yahweh considered your sons more worthy than us to sanctify His Sanctuary.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Aaron said not a word. What could he say? What else could he do in such a situation but accept Yahweh’s will?¹⁰⁴⁹

After the bodies of Nadab and Abihu had been removed,¹⁰⁵⁰ Moses ordered us not to make any public showing of grief,¹⁰⁵¹ but to continue the ceremony as if nothing had happened.¹⁰⁵²

I don’t know where Aaron found the strength. After such a tragic loss, only a man of deep piety could have blessed the congregation with such serenity:

“May the Lord bless you and watch over you.

May the Lord cause His countenance to shine on you and favor you.

May the Lord raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace.”¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁸ Leviticus 10:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9911/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Leviticus

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39684/jewish/Shemini-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁴⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 115b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

¹⁰⁵⁰ Leviticus 10:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9911/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁵¹ Leviticus 10: 6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9911/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 14b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

¹⁰⁵² Leviticus 10:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9911/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 101a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

¹⁰⁵³ Numbers 6:22-26

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

The story of how Yahweh had finally persuaded Pharaoh to free the Israelites, how Pharaoh and his army had been utterly annihilated at the Reed Sea, and how the Israelites had survived in the desert by eating manna, soon spread far and wide, eventually reaching us in Midian.

My father was deeply impressed by the story of how the Reed Sea had divided into two, allowing the Hebrews to cross on dry land, and then returned to drown the Egyptian army. He was also impressed by the Hebrew's victory over the Amalekites. However, the greatest miracle of all was undoubtedly the fact that, thanks to Yahweh, Moses and his people had succeeded in freeing themselves from Egyptian bondage. My father was not the only one to be impressed. Many others who were not Israelites decided to convert to the worship of Yahweh, the all-powerful Israelite God.¹⁰⁵⁴

Deciding that it was time for me and my two sons to return to Moses, my father told me to prepare for the journey.¹⁰⁵⁵ We set out from Midian in the company of my brother, Hobab,¹⁰⁵⁶ and eventually arrived at the Israelite camp at the base of Mount Sinai.¹⁰⁵⁷

It was ironic. Formerly my father had been a great leader whom Moses had willingly served. Now the situation was reversed. No longer was Moses a simple shepherd, tending my father's flocks, but a great man, a king even, a man worth as much as his entire people put together.¹⁰⁵⁸

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

¹⁰⁵⁴ Exodus 18:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

Rashi

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/36209/jewish/Yitro-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁵⁵ Exodus 18:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת יתרו פרשה כז: בואו של יתרו א' [ביאת יתרו וביאת עמלק]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/27.htm>

¹⁰⁵⁶ Numbers 10:29

¹⁰⁵⁷ Exodus 18:5

¹⁰⁵⁸ Exodus 18:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

Fearing that Moses might not want to take us back, my father sent ahead a messenger, saying,

“If you will not come out of your tent for my sake,
at least come out for your wife’s sake.
If you will not come out for your wife’s sake,
at least come out for the sake of your two sons.”¹⁰⁵⁹

To our surprise, not only did Moses come out to greet us, but so did Aaron and two of his sons. In fact everyone came to greet us. Moses even bowed down to my father and kissed him. This was indeed a great honor.¹⁰⁶⁰

At first, Moses did not acknowledge me or our two sons - his thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. Eventually he emerged from his reverie and turned to greet us. Up to now our two sons had been known as my sons, since it was I who had raised them. From that moment on they were known as the sons of Moses.¹⁰⁶¹

After converting to the worship of Yahweh,¹⁰⁶² my father instructed Moses in the art of government, emphasizing the importance of delegating authority in order to lighten the heavy burden of leadership. Moses took my father’s advice and did everything he said.¹⁰⁶³

Having performed the task he had set himself, my father prepared to return to Midian, leaving Hobab, my sons and me with Moses.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵⁹ Exodus 18:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת יתרו ב [כבוד חכמים ינהלו, זה יתרו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/27.htm>

¹⁰⁶⁰ Exodus 18:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9879/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות – פרשת יתרו ב [כבוד חכמים ינהלו, זה יתרו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/27.htm>

¹⁰⁶¹ הוזהר פרשת יתרו חלק א'

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/94283?heb/content/view/full/94283&main>

¹⁰⁶² Exodus 18:8-12

¹⁰⁶³ Exodus 18:13-24

¹⁰⁶⁴ Exodus 18:27

Numbers 10:29-32

CHAPTER 21
FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT
The Book of Numbers

After receiving Yahweh's laws, the Israelites resumed their journey to the 'promised' land, a forty-year journey marked not only by further instances of human weakness, but also by the deaths of an entire generation.

Miriam is the first to speak. The moral to her tale is "Be careful what you wish for" (Numbers Chapter 11).

She is followed by Zipporah, who reveals a secret that results in Miriam being punished by Yahweh (Numbers Chapter 12).

Miriam returns to explain why the Israelites were forced to wander in the desert for forty years, before taking possession of the land Yahweh had promised them (Numbers Chapter 13).

We also learn what happened to Miriam's well, the well that accompanied the Israelites on their journey in the desert for forty years, and which disappeared at her death.

The chapter ends with Aaron's death, as related by his wife, Elisheba (Numbers Chapter 20).

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

After remaining at Mount Sinai for over a year, we finally set out on the next stage of our journey to Canaan, the land promised to our ancestors by Yahweh. ¹⁰⁶⁵ It didn't take long before our people started complaining about the hardships of the journey, especially about the fact that all we had to eat was manna. ¹⁰⁶⁶

At first, we were perfectly happy to eat manna. Every morning we would gather the day's supply. There was no cooking involved because it tasted just like cakes of dough, kneaded with oil, already baked and coated with honey. ¹⁰⁶⁷ However, after months of "manna in the morning, manna in the evening, manna at supper time", we had completely lost our appetite for it and were wasting away. ¹⁰⁶⁸

Yahweh may have considered it very nutritious and, no doubt, couldn't understand what we were complaining about, but we had enjoyed greater variety in Egypt. How we missed the watermelons, leeks, onions and garlic! We even missed the cucumbers. We lovingly recalled the delicious fish we had eaten free of charge, conveniently forgetting that Pharaoh had refused to provide us with straw for bricks, let alone free fish! ¹⁰⁶⁹ However, what we really longed for was meat. ¹⁰⁷⁰

CHAPTER 21 FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

¹⁰⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9965/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁶⁶ Numbers 11:4-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary

¹⁰⁶⁷ Numbers 11:7-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary

¹⁰⁶⁸ Numbers 11:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary

¹⁰⁶⁹ Numbers 11:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary

¹⁰⁷⁰ Numbers 11:4

So we sent a delegation to Moses, asking him to convey our request to Yahweh. Yahweh's answer was,

“Tomorrow you shall have meat to eat.
You shall eat it not one day, not two, not five, not ten,
not even for twenty days, but for an entire month,
until it comes out of your noses and makes you sick.
For the same meat for which you now long,
will be the cause of your deaths.”¹⁰⁷¹

A strong wind arose and blew a flock of quails in from the sea. They were so exhausted from being buffeted about that they flew at just below shoulder height, making it easier for us to catch them. There were so many that it took us two days and a night to gather and distribute them. Still the quails kept on coming, and coming, and coming...

At first we wolfed down the meat. Even after we were sated, we continued to stuff ourselves, until many dropped down dead.¹⁰⁷² Only those of us who refrained from eating the meat survived. After this, we were quite content to continue eating manna. We did so for the next forty years, until we reached the plains of Moab prior to crossing the River Jordan into Canaan. The day that Moses died, the manna ceased to appear. The following day we started reaping grain for bread.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷¹ Numbers 11:18-19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 75a and b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

¹⁰⁷² Numbers 11:31-34 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9939/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary

¹⁰⁷³ Exodus 16:35 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9877/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true
Antiquities of the Jews Book 3:6
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

After Moses and I were reunited, it soon became clear that our relationship had changed. What aggravated the situation was the fact that Moses had not appointed either of our sons his heir, but had chosen an upstart named Joshua.¹⁰⁷⁴ The result was that I became increasingly bitter. However, to preserve appearances, in public I continued to conduct myself in a manner befitting the wife of a great leader, just as I had formerly conducted myself in a manner befitting the daughter of the High Priest of Midian.¹⁰⁷⁵

Then, gradually, I let myself go. I stopped wearing jewelry. When my sister-in-law, Miriam, asked why, I answered,

“Your brother couldn’t care less whether I wear it or not.”¹⁰⁷⁶

One day I could stand it no longer. If I remember rightly, it all started with an innocent remark of Miriam’s. We had just finished choosing seventy elders to rule over us, and had lit candles to celebrate their good fortune. When Miriam saw the candles, she said,

“Not only are these men lucky, but their wives too.”

Hearing this, I burst out, “How are their wives lucky?

In my opinion they’re very unlucky.

From the day your brother Moses was chosen by Yahweh to carry out His mission,

he has refrained from marital relations, as good as divorcing me!”¹⁰⁷⁷

NARRATOR

At this point Zipporah vanishes from the record.

ZIPPORAH, MOSES'S SECOND WIFE

¹⁰⁷⁴ Midrash HaChefetz

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/43009/jewish/Bamidbar-In-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁷⁵ ילקוט שמעוני במדבר פרק יב סימן תשלז

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=4&perek=12&mefaresh=shimoni

Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 16b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

¹⁰⁷⁶ ספרי במדבר פרשת בהעלותך פסקא צט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifri/sifri03.pdf>

¹⁰⁷⁷ Numbers 12:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9940/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת צו יג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

ספרי זוטא פרק י"ב:א'

http://alhatorah.org/Miryam%27s_Critique_of_Moshe_and_his_Cushite_Marriage/5

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

When I heard that Moses no longer obeyed the law of procreation, I immediately rushed off to tell Aaron.¹⁰⁷⁸

“After all,” I said, “Moses isn’t the only one to whom Yahweh has spoken. Did we refuse to have relations with our spouses afterwards? Of course not!”¹⁰⁷⁹

We couldn’t understand it. Zipporah was an unusually beautiful woman, as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside. In fact she had retained her good looks into old age.¹⁰⁸⁰ Aaron agreed with me that Moses’s position must have gone to his head.

Shortly afterwards, all three of us siblings were summoned to the Sanctuary for judgment.¹⁰⁸¹ I protested that I had acted with the best of intentions. All I had wanted was to end the estrangement between Moses and Zipporah.¹⁰⁸² Therefore, what happened next was most unfair. Whereas I was punished with leprosy, Aaron received no punishment at all!¹⁰⁸³

MIRIAM, MOSES'S SISTER

¹⁰⁷⁸ Numbers 12:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9940/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁷⁹ Numbers 12:2

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת צו יג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

Sifri

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45585/jewish/Behaalotecha-in-Depth.htm

¹⁰⁸⁰ ספרי זוטא – במדבר עמוד 70

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?sits=1&req=14529&st=%u05de%u05e8%u05d9%u05dd>

¹⁰⁸¹ Numbers 12:4

¹⁰⁸² מדרש רבה - חומש דברים סדר כי תצא פרשה ו יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01637_part_6.html

¹⁰⁸³ Numbers 12:10

Stricken with guilt, Aaron turned to Moses and said,
“Please forgive us for acting so foolishly.”¹⁰⁸⁴
Don’t let our sister be a leper all her life.
After all, she is our own flesh and blood.
If you don’t pray for her to be healed, who else will heal her?
As High Priest, I can’t have anything to do with her,
lest I become contaminated.
If that happens, there is no one else to take my place.”¹⁰⁸⁵
Moses’s response was to offer up a short prayer, saying,
“Please, Yahweh, heal our sister.”¹⁰⁸⁶

The outcome was that I was banished from the camp for seven days, until I recovered.
Only then did we continue on our way.¹⁰⁸⁷

When we reached the border with Canaan, a bitter argument broke out between those who were all for invading the country immediately, and those who wanted to reconnoiter the land in advance. The meeting degenerated into chaos, with the younger men shouldering aside the older men, and both pushing aside the tribal elders. Some demanded to know what language the Canaanites spoke, others what was the fastest route to take, and yet others which cities we should conquer first.¹⁰⁸⁸

To answer these questions, Moses decided to send a group of trustworthy men to spy out the land. The group consisted of one representative from each of our twelve tribes,¹⁰⁸⁹ and included my husband, Caleb, and Moses’s protégé, Joshua.¹⁰⁹⁰ They were instructed to enter Canaan from the south, the least fertile part of the country and, therefore, the most sparsely populated. Then they were to travel east in the direction of the mountains, until they reached the Eshkol valley, from where they were to bring back samples of its produce.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁴ Numbers 12:11

¹⁰⁸⁵ Numbers 12:12 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9940/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁸⁶ Numbers 12:3 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9940/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁸⁷ Numbers 12:15

¹⁰⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 1:22 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9965/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁰⁸⁹ Numbers 13:1-2

¹⁰⁹⁰ Numbers 13:4-16

¹⁰⁹¹ Numbers 13:17-24 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9941/jewish/Chapter-13.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

After forty days the spies returned. ¹⁰⁹² Ten brought back grapes, figs and pomegranates so large that they had to be carried suspended from poles. This gave us some idea of the gigantic size of the inhabitants. The majority of the spies emphasized the impossibility of crossing the Jordan, the hostility of the local tribes and the impregnability of the cities. In contrast, Joshua and Caleb brought back nothing, insisted that the land could be conquered and assured us we had nothing to fear. ¹⁰⁹³

Most of our people chose to believe the majority report and refused to advance any further, complaining,

“It would have been better if we had died in the desert.” ¹⁰⁹⁴

Caleb’s and Joshua’s entreaties fell on deaf ears and only served to anger the people all the more. In fact the two were lucky to escape with their lives. ¹⁰⁹⁵

¹⁰⁹² Numbers 13:25-26

¹⁰⁹³ Numbers 13:27-29

Rashi

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45587/jewish/Shelach-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 34a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_34.html

¹⁰⁹⁴ Numbers 14:1-4

¹⁰⁹⁵ Numbers 14:6-10

NARRATOR

The Israelites' refusal to advance further is ascribed by modern commentators to their 'slave mentality'. Their refusal was punished by having to spend the next forty years wandering about in the desert. Other than a few exceptions, only those born in freedom were deemed worthy of entering the Promised Land.¹⁰⁹⁶

Miriam died in the desert of Zin.¹⁰⁹⁷ Legend says she was buried with her two brothers on Mount Nebo, which came to be known as 'The Mountain of the Three Prophets'.¹⁰⁹⁸ Only with her death did her people come to appreciate her importance.¹⁰⁹⁹

While she had been alive, every time the Israelites had ran out of water, a well would miraculously appear. The moment Miriam died, the well ceased to do so. Only after Moses struck a rock with his staff did the well reappear,¹¹⁰⁰ continuing to follow the Israelites until they reached the border with Canaan.¹¹⁰¹

Today, if you ascend Mount Carmel on the Mediterranean coast and look out over the sea, you can see the dip in the ocean that is Miriam's well.¹¹⁰²

NARRATOR

¹⁰⁹⁶ Numbers 14:28-34

¹⁰⁹⁷ Numbers 20:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9948/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

סדר עולם פרק ט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sederolam/sederolam01.pdf>

¹⁰⁹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 13b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_13.html

¹⁰⁹⁹ הוזהר - פרשת חיי שרה

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/92514?heb/content/view/full/92514&main>

Babylonian Talmud: Ta'anith 9a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Taanith.pdf>

¹¹⁰⁰ Numbers 20:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9948/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

¹¹⁰¹ Numbers 21:19-20

¹¹⁰² Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 35a

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_35.html

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

We finally arrived at Mount Hor on the border with Edom, south of the Salt Sea. ¹¹⁰³
At the first opportunity Moses climbed the mountain to speak to Yahweh.

Early the next morning he came to our tent, calling for Aaron. Aaron went outside and asked him,

“What’s happened? Why are you up so early?”

Moses replied, “There’s something in the law I’m not clear about. It’s kept me awake all night.”

Aaron asked, “What part aren’t you clear about?”

Moses said to him,

“I don’t remember what it was, but I know that it was in the Book of Genesis. Bring me the scroll so that I can find it.”

They entered the tent and sat down to pore over the scroll, while I served them manna and water. After reading each passage, Moses exclaimed,

“Excellent! Excellent!”

When they came to the part about the creation of man, Moses asked,

“What do you think about the fact that it was man who brought death into the world?”

Aaron replied, “Moses, all we can do is accept whatever Yahweh decrees.”

Moses asked,

“Will we die too - me, the leader of our people and you, their High Priest?”

Aaron and I almost stopped breathing; we were so shocked. What on earth had got into Moses? Why was he talking about death - his own and Aaron’s?

Aaron must have guessed for, in a small voice, he said, “I’m afraid to die.”

Moses asked him gently, “But are you ready to do so?”

“Yes,” came my husband’s answer.

Moses said, “So let us climb the mountain together.” ¹¹⁰⁴

I cannot begin to describe how I felt, dreading that I would never again see my husband, the nicest and kindest man one could wish to meet, the husband with whom I had shared a bed for so many years, the wonderful, caring father of our four sons.

ELISHEBA, AARON'S WIFE

¹¹⁰³ Numbers 20:22

¹¹⁰⁴ Yalkut Shimoni

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45616/jewish/Chukat-In-Depth.htm

By the time Moses, Aaron and our son, Elazar, started climbing the mountain, a large crowd had gathered. ¹¹⁰⁵ We looked on in silence as they climbed, continuing our vigil long after they had disappeared. Eventually word spread that they were on their way back down. I hurried out of my tent, but all I could see were two small figures in the distance, not three. As they drew closer, I saw that one was Moses and the other, Elazar, and that Elazar was now wearing Aaron's priestly garments. ¹¹⁰⁶ My fears had been fully justified.

The people demanded to know where Aaron was.

Moses replied in a heavy voice, "He's been gathered to his people."

"What does that mean?" someone asked.

"It means that he is no more," was the answer.

The murmuring grew louder.

"We don't believe you. Tell us where he is so we can bring him back."

"Very well," said Moses. "Everyone shut your eyes. What do you see?"

A chorus of voices answered,

"He's in a cave, lying on a bed with his eyes closed
and there's a lighted candle by his head." ¹¹⁰⁷

We mourned Aaron for thirty days. You have no idea how many couples came up to me and told me that, had it not been for my husband, they would have divorced long ago. He was a born peacemaker, loved his fellow human beings and encouraged them to obey the law instead of scolding them for breaking it. Whenever Aaron met anyone, no matter how wicked, he would greet him with a warm "Shalom". The result was that, whenever a hardened criminal was about to break some law or other, he would stop and say,

"How will I be able to show my face to Aaron,
who is so nice to me all the time?" ¹¹⁰⁸

¹¹⁰⁵ Numbers 20:27

¹¹⁰⁶ Numbers 20:28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9948/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

¹¹⁰⁷ Numbers 20:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9948/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45616/jewish/Chukat-In-Depth.htm

¹¹⁰⁸ Numbers 20:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9948/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true

Avot d'Rabbi Natan Ch. 12

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45616/jewish/Chukat-In-Depth.htm

He was no fool, my Aaron. If two friends quarreled, he would go to one of them and say,

“Have you seen how sorry your friend is for offending you?
He is quite beside himself and doesn’t dare show his face.”

He would continue to sit with the man, coaxing him to forgive his friend until the man agreed to do so. Then Aaron would go to the man’s friend and do the same. The result was, when the two finally met up, they were immediately reconciled.

That was my Aaron for you! ¹¹⁰⁹

NARRATOR

Although the name of Elisheba, the daughter of Aminadab, appears only once in the Bible (Exodus Chapter 6 verse 23), she was known as ‘the mother of priests’. She was said to have been the luckiest of women, since her brother-in-law, Moses, was a king, her husband, Aaron, a High Priest, her son, Elazar, Deputy High Priest, her grandson, Phinehas, Deputy High Priest of battle, and her brother, Nahshon, prince of his tribe.
¹¹¹⁰

After the tragedy that befell her two eldest sons, she was no longer considered so lucky. ¹¹¹¹ With Aaron dead, for the purposes of our narrative she dies with him.

¹¹⁰⁹ Avot d’Rabbi Natan Ch. 12

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45616/jewish/Chukat-In-Depth.htm

NARRATOR

¹¹¹⁰ רמבן שמות פרק ו (כג):

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=2&perek=6&mefaresh=ramban

ילקוט שמעוני בראשית פרק מט סימן קנט [מט, ח]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=1&perek=49&mefaresh=shimoni

¹¹¹¹ Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 102a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

Part 7
The Conquest of Canaan

CHAPTER 22 THE EVE OF THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

The Book of Numbers
The Book of Deuteronomy

By now the Israelites were camped out in the acacia groves on the east bank of the River Jordan, about to cross the river into Canaan.¹¹¹² News of their arrival, and of the miracles performed by their God, had spread throughout the region, striking fear into every heart. The local tribes prepared to defend themselves, though not all resorted to force of arms. Three tribes unleashed a secret weapon on their enemy – their women – whom they sent, not to fight but to fornicate with them!

The first to do so were the Moabites, followed by the Ammonites, both descended from Lot and his two daughters. In fact, neither tribe had anything to fear from the Israelites, who had been forbidden to kill them.¹¹¹³ For from these two tribes would arise two Israelite heroines - Ruth the Moabitess, ancestress of King David, and Naamah the Ammonitess, wife of King Solomon and mother of his heir, Rehoboam.¹¹¹⁴

The campaign began with a pre-emptive strike by the Moabite king, Balak, who hired a magician named Balaam to curse the Israelites. When the magician's curses proved fruitless, the king employed cunning. A Moabite prostitute narrates the story, which appears in Numbers Chapter 25, embellished by material taken from the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 106).

CHAPTER 22 THE EVE OF THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

INTRODUCTION

¹¹¹² Numbers 22:1

Numbers 33:49 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9961/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvim 55b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvim.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 75b

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/52613/jewish/Matot-Massei-In-Depth.htm

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

¹¹¹³ Deuteronomy 2:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9966/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 38b

http://halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_38.html

¹¹¹⁴ Numbers 25:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 38a-b

http://halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_38.html

The third tribe to employ women against the Israelites were their implacable foes, the Midianites, whose most important clan chief, Zur, was prepared to sacrifice his own daughter, Cozbi, to attain his ends (Numbers Chapter 25). An additional source for her story is the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 82).

The chapter ends with a tale concerning the allocation of land on the east bank of the Jordan, an early instance of the fight for women's rights, related by five sisters from the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers Chapters 27 and 36, with additional material drawn from many rabbinical sources).

A MOABITE PROSTITUTE

People look down on us prostitutes, thinking they are better than us. They never pause to consider that we follow our profession, not because we want to, but because we have no choice. Rarely do we have the opportunity to prove that we are useful members of society. Yet the following story proves exactly that.

A new tribe, named the Israelites, had recently appeared in our region and was now camped on our doorstep.¹¹¹⁵ It was said that their God performed great wonders, rendering them invincible. Our king, Balak, decided that the only way to defeat such a powerful enemy was to employ a magician to curse them. The magician, whose name was Balaam, did his best, but every time he cursed the Israelites, the words came out as a blessing. After seven fruitless attempts, he admitted defeat.¹¹¹⁶

Before he left, he suggested that, instead of cursing the Israelites, we entice them into idol-worship, which their God, Yahweh, had expressly forbidden.

“Instead of fighting them, let their Yahweh punish them,” he advised.¹¹¹⁷

Following Balaam’s advice, the king ordered temporary camps to be erected throughout the region, from Mount Hermon in the north to Shittim near the Salt Sea. At the entrance to each tent stood a stall selling garments of the finest linen from Beit Shean, known to be very popular among the Israelite women. The entrance to each tent was left open to reveal another stall within, offering for sale the same linen clothes, but at a much lower price. Whereas the outside stalls were staffed by our old women, the inside stalls were staffed by attractive young prostitutes like me.

A MOABITE PROSTITUTE

¹¹¹⁵ Numbers 22:1

Numbers 33:49 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9961/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Eirubin 55b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eirubin.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 75b

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/52613/jewish/Matot-Massei-In-Depth.htm

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

¹¹¹⁶ Numbers 22:5-6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9950/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true

Numbers 24:10, 25

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת בלק פרשה כ: פרשת בלק ז [וישלה מלאכים אל בלעם]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/20.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש במדבר - פרשת בלק ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L4

¹¹¹⁷ Numbers 25:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 106a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_106.html

Inevitably the Israelite men were drawn to our camps to eat, drink and generally make merry. Like my sisters, I sat inside my tent, waiting for a customer, while the old woman outside did her best to lure one in. Eventually a burly Israelite succumbed to her importuning and entered. I rose to better show him my wares, the most attractive of which was my scantily clothed body. Doing his best to keep his face averted, he snatched up a garment, shoved some money into my hand and fled from the tent.

The next day, the Israelite returned and the day after that. Each time he spent less time inspecting the garment and more time looking at me. I decided that the time had come to proceed to the next stage of the plan. On his next visit, I said,

“You’re like one of the family now.

Why don’t you sit down and make yourself comfortable,
while you choose what you want?”

Then I plied him with Ammonite wine. We knew that the Israelites, who observed all sorts of strange prohibitions regarding food and drink, were allowed to drink wine. After drinking his fill, the Israelite became so inflamed with lust that he demanded to lie with me. At this crucial point, I produced one of our idols and announced,

“If you want me to lie with you,
then first you must worship this idol.”

Without hesitation he bowed to the idol, then turned and grabbed me. ¹¹¹⁸

After that he returned every day. Before I agreed to have intercourse, I demanded he prove his devotion to his new god by offering up a sacrifice and attending our feasts. ¹¹¹⁹ In this way he converted to the worship of our god, Baal Peor, eating greens, drinking beer and then defecating in front of Baal’s image. ¹¹²⁰

¹¹¹⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת בלק פרשה כ: פרשת בלק כב [ייחל העם לזנות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/20.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 106a

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/48218/jewish/Balak-In-Depth.htm

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_106.html

¹¹¹⁹ Numbers 25:2

¹¹²⁰ Numbers 25:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 64a

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/48218/jewish/Balak-In-Depth.htm

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_64.html

I was the instrument of many such conversions, as were my sister Moabites and our allies, the Ammonite prostitutes.¹¹²¹ As a result of our efforts, not only were many of our former customers sentenced to be hung in public by their irate king, Moses,¹¹²² but another 24,000 died of a plague.¹¹²³ Balaam, the magician, had succeeded in helping us after all.

As for us prostitutes, instead of being regarded as second-class citizens, henceforth we were treated as heroines.

¹¹²¹ Numbers 25:3

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת בלק פרשה כ: פרשת בלק כב [ויחל העם לזנות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/20.htm>

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/48218/jewish/Balak-In-Depth.htm

¹¹²² Numbers 25:1, 5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 35a

http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_35.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 18a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_18.html

¹¹²³ Numbers 25:9

COZBI, A MIDIANITE PRINCESS

My name is Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, the most prominent of five Midianite clan chiefs.¹¹²⁴ Descended from the sons of Keturah, the third wife of Abraham, we were distant relatives of the Israelites. As long as I can remember, there had been bad blood between our two nations. In fact, we Midianites hated the Israelites so much that we were prepared to do almost anything to cause them harm, as you will learn.

When we heard that all those Israelites who had fornicated with Moabite and Ammonite prostitutes had been sentenced to death, my father decided to employ the same strategy to lure the Israelite leader to his death. However, instead of employing a prostitute to seduce Moses, he used me.

Before I could carry out his plan, a young Israelite named Zimri, the son of a Simeonite clan chief named Salu, turned up at our gates at the head of 24,000 men to claim me as his wife.¹¹²⁵

Astonished at his impudence, I protested,
“As a princess, the daughter of the chief of my people,
I have been instructed by my father to give myself only to your king, Moses.”
To this Zimri replied,
“I too am a prince of my tribe
and my tribe takes precedence over that of Moses.”¹¹²⁶

Before I could do anything to stop him, he grabbed me by the hair and dragged me before Moses, demanding,
“Moses, can I have this woman or not?”
To my great relief, Moses replied, “No.”
Zimri retorted,
“Then how is it that you were permitted to take a Midianite wife?”

¹¹²⁴ Numbers 25:15

COZBI, A MIDIANITE PRINCESS

¹¹²⁵ Numbers 25:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת פינחס פרשה כא: פרשת פינחס ג' [למה נכתב ייחוסו של פינחס]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/21.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש במדבר - פרשת פנחס ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01991.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L4

¹¹²⁶ Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/48218/jewish/Balak-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 82a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_82.html

It was obvious that Moses was completely taken aback by this question and didn't know how to answer. His people were equally shocked, less over Zimri's impudence than over the fact that their great leader had been rendered speechless. ¹¹²⁷

Without waiting for an answer, Zimri dragged me off to his tent and, despite my entreaties, proceeded to have intercourse with me.

¹¹²⁷ Numbers 25:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת בלק פרשה כ: פרשת בלק כד [זמרי]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/20.htm>

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/48218/jewish/Balak-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 82a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_82.html

NARRATOR

By openly defying Moses's edict against having relations with heathen women, Zimri was bound to be punished. However, it was not Moses who punished him but Phineas, the grandson of his brother, Aaron. Phineas said to Moses,

“Great Uncle!

Doesn't one of our laws state that any man having intercourse with a heathen woman will be punished by death?”

Looking relieved, Moses replied,

“Since you know the law so well, you may as well carry out punishment.”

Phineas took a spear, removed the tip and placed it under his clothes. Using the shaft of the spear as a walking stick, he walked over to the compound of the tribe of Simeon. On his arrival at Zimri's tent, he announced,

“Why should the tribe of Simeon have all the fun?

I want to enjoy the Midianite princess too.”

The Simeonites waiting in line outside Zimri's tent made way for him, saying,

“Let him enter. It looks as though Moses has changed his mind and all of us can now lie with heathen women.”

Luck was on Phineas's side. Zimri, caught in the middle of the sexual act, was so intent on what he was doing, that he did not notice Phineas enter. Replacing the tip on the shaft of his spear, Phineas drove it through the sexual organs of the couple writhing on the bed. He even managed to raise the spear aloft, with their two bodies impaled on it, and carry them back to where Moses was waiting. Fortunately, something had distracted Zimri's supporters so that they did not notice him leave.¹¹²⁸

Cozbi's father, Zur, was remembered as the clan chief who brought dishonor on his house, by forcing his own daughter into prostitution and leaving her to a cruel fate.

NARRATOR

¹¹²⁸ Numbers 25:7-8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9953/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 82a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_82.html

MAHLAH, ONE OF FIVE SISTERS

We were five sisters, ¹¹²⁹ all considered very clever, well-versed in the scriptures, God-fearing, ¹¹³⁰ beautiful and noble. ¹¹³¹ Yet very few had heard of us, until we took the unprecedented step of claiming our property rights in a court of law. ¹¹³²

Our father, Zelophehad, had been somewhat eccentric. People couldn't make up their minds whether he was crazy or not. ¹¹³³ He insisted on collecting wood for a fire on the Sabbath, the day on which we were forbidden to work. No warning deterred him. ¹¹³⁴ Eventually he was apprehended and brought before Moses and Aaron for judgment. ¹¹³⁵

MAHLAH, ONE OF FIVE SISTERS

¹¹²⁹ Numbers 27:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9955/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹¹³⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

¹¹³¹ ספרי זוטא - פרשת שלח עמוד 92

<https://beta.hebrewbooks.org/14529>

¹¹³² Midrash B'not Zelophehad Chapter 1

http://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_B'not_Zelophehad.1.1?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

¹¹³³ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_96.html

¹¹³⁴ Numbers 15:32 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9943/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

ספרי ספר במדבר - פרשת שלח-קורה לך בז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/tohen.asp?id=146>

Talmud

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45587/jewish/Shelach-In-Depth.htm

¹¹³⁵ Numbers 15:33 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9943/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 40b

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45587/jewish/Shelach-In-Depth.htm

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_40.html

With perfect equanimity, our father explained that, if he was punished for breaking the law, it would prove that Yahweh's laws still applied, even to those of his generation who would not be permitted to enter Canaan. He had merely wished to make this clear to those who thought differently.¹¹³⁶

In sentencing him to death, Moses and Aaron justified their verdict by explaining that they could only base their judgment on what Zelophehad had been seen to do, not on what had motivated him to do it. Some thought he was right to have acted as he did. Others thought he was completely in the wrong.¹¹³⁷ Even we had to admit that our father's punishment was not unjustified.¹¹³⁸ Before we could recover from the shock, he was taken out of the camp and stoned to death, leaving our family without a male at its head.¹¹³⁹

Just before we invaded Canaan, a census was conducted to determine how many able-bodied men we had for the battles ahead,¹¹⁴⁰ and how many families were eligible to receive land. When we heard that only those families headed by a male over twenty years of age would be allocated land, we knew we were in for trouble.¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁶ אוצרות מהרש"א - חלק ב עמוד 454

<http://hebrewbooks.org/50034>

Talmud Tosafot: Bava Batra 119b

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45587/jewish/Shelach-In-Depth.htm

Maharsha

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/45587/jewish/Shelach-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 118b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_118.html

¹¹³⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_96.html

¹¹³⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

¹¹³⁹ Numbers 15:36 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9943/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹¹⁴⁰ Numbers 26:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9954/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#showrashi=true

¹¹⁴¹ Numbers 26:53 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9954/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#showrashi=true

We said to each other,
“Yahweh doesn’t discriminate between men and women.
So why should man?”¹¹⁴²

It was well-known that women were more God-fearing than men. It was we women who repaired whatever the men broke. It was we women who had refused to donate our earrings to make the gold calf, and had tried to prevent our husbands from donating theirs.¹¹⁴³ It was we women who couldn’t wait to enter Canaan in order to receive land of our own, whereas, out of fear, our men had refused to do so.¹¹⁴⁴

After petitioning the lower courts, none of which was able to give us a ruling, but simply referred us to a higher court of law, we finally presented our case to the High Court, adjudicated by Moses and Elazar, our High Priest.¹¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁴² Numbers 27:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9955/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true
Psalm 145:9

ספרי פנחס לפרשת בלק פרק כה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=midrash_sefer&book=4&perek=25

ספרי מדרש הלכה לבמדבר ודברים

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/tohen.asp?id=146>

Yalkut Shimoni

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/49232/jewish/Pinchas-In-Depth.htm

¹¹⁴³ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת פינחס פרשה כא: פרשת פינחס י [הנשים לא היו בחטא דור המדבר]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/21.htm>

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/49232/jewish/Pinchas-In-Depth.htm

¹¹⁴⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת פינחס פרשה כא: פרשת פינחס י [הנשים לא היו בחטא דור המדבר]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/21.htm>

Great Commentary on Numbers

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/49232/jewish/Pinchas-In-Depth.htm

¹¹⁴⁵ Great Commentary on Numbers

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl08.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_119.html

Fortunately we arrived at an opportune moment. ¹¹⁴⁶ Moses was explaining the section on levirate marriages, where it is stated that, if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his widow to provide his brother with an heir. This gave me the idea how to present our case. ¹¹⁴⁷

I began, “Was our father considered childless because he fathered only daughters and not sons? No! For, had he been considered childless, then our mother would have been subject to the law of levirate marriage and married to one of our uncles.” ¹¹⁴⁸

I continued,
“Since she wasn’t married to one of our uncles, then it is obvious that our father was not considered childless. This being the case, in the allocation of land we have the same rights as sons, and should be awarded the same sized portion as that allotted to our father’s brothers.” ¹¹⁴⁹

Diplomatically I added,
“Of course, if our father had had a son, we would make no such claim.” ¹¹⁵⁰

¹¹⁴⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_119.html

¹¹⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 25:5 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9989/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 17b
http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_17.html
Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 22b
http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_22.html

¹¹⁴⁸ Numbers 27:2-3 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9955/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 118b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_118.html

¹¹⁴⁹ Numbers 27:4 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9955/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹¹⁵⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת פינחס פרשה כא: פרשת פינחס יא [בנות צלפחד חכמות וצדקניות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/21.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_119.html

Moses withdrew before giving his verdict.¹¹⁵¹ We thought it rather strange that, out of all the difficult matters that Moses had to adjudicate, this particular issue should have so perplexed him that he needed time to think about it.¹¹⁵²

Eventually he reappeared and announced,
“Zelophehad’s daughters are correct.
They have seen right to the heart of the matter.
They must certainly receive the same sized portion of land
as their father’s brothers.
In addition, they shall also have the portion
that their father inherited from his father.”¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁵¹ Numbers 27:5

Maor v’Shemesh

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/49232/jewish/Pinchas-In-Depth.htm

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf

¹¹⁵² Great Commentary on Numbers

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl08.htm>

¹¹⁵³ Numbers 27:6-11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9955/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת פינחס פרשה כא: פרשת פינחס יב [ויקרב משה את משפטן]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/21.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת בבא בתרא דף כב,ב פרק ח הלכה ב

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r43.htm>

Unfortunately our battle wasn't yet over. No sooner had Moses announced the change in the law than the clan chiefs of Manasseh appealed against his decision, claiming,

“It's all very well granting Zelophehad's daughters their father's portion of land.

If they marry a member of another tribe, any sons they bear will be considered as belonging to their father's tribe, as will their inheritance.”¹¹⁵⁴

Moses replied, “You're right.

Therefore, Zelophehad's daughters can only marry someone from their father's tribe.

In this way their property will be kept in the family.”¹¹⁵⁵

Left with no choice, we married our cousins. I was the first to marry, then came Tirzah, followed by Hoglah, Milcah and finally our youngest sister, Noah.¹¹⁵⁶ Although none of us was particularly young, we were still able to bear children.¹¹⁵⁷ I felt proud to think that, as a result of our bringing our case before a court of law, the law of inheritance was changed in favor of us women.¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵⁴ Numbers 36:1-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9964/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹¹⁵⁵ Numbers 36:5-8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9964/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 116a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_116.html

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 120a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_120.html

¹¹⁵⁶ Numbers 36:10-12

¹¹⁵⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 119b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_119.html

¹¹⁵⁸ מסכת שמחות פרק ה הלכה יד

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA_%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%97%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%97

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http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pagefeed/hebrewbooks_org_50385_129.pdf

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 8a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_8.html

Moses then allotted the land we had already conquered on the east bank of the Jordan.¹¹⁵⁹ This was one of his last acts as our leader. When the time came for him to die, after giving us his final blessing, he ascended Mount Nebo and was never seen again. Nor is it known where he was buried.¹¹⁶⁰

Moses was unique, if only for the fact that he was on such good terms with Yahweh that he could talk to Him face to face, as a friend.¹¹⁶¹ He possessed all the best qualities to be found in a man - humility, wisdom, prudence, nobility, a forgiving disposition, unselfishness, lack of envy and a sweet, gentle nature. Yet he was also a great statesman, a successful general, a wise judge, an eloquent prophet, a good friend and a pious worshipper of Yahweh.¹¹⁶² Nevertheless, great as he was, even Moses was unable to escape death.¹¹⁶³

NARRATOR

The story goes that Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, the first five Books of the Bible, continued writing the Book of Deuteronomy right up till his death. Although a hundred and twenty years old, he could still see perfectly well.¹¹⁶⁴ The moment he died, the pen, with which he had been recording Yahweh's words, slipped from his fingers and was taken up by Joshua, who completed the last eight verses before starting the book that bears his name.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 3:13-15

¹¹⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 34:1, 5-6

¹¹⁶¹ Deuteronomy 34:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9998/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true

¹¹⁶² Great Commentary on Deuteronomy

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl09.htm>

¹¹⁶³ Midrash Tanhuma

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl04.htm>

NARRATOR

¹¹⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 34:7

¹¹⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 34:5-10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9998/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15a

https://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_15.html

CHAPTER 23
THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN
The Book of Joshua
The Book of Judges

With Moses dead, it fell to his successor, Joshua, to lead his people across the River Jordan into Canaan. To the semi-nomadic Israelites, who had no previous experience of siege warfare, their first encounter with fortified cities like Jericho and Ai must have been daunting. So, how did they manage to overcome a more experienced, better trained enemy, possessing superior military technology in the form of chariots?

The answer is through exploiting the enemy's disunity (a peace agreement with the Hivites), superior intelligence (the use of spies), well-planned logistics (using Gilgal as an operational base) and unconventional tactics (employing deception rather than frontal assaults). As for the chariots, they were of no advantage in the hilly regions of Canaan.

A prostitute named Rahab tells the story of how her city of Jericho was the first to be destroyed (Joshua Chapters 2 and 6).

A woman from the city of Gibeon describes how her people, the Hivites, one of the seven tribes inhabiting Canaan, instead of preparing for war like the other tribes, used cunning to survive (Joshua Chapter 9).

The wife of an Israelite, named Achan, relates how her greedy husband not only jeopardized the lives of his family, but also the success of the conquest (Joshua Chapter 7).

Finally Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, provides us with an example of female initiative in a patriarchal society (Joshua Chapter 15 and Judges Chapter 1).

RAHAB OF JERICHO, JOSHUA'S WIFE

As an unmarried woman with no children, I had always supported myself. For forty years I worked as a prostitute, ¹¹⁶⁶ servicing our country's elite. ¹¹⁶⁷ When I retired, I used my savings to open an inn in the city wall. As a sideline I sold food, ¹¹⁶⁸ fine linen which I wove myself, ¹¹⁶⁹ and home-made perfume. ¹¹⁷⁰

A new tribe, called the Israelites, had recently arrived in the area and was encamped in an acacia grove on the other side of the River Jordan, facing our city of Jericho. Assisted by a deity called Yahweh, who performed prodigious feats that could scarcely be believed, they were said to be ferocious fighters who left no one alive. ¹¹⁷¹

CHAPTER 23 THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

RAHAB OF JERICHO, JOSHUA'S WIFE

¹¹⁶⁶ מכילתא – שמות פרשת יתרו מסכת עמלק פרשה א פרק יח [יא, א] וישמע יתרו –

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/mehilta/shmot18.htm>

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק ב סימן ט 10.

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefareash=shimoni

Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 116b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

¹¹⁶⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 116b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק ב סימן ט 10.

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefareash=shimoni

ספרי זוטא בהעלותך עמוד 3-52

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14529>

¹¹⁶⁸ Joshua 2:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

תרגום יונתן לנביאים ראשונים יהושע פרק ב עמוד 3

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

בי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק)

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefareash=radak

¹¹⁶⁹ I Chronicles 4:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16524/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה מגילת רות פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/rut/2-2.htm#2>

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%90

¹¹⁷⁰ מדרש רבה מגילת רות פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/rut/2-2.htm#2>

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%90

¹¹⁷¹ Joshua 2:9-10

We entertained no illusions. Because our city blocked their advance, we knew that the moment they crossed the river into Canaan, we would be the first to be attacked.

One evening two strangers knocked at my door, requesting food and lodging for the night.¹¹⁷² Although I had my suspicions, I invited them in. My suspicions were confirmed the next morning, when I heard that the king's men were conducting a house-to-house search for two spies.¹¹⁷³ I did not panic as other women would have done. By the time the soldiers reached my house, my guests were already safely hidden under the flax drying on my roof.¹¹⁷⁴

¹¹⁷² Joshua 2:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786#showrashi=true

¹¹⁷³ Joshua 2 :2-3

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

¹¹⁷⁴ Joshua 2:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה, מגילת רות פרשה ב

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רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, ד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

After sending the soldiers off on a wild goose chase along the River Jordan,¹¹⁷⁵ I gave my two guests the all-clear.¹¹⁷⁶ They made no effort to hide the fact that they were Israelite spies, sent to gauge the mood of our citizens. As a former prostitute whose customers had included every important man in the region, and as an innkeeper whose customers included the same, I was able to supply them with all the information they required.

No doubt you are asking yourselves why I was so willing to betray my own people? I did so because it was clear that the Israelites would easily conquer, not just our city but the whole country. The very mention of their name was enough to strike fear in every heart.¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷⁵ Joshua 2:4-7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה מגילת רות פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/rut/2-2.htm#2>

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%90

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, ה]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

¹¹⁷⁶ Joshua 2:8

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, ה]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, ז]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

¹¹⁷⁷ Joshua 2:9-11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 116a

<http://www.halakhah.com/rst/kodoshim/41d%20-%20Zevachim%20-%2091b-128b.pdf>

ספרי על דברים פסוק ג

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%9C%D7%91

ספרי על דברים פסוק כה

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%99%D7%90

ילקוט שמעוני י

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=shimoni

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, יא]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

רבי לוי בן גרשום (רלב"ג)

http://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%9C%D7%91%22%D7%92_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%A2_%D7%91

I asked the spies to leave before the soldiers returned,¹¹⁷⁸ but not before making them swear to do everything in their power to save me and my family.¹¹⁷⁹

The spies looked at each other and said,

“If you promise not to give us away, then we swear by our lives to protect you. We assure you that you and your family will be well treated.”¹¹⁸⁰

“All my family?” I asked. “No matter how many?”

“No matter how many,” was the reply.¹¹⁸¹

¹¹⁷⁸ The Antiquities of the Jews Book V Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

¹¹⁷⁹ Joshua 2:12-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, יב]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, יז]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, יט]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

¹¹⁸⁰ Joshua 2:14

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) [ב, יד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=radak

רבי לוי בן גרשום (רלב"ג) פסוק כ

http://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%9C%D7%91%22%D7%92_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%A2_%D7%91

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1

http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_V&oldid=603355

¹¹⁸¹ מדרש רבה מגילת רות פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/rut/2-2.htm#2>

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91_%D7%90

תלמוד ירושלמי סדר זרעים מסכת ברכות פרק ד דף לה, א פרק ד הלכה ד גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r11.htm>

Following the spies' instructions, only when I saw the Israelites advancing, did I tie a red cord outside my window to mark where I lived.¹¹⁸² Every day, for the next six days, the Israelite army marched round the walls of our city, always in the same order. First came two-and-a-half elite divisions, followed by seven priests blowing loud blasts on their horns. Next walked a group of men, bearing an object covered in flags suspended from two poles. Behind these marched the rest of the Israelite army. Apart from the incessant blasts of their ram's horns, they made no other sound. After completing a full circuit of our city, they returned to their camp.¹¹⁸³

By the seventh day the Israelites were no longer a source of curiosity. Some of my fellow citizens, tired of climbing the walls every day to watch them, didn't bother to show up at all. So when, after circling the city, the Israelites did not return to their camp as usual but continued marching, we were taken by surprise. The noise of their ram's horns was so deafening that those citizens who had remained at home came running to see what was happening.

After circling the city seven times, the Israelites came to a halt. All of them, not only their soldiers but all their non-combatants, let out a great shout. The noise was excruciating.¹¹⁸⁴ The shouting continued for quite some time and then abruptly ceased, the horns fell silent and there was a deathly hush. Time seemed to slow down as cracks began to appear in the city walls and the walls started crumbling before our eyes. Then, to our horror, the city walls of Jericho, the same walls that had protected us for generations and that we had thought invincible, collapsed almost completely. The only part left standing was that in which my inn was located.

¹¹⁸² רבי ישעיה ב"ר מאלי די טראני - רי"ד

http://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A2%D7%99%D7%94_%D7%93%D7%99_%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%A2_%D7%91

¹¹⁸³ Joshua 6:2-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15790/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק ב

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=6&perek=3

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) יהושע פרק ו ט

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=6&mefaresh=radak

¹¹⁸⁴ Joshua 6:15-16, 20

The Israelite army poured over the rubble into the city and started slaughtering its inhabitants. From the safety of my inn we could hear the screams of the dying. It was the most terrible sound I have ever heard.¹¹⁸⁵ Instead of thanking Yerach, the crescent moon god of Jericho, I found myself thanking Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, for withholding from my sight the ghastly scenes outside.¹¹⁸⁶

By now my family was in a state of shock. They almost jumped out of their skins when there was a loud knocking on the door. Even I experienced a few qualms as I opened it. Anyone could have been outside. Fortunately it was the two spies, Pinchas and Caleb, who had been sent by their leader to conduct us to safety. We were the only citizens of Jericho to survive.¹¹⁸⁷

¹¹⁸⁵ Joshua 6:21

¹¹⁸⁶ כנעניות: הדת העתיקה של ארץ ישראל
<https://web.archive.org/web/20090324113116/http://witchcraft.co.il/creligion.htm>
New World Encyclopedia Canaanite Religion
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Canaanite_Religion

¹¹⁸⁷ Joshua 6:22 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15790/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true

ACHAN'S WIFE

The destruction of Jericho, one of the most strongly fortified of the Canaanite cities, left us feeling positively euphoric. If we had overcome Jericho so easily then, surely, we would have no trouble with the next city on our line of march - the much smaller city of Ai.

Just as he had done before we took Jericho, our leader, Joshua, a cautious man who left nothing to chance, sent out a scouting party to reconnoiter the area.¹¹⁸⁸ The scouts reported that the city was poorly guarded and only a small detachment of the army was necessary to take it.

The last thing we expected was to see this force return with its tail between its legs. Not only had they failed to take the city, but had lost thirty-six men in the attempt.¹¹⁸⁹ No-one needed to be told what a calamity this was. Once the Canaanite tribes heard that our soldiers had turned about and ran, they would lose no time in attacking us.¹¹⁹⁰

We were summoned to a public meeting at which Joshua announced, "The reason for this catastrophe is that one of you has disobeyed my order not to take any booty from Jericho."¹¹⁹¹ Tomorrow we will find out who that person is by a process of elimination, first between the tribes, then between the clans of the guilty tribe, then between the families of the guilty clan, and finally between the members of the guilty family."¹¹⁹²

ACHAN'S WIFE

¹¹⁸⁸ Joshua 7:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹¹⁸⁹ Joshua 7:3-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹¹⁹⁰ Joshua 7:8-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹¹⁹¹ Joshua 7:11-12

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b-44a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_44.html

¹¹⁹² Joshua 7:13-15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

The next morning, the process of elimination began.¹¹⁹³ It entailed marching past the High Priest whose breastplate was adorned with twelve precious gems representing each of our twelve tribes. When the tribe of Judah marched past, the color of its gem faded unmistakably. In this way we knew that the culprit came from the tribe of Judah. I don't have to tell you that we Judahites were aghast at the thought that it was one of us.¹¹⁹⁴

It was now the turn of all the clans of Judah to march past the High Priest. To our horror, Achan's grandfather, Zabdi, the head of our clan, was arrested.¹¹⁹⁵ So now all Zabdi's family had to march past the High Priest. When it came to our turn, Achan held back, until he was forcibly pulled forwards by Joshua's attendants, at which point he too was arrested.¹¹⁹⁶ I looked at him in horror. My husband, guilty of such a crime? Surely not!

¹¹⁹³ מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹¹⁹⁴ Joshua 7:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Exodus 28:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9889/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Zevachim 88b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Zevachim.pdf>

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

¹¹⁹⁵ Joshua 7:17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹¹⁹⁶ Joshua 7:18

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Considering the enormity of the offense, Joshua spoke to Achan in a remarkably mild tone of voice. He asked my husband to confess what he had done, implying that, if he did so, he would not be punished.¹¹⁹⁷ What was my husband's reaction? Instead of confessing, Achan started protesting his innocence, claiming that the search had been conducted in an unfair manner.¹¹⁹⁸ Joshua stopped him in mid-sentence by telling him that it was by far the fairest method, one he intended to use when allotting us land.¹¹⁹⁹

Achan looked around for support. When he saw our clansmen drawing their swords to defend him, he must have realized that innocent blood was about to be spilt, and he immediately confessed that he was the culprit.¹²⁰⁰ In a low voice he admitted that he had, indeed, smuggled a few insignificant items out of the city and buried them under the bed in our tent. When I heard this, I could not help shuddering at the thought that all this time I had been sleeping over something so taboo.¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹⁷ Joshua 7:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹¹⁹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

¹¹⁹⁹ Joshua 7:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

¹²⁰⁰ Joshua 7:20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹²⁰¹ Joshua 7:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:10

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

מדרש תנחומא - בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

Before any of our family could rush back to our tent and hide them, Joshua sent his men to fetch the offending articles.¹²⁰² When we saw them laid out on the ground at our feet, we could not believe that Achan had thought an embroidered cloak and some silver and gold valuable enough to risk defying the ban.¹²⁰³ Joshua turned to my husband and asked him,

“Is this worth the lives of thirty-six men?”
What could Achan say?¹²⁰⁴

Following this, we had to endure the humiliation of being escorted under arms to a gloomy valley, not far from Jericho, named Achor. When I say we, I mean all of us and everything we owned - me, our sons and daughters, our flocks, our possessions and, of course, the forbidden items that Achan had smuggled out of Jericho.¹²⁰⁵ Then Joshua pronounced sentence and my husband was stoned to death. Everything we owned was burned to a cinder.

¹²⁰² Joshua 7:22

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁰³ Joshua 7:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁰⁴ מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת וישב ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 44a

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_44.html

¹²⁰⁵ Joshua 7:24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

My children and I gazed down at the smoldering embers, numb with shock and unable to utter a word.¹²⁰⁶ We watched as Joshua's men built a large cairn of stones over the place where my husband had met his death.¹²⁰⁷

Did I feel any pity for my husband? Of course I pitied him! However, I was furious at the way he had placed us all in danger and left us paupers. And all for a garment and a little silver and gold!

NARRATOR

Some sources claim that not only Achan was punished by death but all his family with him.¹²⁰⁸

¹²⁰⁶ Joshua 7:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 44a

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_44.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:14

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²⁰⁷ Joshua 7:26 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15791/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 15a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

NARRATOR

¹²⁰⁸ Joshua 22:20

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 38

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 43b-44a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_44.html

THE HIVITE WOMAN FROM GIBEON

While all the other tribes were preparing for battle, ¹²⁰⁹ mine decided to employ cunning to save us from the merciless Israelites. ¹²¹⁰ A delegation was dispatched to the Israelite base camp at Gilgal, dressed in threadbare clothes and shod in sandals that had obviously seen better days. Their donkeys were saddled with worn sacks, over which hung empty wineskins of cracked leather and pouches filled with moldy bread. All this was to convince the Israelites that the members of the delegation had not come from Canaan, but from far away. ¹²¹¹

On their arrival, the delegates told the Israelite leader, Joshua, that they had come from a distant land in order to sign a peace treaty with his people. ¹²¹²

Joshua asked,

“How do I know that you’re not one of the Canaanite tribes?” ¹²¹³

They answered, “We are entirely at your disposal. Ask us anything you like.”

Joshua said, “So tell me who you are and from where you come.”

They replied, “Our country is far from here.

When we heard of the miracles your deity performed,

both in Egypt and on the east bank of the Jordan,

our leaders appointed us to sign a peace treaty with you.

Look, here is the proof that we do not come from Canaan.”

They showed him the bread from their pouches.

“When we left our country, this bread was fresh.

Look how moldy it is now.” ¹²¹⁴

THE HIVITE WOMAN FROM GIBEON

¹²⁰⁹ Joshua 9:1-2

¹²¹⁰ Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:16

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²¹¹ Joshua 9:3-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15793/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:16

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²¹² Joshua 9:6

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:16

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²¹³ Joshua 9:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15793/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²¹⁴ Joshua 9:8-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15793/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Then they showed him the wineskins.

“When we set out, these wineskins were brand new and full of wine.

Now they are cracked and empty.”

They pointed to their clothes.

“Look how we’re dressed. Do we look as though we live nearby?”

In this way our delegates succeeded in overcoming Joshua’s suspicions and returned home, triumphantly waving a peace treaty. ¹²¹⁵

Three days later the Israelites arrived in our area, about forty or fifty furlongs from Jerusalem, ¹²¹⁶ only to discover that they had been deceived and that the so-called ‘travelers from afar’ were none other but local Canaanites. ¹²¹⁷ They were so angry that they would have killed us, had they not been prevented from doing so by the terms of the treaty. ¹²¹⁸ Instead, we became their slaves. ¹²¹⁹

¹²¹⁵ [Joshua 9:13-15 Rashi Commentary](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15793/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary)
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15793/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:16
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²¹⁶ Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 1:7
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-7.htm>
The Wars of The Jews Book 2 Chapter 19:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/war-2.htm>

¹²¹⁷ Joshua 9:16-17

¹²¹⁸ Joshua 9:18-19

¹²¹⁹ Joshua 9:21

RAHAB OF JERICHO, JOSHUA'S WIFE

After recovering from our harrowing experience in Jericho, I and my family were required to convert to the worship of Yahweh before being accepted into the Israelite camp.¹²²⁰ As a reward for saving the two spies, I was given money and a plot of land to support us.¹²²¹

Apart from Pinchas and Caleb, the only person to show any interest in us was the Israelite leader, Joshua. Like everyone else, I was slightly in awe of him and barely knew what to say. Gradually I overcame my shyness until I was able to chat with him quite freely.

Then something completely unexpected happened. Joshua asked me to be his wife!¹²²² A more unlikely match you could not imagine. Joshua had never married, whilst I made no attempt to hide my past. We hardly knew each other, neither of us was particularly young and love didn't come into it. However, one doesn't turn down a proposal of marriage from a man like Joshua, so we were married without further ado.¹²²³

Only after I had acquainted myself with the legends of his people, did I realize why Joshua had married me. Like Joseph and Moses before him, he had married a convert in order to demonstrate that we were as worthy as anyone born into the Israelite faith.¹²²⁴

RAHAB OF JERICHO, JOSHUA'S WIFE

¹²²⁰ Joshua 6:25

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) יהושע פרק ו כג

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=6&mefareash=radak

¹²²¹ ספרי זוטא בהעלותך עמוד 3-52

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14529>

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) יהושע פרק ו כה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=6&mefareash=radak

¹²²² Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹²²³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 20a

https://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_20.html

רבי דוד בן יוסף קמחי (רד"ק) יהושע פרק ו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=6&mefareash=radak

¹²²⁴ מדרש רבה קהלת

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/kohelet-raba/raba-kohelet8.htm>

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תנינא פרשה ז א (*)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

NARRATOR

After Rahab converted to the worship of Yahweh, she became more devout than many Israelites.¹²²⁵ Although she bore Joshua only daughters,¹²²⁶ they all married priests.¹²²⁷ Many holy men were said to be descended from her.¹²²⁸

Joshua retired to Timnath-Serah in the Ephraim Mountains.¹²²⁹ Although an old man, he lived for another twenty years, spending most of his retirement writing the book that bears his name.¹²³⁰

NARRATOR

1225 מדרש תדשא פרק כא עמוד 20

<http://hebrewbooks.org/49989>

1226 Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

1227 מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה ח: גרים ט [שכרו של המתגייר לשם שמים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

1228 מדרש רבה מגילת רות פ"א

<http://www.daat.ac.il/encyclopedia/value.asp?id1=1486>

מדרש רבה מגילת רות פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/rut/2-2.htm#2>

מדרש רבה מגילת רות

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%90

ספרי זוטא בהעלותך עמוד 53

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14529>

ספרי על במדבר י בהעלותך פסוק כט

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8_%D7%99

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק ב סימן ט 10

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefaresh=shimoni

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Midrash Ruth

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm12.htm>

1229 Joshua 19:49-50

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:28

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

1230 Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 15a

https://halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_15.html

Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 11a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

After governing his people for thirty-eight years, ¹²³¹ he died at the age of a hundred and ten and was buried in the family plot on the northern face of Gaash Hill. ¹²³² Many people found his funeral disappointing and said that there could have been more speeches. ¹²³³

Joshua was remembered as the man who caused the sun to stand still so that his people could successfully conclude a battle against their enemies. ¹²³⁴ Ironically the ‘casus belli’ was an attack by five Aramean kings on the same Gibeonites who had deceived him into signing a peace treaty. ¹²³⁵

¹²³¹ סדר עולם עמוד 18 פרק 54

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sederolam/sederolam01.pdf>
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/tohen.asp?id=785>

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק כד סימן לה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=24&mefaresh=shimoni

¹²³² Joshua 24:29-30

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 1:29

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²³³ Joshua 24:30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15808/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק כד סימן לה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=6&perek=24&mefaresh=shimoni

¹²³⁴ Joshua 24:30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15808/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²³⁵ Joshua 10:1-14

ACHSAH, DAUGHTER OF CALEB

“Achsah! Where are you? I’ve something important to tell you,” called my mother, Maacah, sounding alarmed.¹²³⁶ Normally she was the most placid person you could wish to meet. Nothing seemed to ruffle her. This was probably the reason why my father had taken her as a concubine¹²³⁷ after the death of his first wife, Miriam, who was reputed to have been a regular firebrand.¹²³⁸

I stopped what I was doing and hastened to hear what she had to say. What I heard shocked me deeply.

We lived in uncertain times. For over forty years my people had led a semi-nomadic existence in the search for a country of our own. Then, having found it, it had taken us years to displace its inhabitants. Although there still remained much to do, Joshua, our leader, had judged it time to begin allocating land.

When my father, Caleb, son of Jephunneh, learned that our tribe of Judah had been allotted land in the area south of Jerusalem, he had lost no time in staking his claim to Hebron.¹²³⁹ Hebron was where the Mothers and Fathers were buried. Occupied by a giant named Arba¹²⁴⁰ and his three sons, it was known as Kiryat Arba, the ‘City of Four’.¹²⁴¹

ACHSAH, DAUGHTER OF CALEB

¹²³⁶ I Chronicles Chapter 2:48-49 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16522/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

¹²³⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת שמות פרשה א: ואלה שמות יז [ויעש להן בתים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/1.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 12a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>

¹²³⁸ Numbers 12:1

Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 16b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

¹²³⁹ Joshua 14:6-14

¹²⁴⁰ Joshua 14:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15798/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹²⁴¹ Joshua 15:14

Judges 1:10

Even at the age of eighty-five my father still possessed prodigious strength.
¹²⁴² Instead of appointing a younger man to lead our men into battle, he took command himself, driving out the giants from Kiryat Arba. ¹²⁴³

Then he turned his attention to Kiryat Sefer. ¹²⁴⁴ Since my father no longer had to prove anything to anyone, or perhaps because he was simply tired of fighting, he decided to give someone else the honor of taking the city. He summoned his warriors and announced,

“Whoever is able to take Kiryat Sefer,
to him will I give my daughter’s hand in marriage.” ¹²⁴⁵

This was the news that my mother had come to tell me. It meant that I would have to marry any man brave enough and strong enough to take the city. Even, perish the thought, a slave!

Daughters don’t usually count for much, even though, as in my case, we are often cleverer than our brothers, who care only about fighting and winning wars. However, as the only daughter of my father’s favorite concubine, I was the apple of his eye and could usually twist him round my little finger. Therefore, I was very hurt that my father hadn’t thought to consult me or my mother before using me as bait.

I was considered a great beauty, so beautiful that many husbands regretted that they had married their wives and not me. If I hadn’t been so beautiful, I doubt if anyone would have accepted my father’s challenge. Taking on the gigantic inhabitants of Kiryat Sefer was no easy task.

¹²⁴² Joshua 14:6-10 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15798/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#t=primary&showrashi=true

¹²⁴³ Joshua 15:14 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true
Judges 1:20

¹²⁴⁴ Joshua 15:15
Judges 1:11

¹²⁴⁵ Joshua 15:16
Judges 1:12

The man who conquered the city was Othniel, my father's younger half-brother.¹²⁴⁶ When I learned this, I complained to my father,
"Uncle Othniel may be a great warrior and a great scholar,
but he's a bad provider.
At least give us some means of supporting ourselves."¹²⁴⁷
So my father gave us a plot of land in the south of the country.

Since my husband spent all his time studying the law, it was left to me to ensure we didn't starve. After digging wells in various locations, I soon discovered we had no source of water. As everyone knows, land without water is useless.¹²⁴⁸ Therefore, I persuaded Othniel to approach my father and ask for an extra plot of land, this time with an existing water source.

Standing before my father, Othniel was so overawed that he couldn't say a word. I realized that if I didn't act quickly, we were in danger of leaving empty-handed. So, according to custom, I descended from my donkey and threw myself down at my father's feet.

My father looked down at me and asked, "What do you want?"¹²⁴⁹
I thought quickly. I didn't want him to think we were being greedy.
That would just make him angry and he might give us nothing.
I knew that my father loved puns, so I replied,
"Please give me a blessing."

¹²⁴⁶ Joshua Chapter 15:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

Judges Chapter 1:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15809/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ג [אליעזר נענה למרות ששאל שלא כהוגן]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

¹²⁴⁷ Judges 1:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15809/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: T'murah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Tmura.pdf>

¹²⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 33:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9997/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#lt=both&showrashi=true

¹²⁴⁹ Joshua Chapter 15:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

Now the word in Hebrew for ‘blessing’ is very similar to the word for ‘pool’. My father, who had a very agile mind, immediately understood what I meant and, with a half-smile on his face, granted my request. This is how we were given another plot of land containing a series of springs.¹²⁵⁰

I felt pleased with myself. Thanks to my quick wits, I had proved the equal of both my husband and my father, both great men and warriors of renown. We now possessed a means of earning our living which meant that, while I superintended the running of our house and farm, my husband could pursue his study of the law.

In the end he became such an expert¹²⁵¹ that he was appointed chief judge of our people.¹²⁵² He reintroduced all the laws that had fallen into disuse since the time of Moses¹²⁵³ and, under his rule, our people enjoyed peace for forty years.¹²⁵⁴

¹²⁵⁰ Joshua 15:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true

Judges Chapter 1:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15809/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

¹²⁵¹ Babylonian Talmud: T'murah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Tmurah.pdf>

¹²⁵² Judges Chapter 3:7-10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁵³ Babylonian Talmud: T'murah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Tmurah.pdf>

¹²⁵⁴ Judges Chapter 3:11

Part 8
Judges of Israel

CHAPTER 24
THE WILD WEST BANK
The Book of Judges

We have now reached the period of the Biblical 'Wild West', when every man was a law unto himself. When Joshua died, the Israelites had not yet completed the conquest of all the territory Yahweh had promised them. Moreover, Joshua left no successor. With no central authority to unite them, the Israelite tribes fell prey to their hostile neighbors. This was regarded as a punishment from Yahweh incurred for intermarriage and idol-worship. In every case, just when things could get no worse, a leader would emerge and lead the Israelites to victory against their enemies, after which peace would reign until his death. Then the cycle would recommence.

These intermittent wars came to be known as 'The Wars of Yahweh' and the Israelite leaders who waged them as 'judges', although the position they filled was more that of a military leader than a judge. The following chapters tell the story of the twelve men and one woman mentioned in the Book of Judges, who 'judged Israel'. In the order in which they appear in the text they are Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Yair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon and Samson.

Ehud, coming after Othniel, is not mentioned specifically as a judge, although his story follows the same basic pattern as the others, while the infamous Abimelech, an illegitimate son of Judge Gideon, was the antithesis of a judge. The First Book of Samuel also mentions as judges the priest, Eli, and his two no-good sons, as well as the kingmaker, Samuel, and his two equally disappointing offspring.

Othniel, we met in the last chapter as the husband of Achsah, the daughter of Caleb. After he successfully defeated the king of Aram (Upper Mesopotamia), there was peace in the land for forty years. About Shamgar, Tola, Yair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, there is not much to say. This leaves us with Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah and Samson.

However, to illustrate the lawlessness of the period, we shall start with two tales that appear at the very end of the Book of Judges. The first, related by the mother of a man named Micah, living in the Ephraim Mountains, reveals how far belief in Yahweh had become tainted by Canaanite religious practice (Judges Chapters 17-18).

The second, related by a Levite's concubine from Bethlehem and the daughter of a citizen of the Benjamite town of Gibeah, is a particularly gruesome account of how the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely wiped out (Judges Chapter 19).

MICAH'S MOTHER

For years I had been saving my silver coins to have two images of Yahweh made for our family shrine, one of silver and one of stone. Imagine my shock when I discovered my coins missing. After searching the house high and low, I realized that someone must have stolen them. Furious at the loss of my savings, I cursed the unknown thief with the worst misfortunes I could think of. When my son, Micah, heard me cursing, his face turned white. He admitted that it was he who had stolen my coins and promised to return them immediately, if only I would retract my words. ¹²⁵⁵

On the return of my coins I didn't hesitate, but immediately placed an order for a statue with a stone mason and a figurine of Yahweh with the local foundry. When they were ready, I had them brought to our house and placed in our shrine, where they joined Micha's replica of the High Priest's breast-plate and our family gods. ¹²⁵⁶

Our shrine at Gareb outside Jerusalem was so close to that of Yahweh's at Shiloh that the columns of smoke from their sacrifices intermingled. While some complained that this was an effrontery to Yahweh, most admitted that our shrine served a useful purpose, by providing travelers on their way to worship at the Sanctuary with board and lodging. ¹²⁵⁷

At first, for want of anyone better, Micah had appointed one of his sons to officiate at our shrine. ¹²⁵⁸ Then came a stroke of luck. A young Levite turned up at our door. The tribe of Levites, lacking territory of their own, lived in cities scattered throughout the country. As a result, their young men were often forced to travel the country in search of work. ¹²⁵⁹

CHAPTER 24 THE WILD WEST BANK

MICAH'S MOTHER

¹²⁵⁵ Judges 17:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

¹²⁵⁶ Judges 17:3-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

¹²⁵⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

¹²⁵⁸ Judges 17:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

¹²⁵⁹ Judges 17:7-8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Levite introduced himself as Jonathan, the son of Gershom. Upon learning that he was seeking employment, Micha jumped at the opportunity to hire him, so that the young man – who was knowledgeable in the law – could both instruct him and to officiate at our shrine.¹²⁶⁰ In return he received clothing, board and lodging, plus a salary of ten silver coins per annum.¹²⁶¹ Micah was very pleased with himself for having found a Levite priest, convinced that this would earn him Yahweh’s favor.¹²⁶²

In those days there wasn’t much law and order. Not all the tribes had managed to take possession of the land allotted to them by Joshua.¹²⁶³ One evening, five strangers appeared at our door, seeking board and lodging for the night. You could tell, just by looking at them, that they were no ordinary wayfarers but professional soldiers, not to be trifled with. In no way did this prevent Micha from extending them the wholehearted hospitality for which he was so famous.¹²⁶⁴ During their stay I noticed that they engaged in long conversations with our Levite priest, but, at the time, attached no importance to it.¹²⁶⁵

Therefore, we were totally unprepared when they turned up again, this time with all the other members of their tribe, the tribe of Dan. Leading them was a troop of six hundred soldiers. The five men detached themselves from the troop, entered our shrine and emerged holding our household gods, the ephod and my two statues. Instead of trying to stop them, Jonathan, our priest, took our sacred objects from them and followed them out of our compound. No word of thanks! No word of farewell! This was the thanks we got for treating him like one of the family.¹²⁶⁶

¹²⁶⁰ Judges 17:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

¹²⁶¹ Judges 17:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15825/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

¹²⁶² Judges 17:11-13

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 109b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_109.html

¹²⁶³ Judges 18:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15826/jewish/Chapter-18.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

¹²⁶⁴ Judges 18:2

¹²⁶⁵ Judges 18:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15826/jewish/-18.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

¹²⁶⁶ Judges 18:11-20

Speechless with indignation, we watched them depart, their flocks, carts and camp followers preceding the main force. ¹²⁶⁷

Rumor soon reached us about what happened when they reached the city of Laish in the northeast of Canaan. The city was conquered and burnt to the ground. ¹²⁶⁸ No one came to the aid of its citizens, because it was so remote and they had failed to take the elementary precaution of signing mutual defense pacts with their neighbors.

On the same spot, in memory of the son of Jacob who had founded their tribe, the Danites built a new city called Dan. ¹²⁶⁹ We learned that my carved statue and silver figurine, and Micah's ephod and household gods, now stood in their tribal shrine.

As for Jonathan, our Levite priest, from being a common wayfarer wandering the country in search of a livelihood, that ingrate now filled the important position of tribal priest. ¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶⁷ Judges 18:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15826/jewish/-18.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

¹²⁶⁸ Judges 18:27

¹²⁶⁹ Judges 18:28-29

¹²⁷⁰ Judges 8:30-31 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15826/jewish/Chapter-18.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE

For several years I had been living with a man from the tribe of Levi. After he flew into a rage over something so trivial as a hair in his soup,¹²⁷¹ I decided to return home to my parents in Bethlehem.¹²⁷² Four months later who should turn up but my husband, demanding my return.¹²⁷³ Although my father pretended to be overjoyed to see him, he did everything in his power to delay our departure, fearing that I might come to some harm.¹²⁷⁴ Eventually he ran out of excuses and I was forced to accompany my husband back home.

We set off with our team of donkeys and, towards nightfall, reached the city of Jerusalem, which was then occupied by the Jebusites. There our servant suggested we spend the night. Since my husband didn't want to take a chance of being attacked, we continued on to the nearest Israelite town, which happened to be Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.¹²⁷⁵

Fortunately we made it to Gibeah by sunset, before the gates were closed for the night. As was the custom, we sat in the town square, waiting for someone to offer us shelter. We had almost given up hope when an old man stopped to talk. It turned out that, like my husband, he too originated from the Ephraim Mountains. When he asked us where we were going, we told him that we were on our way to the Sanctuary at Shiloh. My husband then explained that no-one had offered to take us in, even though we had plenty of food as well as fodder for our donkeys. Hearing this, the old man didn't hesitate but begged us to stay with him.¹²⁷⁶

THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE

¹²⁷¹ Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 6b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_6.html

¹²⁷² Judges 19:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15827/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

¹²⁷³ Judges 19:3

¹²⁷⁴ Judges 19:4-9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15827/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

Jewish Woman's Archive

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/concubine-of-levite-midrash-and-aggadah>

¹²⁷⁵ Judges 19:10-13 Rashi Commentary

¹²⁷⁶ Judges 19:14-21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15827/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

While enjoying the old man's hospitality, there was a loud knocking at the door. The old man called out,

"Who's there? What do you want?"

The reply came, "Send out your visitor.

We want to have some fun with him."¹²⁷⁷

The old man got up, opened the door and went outside, closing the door behind him. We could hear him remonstrating with his fellow citizens.

"You can't do such a thing. It's against the laws of hospitality.

This man is a guest in my house and, as such, I am duty bound to protect him."

They continued to argue with him, their voices becoming more and more threatening. In the end he said,

"Very well. I'll send out my unmarried daughter and my visitor's concubine.

You can have your way with them but not with my guest."

I looked at my husband in horror. Surely he would never allow such a thing?

¹²⁷⁸

¹²⁷⁷ Judges 19:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15827/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

¹²⁷⁸ Judges 19:23-24

THE OLD MAN'S UNMARRIED DAUGHTER

When I heard my father offer to hand me over to the mob outside, I was horrified. How could he even think of such a thing? Was a complete stranger more important to him than his own daughter? Fortunately, from what I could hear, the men outside were not prepared to accept my father's offer and continued to threaten him.

Suddenly the Levite grabbed his concubine by the arm and dragged her over to the door. Jerking it open, he pulled my father in and pushed his concubine out, slamming the door behind her. In vain did I place my hands over my ears to shut out the sound of her screams. ¹²⁷⁹

Even though the rest of the night passed undisturbed, I was unable to sleep. With the concubine's screams still ringing in my ears, I kept on thinking that I could so easily have shared the same fate.

In the morning our guest made preparations to depart. As he opened the door to leave, he stumbled over a body lying on the threshold. It was his concubine. He told her to get up but there was no answer. Realizing she was dead, the Levite picked up her body and loaded it onto one of his donkeys. Then he set off home. That was the last we saw of him. ¹²⁸⁰

Afterwards, we heard that he had cut his concubine's body into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the twelve tribes. Everywhere the reaction was the same. "Nothing like this has ever happened since our people left Egypt. We can't just ignore it!" ¹²⁸¹

The result was that not only the people of Gibeah, but the whole tribe of Benjamin was punished. Just as the Benjamites of Gibeah had shown no mercy to the Levite's concubine, so the tribes showed no mercy to the Benjamites who were almost completely wiped out. Only six hundred managed to escape. ¹²⁸²

As Ephraimites, my father and I were spared. However, I never forgave my father for being prepared to sacrifice me in order to save the skin of a stranger.

THE OLD MAN'S UNMARRIED DAUGHTER

¹²⁷⁹ Judges 19:25-26

¹²⁸⁰ Judges 19:27-28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15827/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true

¹²⁸¹ Judges 19:29-30

¹²⁸² Judges 20:46-47

NARRATOR

The story of the Levite's concubine was considered so shocking that, ever since then, just to make sure that there is no misunderstanding as to the gravity of the crime, the relevant verses in Hebrew are read out in public together with their Aramaic translation.¹²⁸³

Normally, Jews don't hang out their dirty washing in public but, in this case, the crime committed by the Benjamites of Gibeah was considered so terrible that no effort was made to protect the tribe's good name.¹²⁸⁴

NARRATOR

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f2a.htm>

¹²⁸³ תלמוד ירושלמי - מסכת מגילה פרק ג ג, יט

¹²⁸⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 25b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

CHAPTER 25
JUDGE EHUD
The Book of Judges

The king of Moab had two daughters, Ruth and Orpah, whom he married off to the two sons of an Israelite family residing in his kingdom. Their story appears in Chapter 31 (Ruth and Boaz – a Love Story). Orpah, so-called because she turned her back on her mother-in-law, unlike her sister, Ruth, who followed her to Bethlehem, was also known as Harapha, meaning ‘disgrace’. Here she relates her father's very unpleasant end (Judges Chapter 3).

ORPAH OR HARAPHA, DAUGHTER OF KING EGLON OF MOAB

My father, King Eglon of Moab, a man of generous proportions,¹²⁸⁵ was very astute. Fleeing a terrible famine in the area of Bethlehem in the province of Judah, an aristocratic Israelite family had settled in our country.¹²⁸⁶ When their two sons were elected representatives of our people,¹²⁸⁷ my father realized that the best way to ensure the goodwill of two such powerful men was to give my sister, Ruth, and me to them in marriage.¹²⁸⁸

Ruth was lucky enough to marry Mahlon, the better-natured of the two, whereas I married the churlish Chilion.¹²⁸⁹ Then Mahlon and Chilion both died. Ruth, who had loved her husband, Mahlon, mourned. I, who had not loved my husband, Chilion, rejoiced.¹²⁹⁰ Ruth decided to accompany our widowed mother-in-law to Bethlehem, while I returned to our people.¹²⁹¹

CHAPTER 25 JUDGE EHUD

ORPAH OR HARAPHA, DAUGHTER OF KING EGLON OF MOAB

¹²⁸⁵ Judges 3:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁸⁶ Ruth 1:1

¹²⁸⁷ Ruth 1:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹²⁸⁸ מדרש רות פרשה ב ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Antiquities of the Jews - Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹²⁸⁹ רות זוטא פרשה א ב עמוד 2

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹²⁹⁰ Ruth 1:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה למגילת רות - פרשה ב י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹²⁹¹ Ruth 1:14

Targum to Ruth

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

זהר חדש - מדרש רות

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01782_part_23.html

After my return I lived with my mother, enjoying the life of a royal princess. This included taking many lovers for, unlike the puritanical Israelites who frowned on such practices, my people encouraged sexual relations in honor of our gods. ¹²⁹²

Living across the Jordan from us was a vassal tribe of Israelites. Once a year, a delegation would arrive at my father's court, bearing their annual tribute. One year, the delegation was led by a man with a shriveled right hand who introduced himself as Ehud, the son of Gera. ¹²⁹³ The members of the delegation stayed only long enough to deliver their tribute, before returning home across the Jordan.

To our surprise, a short while later the Israelite leader returned alone, requesting a private audience with my father. Considered harmless due to his handicap, he was granted entry to my father's favorite room on the upper floor of the palace, where there was always a cool breeze. After the Israelite left, the door to the room remained locked, so our servants naturally assumed that my father did not want to be disturbed. ¹²⁹⁴

It was only towards evening that we began to worry that something was amiss. One of our servants unlocked the door and, to our horror, we found my father dead. ¹²⁹⁵ The sword that had been used to kill him was still embedded in his stomach. It must have pierced his intestines, for there was excrement everywhere. ¹²⁹⁶

¹²⁹² מדרש רות - פרשה ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 42b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_42.html

¹²⁹³ Judges 3:14-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁹⁴ Judges 3:18-24 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 103a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_103.html

¹²⁹⁵ Judges 3:25

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹²⁹⁶ Judges 3:21-22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15811/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

NARRATOR

The Israelites, under Ehud's leadership, took advantage of the ensuing power vacuum to rise against the Moabites and wipe out their army. After this there was peace for eighty years. ¹²⁹⁷

NARRATOR

¹²⁹⁷ Judges 3:26-30

CHAPTER 26
JUDGE DEBORAH
The Book of Judges

According to the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Megillah, Folio 14b), there were two women who were assigned the names of creatures hateful to man. These were the two prophetesses, Deborah and Huldah, who were both criticized for their haughtiness. Deborah means ‘bee’ and Huldah means ‘rat’. Deborah’s ‘sting’ lay in the fact that she ordered General Barak to come to her, instead of the other way round, while Huldah’s ‘bite’ alluded to the fact that she referred to King Josiah as “that man” instead of “the king”.¹²⁹⁸

Other sources – for instance, the *Great Commentary on Deuteronomy* – have preferred to emphasize the more positive characteristics of a bee, such as the sweetness of its honey: just as bees swarm after a leader, so are Jews led by prophets; just as a bee-sting hurts while its honey is sweet, so is life bitter without the Torah and sweet with it; just as Deborah was as sweet as honey to her husband and stingily critical of others, so the words of Torah give life to worshippers of Yahweh and brings death to worshippers of idols; just as a bee collects pollen for the benefit of others, so do Jews accumulate good deeds to give pleasure to Yahweh.¹²⁹⁹

In describing the Israelite victory over the powerful king of Hatzor (Judges Chapters 4-5), Deborah, the Israelite judge, is joined by a Kenite woman named Yael and the mother of a Canaanite general called Sisera. The name of Sisera’s mother, Themech, is taken from Chapter 31 of Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*. Philo, a Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, at the beginning of the Common Era, sought to harmonize Jewish belief with Greek philosophy.

CHAPTER 26 JUDGE DEBORAH

INTRODUCTION

¹²⁹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Megillah 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹²⁹⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש דברים פרשה א ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Devarim_Rabbah.1.6?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

JUDGE DEBORAH, LAPPIDOTH'S WIFE

My husband, Lappidoth,¹³⁰⁰ and I lived in the village of Atarot in the Ephraim Mountains where I was elected judge of our people. Unlike my male counterparts who sat in judgment in a fancy court of law, I performed my judicial duties under the palm tree in our back yard.¹³⁰¹ Instead of holding sessions behind closed doors, the gate to our yard was always left open, so that no-one could accuse me of illicit relations with any of the litigants. Here I used to teach the law to anyone who was interested. I regret to say that most of my pupils were a sorry lot who knew little about the law.¹³⁰²

Some of my more uncharitable neighbors refused to believe that Lappidoth and I couldn't afford a residence more in keeping with my position. They claimed that, in reality, I was a wealthy woman who owned palm trees in Jericho, vineyards in Ramah, olive groves in the area of Beth-el, and finally a white clay quarry on the slopes of Mount Ephraim. I ask you, would a woman with so much wealth be prepared to sit in the dust for hours, trying to drum the law into empty heads?¹³⁰³

Far from being wealthy, I supported myself and my husband by preparing wicks for the candles used in the Sanctuary at Shiloh. These wicks of mine, so thick that they lasted for hours, made me famous among our people and probably contributed to my election as judge.¹³⁰⁴

JUDGE DEBORAH, LAPPIDOTH'S WIFE

¹³⁰⁰ Judges 44:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹³⁰¹ Judges 4:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁰² אליהו רבא י

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%99

ילקוט שמעוני, שופטים פרק ד המשך סימן מב

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=7&perek=4
Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹³⁰³ Judges 4:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

תרגום יונתן לנביאים ראשונים שופטים פרק ד ה.

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

¹³⁰⁴ Judges 4:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

אליהו רבא י

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%99

During my period in office, we were subjected to the oppressive rule of King Jabin of Hatzor, which was enforced by General Sisera, his commander-in-chief, who had set up his headquarters at Haroshet-Goyim, not far from Atarot.¹³⁰⁵ Sisera had a formidable reputation based on wild stories concerning his prodigious voice, which was so loud that no city wall was able to withstand it and which caused animals to drop dead from fright!¹³⁰⁶

After putting up with Jabin's impossible demands for twenty years,¹³⁰⁷ I decided

“Enough is enough! The time had come to take a stand.”

I persuaded my people to renew their vow to worship Yahweh, telling them it was the only way to free ourselves from Canaanite slavery. I can't say that I managed to convince everyone, but I managed to persuade enough. However, this did not answer the question, how could we overcome General Sisera and his powerful army?¹³⁰⁸

The answer came to me in a dream. Normally, I didn't attach much importance to dreams, but this one was particularly vivid. Since it involved engaging Sisera and his army in battle, I needed a man of proven fighting ability. The man I chose was Barak, the son of Abinoam, from the tribe of Naphtali. His family lived in the city of Kadesh. If he lived up to his name, which meant 'lightning', then he would do perfectly for what I had in mind.

¹³⁰⁵ Judges 4:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³⁰⁶ ילקוט שמעוני שופטים פרק ד סימן מ"ג

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=7&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

¹³⁰⁷ Judges 4:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁰⁸ מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר פרק כה סימן ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/32.htm>

I summoned Barak to Atarot and told him,
“Recruit 10,000 soldiers from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun
and make for Mount Tabor in the Lower Galilee.”¹³⁰⁹
I added, “Meanwhile, I will find a way of luring Sisera’s army
to the Kishon River.”¹³¹⁰

Can you believe it? This brave warrior refused to go without me and
demanded my help in recruiting the soldiers.¹³¹¹ I rapidly began to lose patience,
saying,

“Are you sure? Do you really want people to say that Sisera was defeated
by a mere woman?”¹³¹²
He didn’t budge.¹³¹³

¹³⁰⁹ Judges 4:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

אליהו רבא י

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ילקוט שמעוני, שופטים פרק ד המשך סימן מב

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?mefareash=shimoni&book=7&perek=4

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:2-3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³¹⁰ Judges 4:7

¹³¹¹ Judges 4:8

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת לך לך פרשה מ: הרעב בארץ ואברהם יורד מצרימה ד [יופיה של שרה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/40.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש דברים פרשת שופטים סימן יז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/48.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Kamma 92b

https://halakhah.com/babakamma/babakamma_92.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³¹² Judges 4:9

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³¹³ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת לך לך פרשה מ: הרעב בארץ ואברהם יורד מצרימה ד [יופיה של שרה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/40.htm>

In the end I went because I had no choice. Besides, I knew that Barak and I would make a good team, which was why I had chosen him in the first place. I would provide the brains and he, the brawn. ¹³¹⁴

Having recruited our army, we marched to Mount Tabor where we set up camp. Mount Tabor commanded the northwest section of the fertile Jezreel plain. Our aim was to wrest control of the area from King Jabin. ¹³¹⁵

After learning that a rebel army was encamped on the summit of Mount Tabor, Sisera set out to meet us in battle with some 40,000 men. He encamped not far from us, both to be near the field of battle and no doubt to frighten us out of our wits. ¹³¹⁶

When his forces were joined by those of the other Canaanite kings, ¹³¹⁷ Barak was all for retreating. Reassuring him that Yahweh was on our side, I told him that this was the day that he would defeat Sisera and his army. Nevertheless, it was with considerable difficulty that I persuaded him to lead our men down the mountain and engage the enemy in battle. ¹³¹⁸

¹³¹⁴ Judges 5:2, 9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

אליהו רבא י

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¹³¹⁵ Judges 4:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

¹³¹⁶ Judges 4:12-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

Judges 5:8

ילקוט שמעוני שופטים פרק ד סימן מ"ג

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=7&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

¹³¹⁷ Judges 5:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³¹⁸ Judges 4:14

The battle was very closely fought. Just as I thought our men might be forced to retreat, black clouds gathered overhead and it began to rain. The rain poured down in torrents,¹³¹⁹ causing the Kishon River to overflow its banks.¹³²⁰

Bogged down in the marshy ground, Sisera's famous chariots were immobilized. The horses panicked, overturned the chariots and trampled Sisera's men. With the enemy at such a disadvantage,¹³²¹ we were able to press home our attack. Barak and his men chased Sisera's army all the way to the so-called 'impregnable' city of Harosheth-goiim, leaving none alive.¹³²² Of Sisera there was no sign.

After the battle was over, we sang a song of thanks to Yahweh¹³²³ before trooping off to Shiloh to offer up a sacrifice.¹³²⁴

Not every tribe had joined us. The tribe of Reuben had sat on the fence, waiting to see which side would prevail.¹³²⁵ The tribes across the Jordan didn't bother turning up for battle, while the tribe of Dan loaded up their ships ready to make a quick escape. As for the tribe of Asher, they remained at home to defend their land.¹³²⁶

¹³¹⁹ Judges 5:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

הזוהר המתורגם - ספר שמות פרשת ויקהל דף קצ"ז ע"א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01777_part_11.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³²⁰ Judges 5:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 118b

<https://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

¹³²¹ Judges 4:15

¹³²² Judges 4:16

¹³²³ Judges 5:1

¹³²⁴ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 32:18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap48.htm>

¹³²⁵ Judges 5:15-16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

¹³²⁶ Judges 5:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

After such a victory, we felt confident enough to carry on fighting Jabin and his men. Eventually we cornered him in his city of Hatzor, where he met his death and his capital was destroyed.

Barak proved so capable a general that he remained commander-in-chief of our army for the next forty years. ¹³²⁷ I enjoyed far less popularity. From the very beginning, not everyone had been happy to have a woman judge. Before the battle I was criticized for summoning Barak instead of visiting him myself. ¹³²⁸ After the battle I was blamed for boasting of my part in the victory. ¹³²⁹ Because I never had another dream like the one about Sisera, people claimed that I had lost the gift of prophecy as a punishment for my boastfulness. ¹³³⁰

¹³²⁷ Judges 4:23-24

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³²⁸ Judges 4:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³²⁹ Judges 5:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 66b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

¹³³⁰ Judges 5:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 66b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

זוהר לעם / פרשת ויקרא / נשים שולטות בעולם [נשין שלטין בעלמא]

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/93280?heb/content/view/full/93280&main>

Nevertheless, I continued to rule my people for another forty years. Formerly we had been afraid to travel and did so only along back roads. All our unfortified cities had been abandoned in favor of those with thick walls.¹³³¹ How different the situation was now! People no longer feared to be ambushed for their money. Nor did they have to travel in convoys for safety. Our merchants and nobles could now ride with impunity on their precious, white donkeys.¹³³²

When I felt that my end was near, I summoned the people and told them to repent of their crimes before it was too late.¹³³³ When they begged me to pray for them,¹³³⁴ I refused, telling them to pray themselves. It would do more good.¹³³⁵

NARRATOR

Deborah was buried in Atarot, the town where she was born,¹³³⁶ and mourned for seventy days. Following her death, there was peace for seven years.¹³³⁷

The battle of the Jezreel Valley came to serve as an example of a successful military strategy.¹³³⁸ Deborah's song of victory also became famous and was passed down from generation to generation.¹³³⁹

¹³³¹ Judges 5:6, 8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

¹³³² Judges 5:10-11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

¹³³³ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 33:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap49.htm>

¹³³⁴ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 33:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap49.htm>

¹³³⁵ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 33:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap49.htm>

NARRATOR

¹³³⁶ Judges 4:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true

¹³³⁷ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 33:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap49.htm>

¹³³⁸ Psalm 83:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16304/jewish/Chapter-83.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³³⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 117a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

YAEL, HEBER'S WIFE

My husband, Heber, a cautious man who believed in playing both sides, had signed non-aggression pacts with our two powerful neighbors, King Jabin of Hatzor¹³⁴⁰ and the Israelite tribe of Naphtali. When they went to war with each other, although family ties bound us closer to the Israelites, we adopted a position of neutrality.¹³⁴¹

One day, while Heber was absent on a journey, hearing that Jabin's general, Sisera, had been defeated in battle and now sought refuge,¹³⁴² I found myself in a quandary. Should I help him or not? If I did, the victorious Israelites might accuse us of breaking the terms of our pact. That was when I made up my mind to do what followed.

The general arrived on foot, panting hard and covered in blood, but otherwise unharmed. Dressed in my finery, I went out to meet him, inviting him into my tent to rest from his ordeal and to have something to eat. Assuring him he was perfectly safe,¹³⁴³ I promised that when night fell, my servants would escort him to safety, adding that I knew my help would not go unrewarded.¹³⁴⁴

After regaining his breath, Sisera asked for a drink. Instead of giving him water, I offered him goat's milk, which made him even drowsier than he already was.¹³⁴⁵

YAEL, HEBER'S WIFE

¹³⁴⁰ Judges 4:17

¹³⁴¹ Genesis 46:17-18

¹³⁴² Judges 4:17

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³⁴³ Judges 4:18

¹³⁴⁴ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 31:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap47.htm>

¹³⁴⁵ Judges 4:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש הגדול בראשית וישב עמוד 318

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38103>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

Asking me to stand guard and to keep his whereabouts a secret,¹³⁴⁶ he lay down on my bed. As he did so, I heard him mumble something about taking me to meet his mother and making me his wife. I smiled, wondering what Heber would have to say about that!¹³⁴⁷

When I was certain that he was sound sleep, I pulled out one of the tent pegs, seized a mallet, crept up to Sisera and hammered the peg into his temple.¹³⁴⁸ Sisera tried to rise but failed. His dying words were,

“Yael, have mercy on me. I’m as weak as a woman.”

I answered him,

“Go to hell and tell your father that the great Sisera was killed by one.”¹³⁴⁹

Then I hammered so hard, that the peg came out the other side, pinning him to the ground.¹³⁵⁰

Soon afterwards the Israelite general, Barak, came cantering up on his horse. When he asked if I had seen Sisera, I replied that he would find him in my tent. This was how Barak and everyone else learned the way Sisera had met his end.¹³⁵¹

¹³⁴⁶ Judges 4:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁴⁷ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 31:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap47.htm>

¹³⁴⁸ Judges 4:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³⁴⁹ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 31

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap47.htm>

¹³⁵⁰ Judges 4:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹³⁵¹ Judges 4:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15812/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

NARRATOR

The Israelites were very appreciative of what Yael had done and included her among the God-fearing women converts to Judaism.¹³⁵² They even called her 'A Woman of Valor' in tribute to her strength.¹³⁵³

However, her greatest claim to fame lies in the fact that she is mentioned in the Song of Deborah (Judges Chapter 5), thought to be one of the earliest sections of the Bible.

NARRATOR

¹³⁵² ילקוט שמעוני יהושע פרק ב סימן ט

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=6&perek=2&mefareash=shimoni

¹³⁵³ Proverbs 31:19

מדרש משלי (בובר) לא

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%9C%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%9C%D7%90)

THEMECH, GENERAL SISERA'S MOTHER

A few days previously, my son, Sisera, had set out from our city of Haroshet-Goyim for Mount Tabor where, it was rumored, the rebellious Israelites had gathered an army. This act of aggression could not, of course, go unpunished. We fully expected my son and his army to win a quick victory and return home with much booty.¹³⁵⁴

Time passed without any word. I spent all day looking out of my window, asking,

“Why can't we see their chariots?”¹³⁵⁵

From time to time a sigh escaped my lips and, when no-one else was in hearing, even a sob or two.¹³⁵⁶ Sisera's chief wife, equally concerned about the fate of her husband, asked a similar question:

“Why can't we hear the clatter of chariot wheels?”¹³⁵⁷

The most sensible of my ladies-in-waiting tried to console me by pointing out that there were many possible reasons why Sisera had not yet returned.¹³⁵⁸ I endeavored to pull myself together and behave as was expected of the mother of a famous general.

“Why am I wasting time wondering why Sisera hasn't returned?”

I asked myself. “He'll be here soon.”

THEMECH, GENERAL SISERA'S MOTHER

¹³⁵⁴ ילקוט שמעוני שופטים פרק ד סימן מ"ג

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=7&perek=4&mefareash=shimoni

¹³⁵⁵ Judges 5:28

מדרש שמואל - פרשה י עמוד 73

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹³⁵⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Rosh HaShana 33b

https://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf

¹³⁵⁷ מדרש שמואל - פרשה י עמוד 73

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹³⁵⁸ Judges - Chapter 5:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש שמואל - פרשה י עמוד 73

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

Sisera's other wives tried to reassure me, saying,
"No doubt he and his soldiers are busy with their booty.
They are probably enjoying the Israelite women at this very moment
and dressing in fine clothes even as we speak."¹³⁵⁹

In the end I could stand the suspense no longer and told the women of the harem,

"Let's go to meet them
and see which women my son has captured to pleasure him in bed."¹³⁶⁰

Then I received a message from the leader of the Israelites, a woman named Deborah, telling me not to wait for my son any longer, for his fate was the fate of all who opposed her people.¹³⁶¹ Her words were prophetic, since, instead of welcoming my son as he led his captive women triumphantly into our city, I found myself staring at his bloody head. The Israelite general, Barak, had ordered one of his soldiers to deliver it to me with the message, "Here's the booty you were waiting for."¹³⁶²

¹³⁵⁹ Judges - Chapter 5:30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש שמואל - פרשה י עמוד 73

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹³⁶⁰ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 31:8

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap47.htm>

¹³⁶¹ Judges 5:31 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש שמואל - פרשה י עמוד 73

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹³⁶² Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (The Biblical Antiquities of Philo) Chapter 31:9

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/bap/bap47.htm>

NARRATOR

When Deborah heard what Barak had done with Sisera's head, she was heard to say,
"This is poor consolation for a woman who has just lost her son."
This showed she possessed some feeling after all.¹³⁶³

It is one of the ironies of life that Sisera's descendants ended up studying the law in Jerusalem,¹³⁶⁴ teaching it to Israelite children, hopefully with more success than Deborah had with her empty-headed pupils.¹³⁶⁵

NARRATOR

¹³⁶³ Judges 5:31 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15813/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true

¹³⁶⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

https://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

¹³⁶⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 57b

https://halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_57.html

CHAPTER 27
JUDGE GIDEON
The Book of Judges

Gideon's story can be found in Chapters 6-8 of the Book of Judges. Here it is related by four women.

Gideon's mother tells us how her youngest son led their people to victory against the Midianites.

Gideon's wife describes how, after the war with the Midianites, her husband resumed his former quiet life.

Gideon's concubine from Shechem tells the story of her lover who refused the position of king (Judges Chapter 8), whereas her son, Abimelech, murdered his own brothers to seize it (Judges Chapter 9).

A woman from Thebez tells how the cruel Abimelech met his end (Judges Chapter 9).

JUDGE GIDEON'S MOTHER

I was married to a man named Joash, who came from one of the poorest clans of the tribe of Manasseh – the Abiezer clan. ¹³⁶⁶ I did my wifely duty and bore him a number of sons, the youngest of whom was Gideon, who helped his father work our small farm in Ophrah. ¹³⁶⁷ I am here to tell you how Gideon was transformed from a simple farm boy into the champion of our people.

For seven long years we had suffered at the hands of the Midianites, who would wait until harvest time before swooping down on us and taking everything we owned - not only our livestock but the very grain in the fields. Powerless to fight them, the best we could do was to seek shelter in the mountains until their attacks were over. ¹³⁶⁸

It was harvest time. Knowing that at any moment the Midianites might descend upon us, we made our way to the cave in the mountains where we stored our grain. Only Gideon remained behind. Hoping to avoid detection, he used our winepress rather than the communal threshing floor to separate the grain from the chaff. ¹³⁶⁹

CHAPTER 27 JUDGE GIDEON

JUDGE GIDEON'S MOTHER

¹³⁶⁶ Judges 6:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁶⁷ Judges 6:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁶⁸ Judges 6:1-6

¹³⁶⁹ Judges 6:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

On our return, we discovered that our altar to Baal and the wooden statue of Asherah standing next to it had been destroyed.¹³⁷⁰ Since Gideon had been the only person present, a delegation of our fellow citizens arrived to demand his death.¹³⁷¹ By convincing the citizens of Ophrah that Baal was quite capable of defending his own honor, Joash succeeded in saving our son's life. From that day forth, our son was known as 'Jerubbaal' meaning 'he who strives against Baal'.¹³⁷²

This was the first indication that Gideon had become a devout follower of Yahweh. In fact, it was only when the Midianites, the Amalekites and other peoples east of the Jordan crossed the river into Canaan and camped in the Jezreel Valley,¹³⁷³ that we discovered that Gideon had been tasked by Yahweh with the mission of saving our people from their depredations.¹³⁷⁴

Gideon's faith in Yahweh was so strong that, of the 22,000 Israelite fighting men¹³⁷⁵ from the tribes of Asher, Zvulun and Naphtali summoned to fight the enemy,¹³⁷⁶ he chose only three hundred to participate in the battle.¹³⁷⁷ Among them were my other sons, Gideon's brothers. I could not help but take pride in this fact.

¹³⁷⁰ Judges 6:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: T'murah 28b-29b

<https://halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Tmura.pdf>

¹³⁷¹ Judges 6:26-29

¹³⁷² Judges 6:31-32 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁷³ Judges 6:33

¹³⁷⁴ Judges 6:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15814/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁷⁵ Judges 7:3

¹³⁷⁶ Judges 6:35

¹³⁷⁷ Judges 7:2-7

Whilst reconnoitering the enemy camp, a conversation he overheard gave Gideon the idea of how to win the battle against such overwhelming odds. Each of his men was issued with a ram's horn and a torch.¹³⁷⁸ Led by Gideon, under cover of night, they crept up to the enemy camp. At Gideon's signal, gripping their horns in one hand and waving their torches in the other, they ran forward blowing on their horns and shouting,

“Strike a blow for Yahweh and for Gideon!”

Taken completely by surprise, the enemy turned and fled.¹³⁷⁹ The two Midianite kings were captured and brought to Gideon for judgment.¹³⁸⁰ When he learned that they had killed his brothers, he showed them no mercy but executed them himself.¹³⁸¹

Don't think that all our people were happy with Gideon. The tribe of Ephraim were furious with him for not including any of their members among the three hundred he had led into battle. Instead of arguing with them, he simply pointed out that by capturing two Midianite princes, they had achieved far more than his three hundred men.¹³⁸²

As for the citizens of Succoth and Penuel who, fearing enemy reprisals, had refused to feed Gideon and his men, they paid for their cowardice when the elders of Succoth were whipped and the fort of Penuel was destroyed.¹³⁸³

The only person who did not share in the jubilation over Gideon's victory was me. I bitterly regretted rejoicing in the fact that so many of my sons had been chosen to participate in the battle, only to be killed.

¹³⁷⁸ Judges 7:9-16 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15815/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁷⁹ Judges 7:19-21

¹³⁸⁰ Judges 7:25

¹³⁸¹ Judges 8:18-21

¹³⁸² Judges 8:1-3 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15816/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁸³ Judges 8:15-17

JUDGE GIDEON'S CHIEF WIFE

Like any great man, my husband had many wives who, together, bore him seventy sons. However, as the mother of Gideon's firstborn son, I was his chief wife. ¹³⁸⁴

Our son, Jether, was a gentle soul, who would have preferred to be a farmer like his father rather than a great warrior. At the time of the war with the Midianites, he was still very young and, therefore, when ordered by Gideon to execute the two Midianite kings who had murdered his uncles, was so afraid that he was unable to draw his sword. Gideon was forced to kill them himself. ¹³⁸⁵

Normally, wives of great men vie with each other over whose son will inherit the patrimony. In my case it was the opposite. No-one was happier than me, when, offered the crown of Israel by a grateful people, Gideon refused it outright, saying neither he nor our son would ever be king, since we already had one - Yahweh! ¹³⁸⁶

After my husband's victory, the Midianites kept a low profile for the following forty years. We returned to the farm in Ophrah that Gideon had inherited from his father, ¹³⁸⁷ where my husband lived to a ripe old age and where, at his death, he was buried in the family graveyard. ¹³⁸⁸

JUDGE GIDEON'S CHIEF WIFE

¹³⁸⁴ Judges 8:30

¹³⁸⁵ Judges 8:20-21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15816/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁸⁶ Judges 8:22-23

¹³⁸⁷ Judges 8:28-29

¹³⁸⁸ Judges 8:32

JUDGE GIDEON'S CONCUBINE

One day Judge Gideon visited our city. Famous as the man who had conquered the Midianites, everyone was eager to host him, including my parents. One thing led to another and I ended up his mistress. Every time he passed through Shechem, Gideon would stay with me. As a result of our lovemaking, I gave birth to a son whom Gideon named Abimelech. Gideon assured me that, even though we were not married, Abimelech was as much his heir as the sons of his legitimate wives.¹³⁸⁹

I'm afraid I rather spoiled Abimelech, allowing him to have his own way, never reprimanding him for his bad behavior. Now I realize I should have been much stricter. As he grew older, he constantly boasted that he was the son of the famous Judge Gideon and that, when his father died, he would inherit his title and his wealth, conveniently ignoring the fact that Gideon's seventy legitimate sons had prior claim to both. I continued to humor him, hoping that he would eventually grow out of such a childish belief.

He didn't. After Gideon's death, Abimelech convinced my family to drum up support to have him elected king. My brothers even donated seventy silver coins to his campaign.¹³⁹⁰ With this money Abimelech hired some no-goods to accompany him back to Ophrah, where they were ordered to kill all seventy of my son's half-brothers.

With no-one left alive to contest him, Abimelech was crowned king of Shechem and Beth-millo.¹³⁹¹ In the middle of the ceremony, a voice was heard from the top of Mount Gerizim, calling out,

“We'll soon see whether or not you have made the right choice of ruler, and whether you will live to bless Abimelech or to curse him.”¹³⁹²

It was Jotham, the only one of Gideon's legitimate sons to have survived the massacre. With these words he disappeared and was last heard of living in exile in Beer.¹³⁹³

JUDGE GIDEON'S CONCUBINE

¹³⁸⁹ Judges 8:30-31

¹³⁹⁰ Judges 9:1-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15817/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁹¹ Judges 9:5-6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15817/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁹² Judges 9:7, 16-20

¹³⁹³ Judges 9:21

It soon became clear that, as a ruler, Abimelech left much to be desired. Whereas Gideon had been kind and just, Abimelech was cruel and despotic. Rumbles of discontent began to be heard among the citizens of Shechem. These included my brothers who, belatedly realizing their error in colluding in the murder of Gideon's sons, began to fear the consequences. I begged them not to take any action. After all, Abimelech was their nephew. Nevertheless, behind my back they joined a plot to lure Abimelech to his death.¹³⁹⁴

When this came to my knowledge, I rushed to Governor Zebul and begged him to warn Abimelech. He must have done so for, the next morning, we awoke to find Abimelech and his soldiers arrayed for battle outside the city gates.¹³⁹⁵ In the battle that followed, my son and his troops were victorious, while many of my fellow citizens, including my brothers, met their deaths.

Then it was the turn of the civilians. When they ventured out to work in the fields, Abimelech sent soldiers to bar their way back into the city. Then he attacked them with three companies of troops, who mercilessly mowed them down. The city walls were demolished, the houses destroyed and the fields sown with salt, so that nothing would grow.¹³⁹⁶

The only people to survive the slaughter were those who had taken refuge in a tower. After somehow or other managing to repel the enemy, they fled to the nearby forest of Beth El Brith, where they hid among the trees. Abimelech simply set the whole forest on fire, so that they all burned to death.¹³⁹⁷ I was the only citizen of Shechem to be spared.

I'm not saying that the Shechemites did not deserve to be punished for rebelling against their king, but in so horrendous a fashion? What monster had I spawned?

¹³⁹⁴ Judges 9:22-25 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15817/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹³⁹⁵ Judges 9:30-34

¹³⁹⁶ Judges 9:40-45

¹³⁹⁷ Judges 9:46-49

THE WOMAN FROM THEBEZ

I don't understand much about politics. All I know is that every time our people were in trouble, a leader would miraculously arise to help us overcome our enemies.¹³⁹⁸ By now, some of us had reached the conclusion that we couldn't always rely on divine providence to save us. What we needed was a king, who would pass on his title to his descendants, what they call a hereditary monarchy. Yet when we asked Judge Gideon to be our king, he refused point-blank, maintaining that the present system was good enough.

His son, Abimelech, clearly had other ideas.¹³⁹⁹ Elected king of Shechem, he ruled with an iron fist. After enduring three years of his tyranny, the citizens of Shechem finally rebelled, but the rebellion was suppressed, the citizens massacred and the city destroyed.¹⁴⁰⁰

Our city of Thebez was next. After Abimelech and his army penetrated its defenses we retreated to the keep. From its ramparts, we watched with mounting terror as the enemy set it on fire. Below me, issuing orders, stood Abimelech.

Resting on the rampart beside me was a millstone. Without thinking twice, I heaved it over the side onto Abimelech's head.¹⁴⁰¹ As he keeled over, his squire came running to his aid. I saw Abimelech whisper something in his ear, whereupon the young man drew his sword and plunged it into the king's chest.¹⁴⁰² At first I was mystified as to the reason, until it dawned on me why he had done so.

Abimelech's attempt to hide the fact that he had been killed by a woman failed. News of what had really happened spread like wildfire throughout the land. It acted as a lesson to the military which, from that day forth, whilst conducting a siege, endeavored to stay well clear of the city's walls.¹⁴⁰³

THE WOMAN FROM THEBEZ

¹³⁹⁸ Judges 2:11-23

¹³⁹⁹ Judges 8:22-23

¹⁴⁰⁰ Judges 9:45

¹⁴⁰¹ Judges 9:50-53 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15817/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁰² Judges 9:54

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15817/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁰³ II Samuel 11:16-21

As for the millstone that had caused Abimelech's death, there was nothing special about it. It was the sort we use for grinding flour. Nevertheless, it came to be quite famous because of the use to which it had been put.¹⁴⁰⁴

¹⁴⁰⁴ Isaiah 47:1-2

CHAPTER 28
JUDGE JEPHTHAH
The Book of Judges

Jephthah's daughter, Seila, relates her tragic story, the outcome of a rash vow made by her ignoramus father (Judges Chapter 11).

For further details again we turn to Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, Chapters 39-40, the source previously cited in Chapter 26 in connection with Themech, General Sisera's mother.

SEILA, JUDGE JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

To me, my father, Jephthah, was the most important person in this world. Although he came from the humblest of backgrounds,¹⁴⁰⁵ as a result of his military skill he rose to the highest position in the land.¹⁴⁰⁶ It saddened me to know that, behind his back, people mocked him, calling him an ignoramus, lacking any knowledge of the law.¹⁴⁰⁷ Surely, as leader of our people, he deserved to be treated with some respect?¹⁴⁰⁸

In the trouble with the Ammonites, my father first tried diplomacy.¹⁴⁰⁹ When that failed, he prepared to go to war.¹⁴¹⁰ We defeated the Ammonites so completely, that twenty of their cities fell into our hands, while hundreds of Ammonites were slaughtered or made slaves.¹⁴¹¹

CHAPTER 28 JUDGE JEPHTHAH **SEILA, JUDGE JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER**

¹⁴⁰⁵ Judges 11:1-2

¹⁴⁰⁶ Judges 11:5-11

¹⁴⁰⁷ מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת בחקתי ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4

¹⁴⁰⁸ I Samuel 12:8-11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15841/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה פתיחא דחכימי פרשה א ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

Babylonian Talmud: Rosh HaShanah 25b

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf

¹⁴⁰⁹ Judges 11:12

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 39

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

¹⁴¹⁰ Judges 11:28-29

¹⁴¹¹ Judges 11:32-33 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 4:10

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

When I heard that my father had won a great victory and was returning home safe and sound, overcome with joy, I ran out to meet him, dancing and singing and shaking my tambourine. ¹⁴¹² The look on his face stopped me in my tracks. Ashen grey, he refused to look at me. Filled with foreboding, I accompanied him back to the palace. All the way he said not a word.

When finally we were alone, he asked me to sit down, explaining that he had something important to tell me. I was sure that he was about to reveal that he had suffered a mortal wound, unseen to the eye, from which he would shortly die. Instead, with bowed head, he admitted that to ensure his victory, he had vowed to sacrifice to Yahweh the first living creature he saw on his return.

“But what has that got to do with me, father?” I asked.

“You were the first living thing I saw on my return,” he explained, in such a low voice I could hardly hear him.

I looked at him, aghast.

Eventually I said in a faltering voice,

“Surely, you don’t mean to carry out such a promise?

I’m sure Yahweh will understand.”

For the first time he looked me straight in the eye and said, “I must.” ¹⁴¹³

I couldn’t believe my ears. I was still very young, a virgin not yet betrothed, let alone married. As the daughter of a king, at the very least I could be sure of marrying a highborn prince to whom, if Yahweh was kind, I would bear many sons to carry on our family name and maybe a daughter or two to look after me in my old age.

After the full import of his words had sunk in, I tried to convince my father to change his mind. As a warrior who had spent all his life earning his living by his sword, my father had never had the chance to study the law. ¹⁴¹⁴ I realized it was left to me to find a loophole in our legal code.

¹⁴¹² Judges 11:34

¹⁴¹³ Judges 11:35 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 40

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

¹⁴¹⁴ מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת בהקתי ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4

I explained,
“Our law commands us to offer up for sacrifice only cattle, sheep and goats.
Nowhere does it make any mention of human sacrifice.”¹⁴¹⁵

To this argument my father replied,
“Unfortunately my vow was of such a general nature
that it included all living things.”

“But,” I continued to argue,
“Father Jacob also made a general vow,
when he promised that he would offer up to Yahweh
a tenth of everything that Yahweh gave him.

Even though he had twelve sons, none of them was sacrificed.”¹⁴¹⁶

It was like talking to a stone wall. In spite of all my arguments, my father was determined to honor his vow.

In order to buy time before I was put to death, I ended the conversation by saying,

“Very well, father. Since Yahweh has kept His word, you must keep yours. I ask only that you delay the sacrifice for two months, to enable me to go up into the mountains and prepare myself for death.”

¹⁴¹⁵ Leviticus 1:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9902/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Shevu'oth 12a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Shevuoth.pdf>

מדרש הגדה חלק ב ויקרא במדבר דברים עב בחקותי עמוד 71

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

¹⁴¹⁶ Genesis 28:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8223/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת בחקתי ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4

Father agreed, giving me time to approach various people who I thought might help. The first was our council of elders.¹⁴¹⁷ I put it to them that the first living thing to meet my father on his return could have been a camel, an ass or even a dog - none of which was suitable as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Was a human being more suitable?¹⁴¹⁸

This generated a heated discussion that ended up with them unable to reach agreement. Some maintained that I was more suitable, others that I was not suitable at all. Some said that in order to absolve himself of his vow, all my father had to do was to pay a fine to the priests. Others claimed that even this was not necessary and that the vow he had sworn was invalid.¹⁴¹⁹

Our High Priest, Phineas, who, had he so chosen, could have annulled my father's vow, refused to help, saying,

“I am a High Priest. My father was a High Priest.
It is beneath my dignity to offer help to an ignoramus like Jephthah.
I'm prepared to help only if he approaches me first.”

My father was equally stubborn and proud. He said,
“As the head of all the Israelite tribes,
I have no intention of humiliating myself
by seeking help from a commoner like Phineas.
Let him approach me first.”

¹⁴¹⁷ Judges 11:36-37

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת בחקתי ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4

מדרש הגדה חלק ב ויקרא במדבר דברים עב בחקותי עמוד 71

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

¹⁴¹⁸ מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת בחקתי ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4

מדרש הגדה חלק ב ויקרא במדבר דברים עב בחקותי עמוד 71

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 39:11

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

¹⁴¹⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשת בחוקותי פרשה לז: איש כי יפליא לנדור ד [ארבעה פתחו בנדורים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/37.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ג [אליעזר נענה למרות ששאל שלא כהוגן]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

Caught between their massive egos, what chance did I have? I was like the baby who, while the mother and the midwife were arguing how best to deliver it, died before it was born. ¹⁴²⁰

Accompanied by my friends, I went up into the mountains, where we camped on Mount Stelac. ¹⁴²¹ After two months spent bewailing the fact that I would never know a man or deliver his children, ¹⁴²² I returned to face my fate. ¹⁴²³

NARRATOR

Jephthah continued to act as Judge of Israel for the following six years, ¹⁴²⁴ suffering from diabetes, as a result of which his limbs were amputated, one by one. Phineas, the High Priest, also received his just reward when he lost his power to foretell the future. ¹⁴²⁵

¹⁴²⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ג [אליעזר נענה למרות ששאל שלא כהוגן] <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא - פרשת בחקתי ה
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L4
תרגום יונתן בן עוזיאל לנביאים ראשונים שופטים פרק יא
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

¹⁴²¹ Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 40:4
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

¹⁴²² Judges 11:38 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>
Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 40:6
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

¹⁴²³ Judges 11:39 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

NARRATOR

¹⁴²⁴ Judges 12:7
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 4 Ch. 8:12
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴²⁵ Judges 11:39 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true
I Chronicles 9:20 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16529/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ג [אליעזר נענה למרות ששאל שלא כהוגן]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

A tradition arose according to which, every year in the month of Tevet on the day on which her father fulfilled his vow, unmarried girls would gather round Seila's grave and for four days mourn her death.¹⁴²⁶

¹⁴²⁶ Judges 11:40 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

תרגום יונתן בן עוזיאל לנביאים ראשונים שופטים פרק יא

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 40:8

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

CHAPTER 29
JUDGE SAMSON
The Book of Judges

The most relentless of Israel's hostile neighbors were the Philistines. Their confederation of five city-states – Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron, each ruled by its own lord – occupied a fertile plain stretching from the Mediterranean in the west to the foothills of Judah in the east, and from the river of Egypt in the south to the Yarkon River in the north.

The first judge to fight the Philistines was Shamgar, who was such a mighty warrior that he killed six hundred Philistines with a metal goad normally used on oxen. From that day forth until Shamgar's death, the Israelites were left in peace (Judges Chapter 3).¹⁴²⁷

The next to fight the Philistines was Samson. The following women describe how one man single-handedly defeated them, literally bringing ruin down on their heads.

Samson's mother, Zlelponith, reveals how difficult it was for her to conceive (Judges Chapter 13). Her name appears in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 91a).¹⁴²⁸

We learn of Samson's ill-fated first marriage from his wife who came from Timna (Judges Chapter 14-15).

Samson's lucky escape from his enemies is described by a whore from Gaza (Judges Chapter 16), while his eventual capture is narrated by his mistress, the infamous Delilah (Judges Chapter 16).

The whore from Gaza returns to tell us of Samson's tragic yet glorious end (Judges Chapter 16).

CHAPTER 29 JUDGE SAMSON
INTRODUCTION

¹⁴²⁷ Judges 3:31

¹⁴²⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

ZLELPONI, JUDGE SAMSON'S MOTHER

The fact that I failed to conceive after my marriage to Manoah was a bone of great contention between us. Whenever Manoah complained,

“It’s your fault we have no children. You’re the one who’s barren,”
I would retort, “No it’s your fault. You’re the one who’s sterile.”¹⁴²⁹

We felt even worse every time Judge Ibzan married off one of his sixty children without inviting us to the wedding, on the grounds that we would never be able to reciprocate his invitation.¹⁴³⁰

We continued arguing until one day the matter was settled in a way I could never have predicted. I was doing my chores as usual, when a tall, good-looking young man came to our house and explained that it was me who was barren. Nevertheless, he added, because of my prayers I would give birth to a son - not just any son but an exceptionally powerful one. For some reason I believed him. After leaving instructions how to raise the child, he disappeared as suddenly as he had come.¹⁴³¹

You might be thinking that I was upset at hearing that I was barren, but you are wrong. All the Mothers had experienced the same difficulty before conception, proving the old adage, “*He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children.*”¹⁴³² We may have started out barren, but this only heightened our happiness when we finally had children.¹⁴³³

ZLELPONI, JUDGE SAMSON'S MOTHER

¹⁴²⁹ Judges 13:2

מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה י ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴³⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁴³¹ Judges 13:3

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴³² Psalm 113:9:9

¹⁴³³ Isaiah 5:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15985/jewish/Chapter-54.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא דרב כהנא פסקא כ רני עקרה עמוד 15

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/psiktakahana/psiktakahana15.pdf>

Naturally I couldn't wait to tell Manoah. When I finally found him, I burst out, "You'll never guess what's happened. A young stranger has just told me that we will shortly have a son."¹⁴³⁴

Unfortunately, instead of welcoming the news, Manoah refused to believe me. So, when the stranger appeared again, instead of waiting to hear what he had to say, I ran to fetch Manoah, knowing very well that my husband would only believe the evidence of his own two eyes.

Manoah asked him, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?"
The stranger answered, "I am."
My husband continued, "My wife says you told her we will have a son. It sounds unbelievable. She's probably got it all wrong, as women often do. Tell me exactly what you said."¹⁴³⁵

The stranger then repeated what he had told me.

His doubts and suspicions laid to rest, my husband remembered his good manners and invited the stranger to dine with us. Refusing our invitation, the stranger told my husband to make a sacrifice to Yahweh instead.¹⁴³⁶ As the sacrifice caught light, he ascended to heaven in the midst of the flames. All along we had been talking to an angel!

Now, it was well-known that no-one could look upon the face of an angel and live, so Manoah was convinced we were about to die.¹⁴³⁷ Unlike Hagar, Mother Sarah's handmaiden, who looked at an angel five times and was unafraid, Manoah was terrified, proving the truth of the saying: "*Better the tiniest fingernail of the fathers than a bellyful of the sons.*"¹⁴³⁸

¹⁴³⁴ Judges 13:6-7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15821/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁴³⁵ Judges 13:8-12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15821/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה י ה

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Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴³⁶ Judges 13:15-16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15821/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴³⁷ Judges 13:19-22

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴³⁸ מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית פרשת לך לך פרשה מה ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0044_L2

I hastened to calm Manoah, saying, “If Yahweh truly wanted to kill us, our sacrifice would not have been accepted. Nor would we have seen and heard all that we have.”¹⁴³⁹

As the angel had predicted, I conceived and bore a son whom we named Samson.¹⁴⁴⁰ I reared him according to the angel’s instructions¹⁴⁴¹ - from boyhood he served in the Sanctuary¹⁴⁴²; wine never passed his lips¹⁴⁴³; his hair was never cut¹⁴⁴⁴ and he never came into contact with the dead.¹⁴⁴⁵

¹⁴³⁹ Judges 13:23 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15821/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁴⁰ Judges 13:24

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁴¹ מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה י ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

¹⁴⁴² Numbers 6:1-2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9934/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ספרי על במדבר ו פסוק ג פז.

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8_%D7%95

¹⁴⁴³ Numbers 6:3-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9934/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 17b

https://halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_17.html

Babylonian Talmud: Nazir 34a and b

https://halakhah.com/nazir/nazir_34.html

ספרי על במדבר ו פסוק ד צג-צד

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8_%D7%95

¹⁴⁴⁴ Numbers 6:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9934/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 9b

https://halakhah.com/nedarim/nedarim_9.html

¹⁴⁴⁵ Numbers 6:6-7

Outwardly, apart from unusually broad shoulders, he looked like the other boys of his age.¹⁴⁴⁶ However, when he ran, it was like watching a fast-flowing stream.¹⁴⁴⁷ While the Holy Spirit was upon him, the hairs of his head stood on end, tapping against each other. The sound they made could be heard from Tzorah to Eshtaol.¹⁴⁴⁸ Another quality that distinguished him from his peers was his inordinate thirst.¹⁴⁴⁹

The first indication we had of Samson's prodigious strength occurred when he complained of a ringing in his ears. The ringing irritated him so much that he grabbed two huge rocks, one in each hand, and ground them together until all that was left was dust.¹⁴⁵⁰

In spite of being consecrated to Yahweh, my son was no saint. He liked women, especially Philistine women. However, I never thought he would go so far as to marry one.¹⁴⁵¹ When he told us that he had found a wife, a Philistine girl from Timna, we complained, "Why do you have to marry a Philistine girl when there are so many nice Israelite ones?"¹⁴⁵²

¹⁴⁴⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a
https://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

¹⁴⁴⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a
https://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

¹⁴⁴⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשת צו פרשה ח: זה קרבן אהרן ובניו ב [רוח הקודש של שמשון]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/8.htm>

¹⁴⁴⁹ Judges 15:18-19 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15823/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית סדר בראשית סדר ויחי פרשה צח יג
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html

¹⁴⁵⁰ Judges 13:25 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15821/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b
https://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_9.html

¹⁴⁵¹ Judges 14:3
מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אחרי מות פרשה כג: כשושנה בן החוחים ט [מעשה ארץ מצרים - איסורי עריות]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/23.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>

¹⁴⁵² Judges 14:3
Antiquities of the Jews Book 5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

NARRATOR

No doubt because she was childless for so long, Zlelponith had time to study and expound the law.¹⁴⁵³ As a result, she was included among Israel's twenty-three most pious women.¹⁴⁵⁴

As for miserly Judge Ibzan, all sixty of his children died in his lifetime. This gave rise to the well-known saying: "*You had sixty children but what good did they do you? Try and have one who will outshine them all.*"¹⁴⁵⁵

NARRATOR

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/21179>

¹⁴⁵³ בתי מדרשות מדרש אשל חיל עמודים 155-156

<http://hebrewbooks.org/49989>

¹⁴⁵⁴ מדרש תדשא פרק קא עמוד 20

¹⁴⁵⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

JUDGE SAMSON'S FIRST WIFE FROM TIMNA

I made the mistake of marrying an Israelite. Who can blame me? Samson had the finest physique of any young man I had ever seen and was head over heels in love with me. After meeting his parents and receiving their consent to our marriage, a contract was drawn up and signed by our respective fathers.

Just to be on the safe side, my father invited thirty of our strongest young men to the wedding, to keep an eye on his powerful new son-in-law. As is usual on such occasions, Samson set them a riddle. If they solved it, he would give them new clothes and bedding. If they failed, each would give him the same. To this wager our guests eagerly agreed. This was the riddle he set them:

“From the eater came out food and out of the strong came out sweetness.”

Our guests looked at each other in puzzlement. What could the riddle possibly mean? Even after racking their brains, they could not come up with the answer. Each had a lot to lose, for clothes and bedding cost a great deal. Therefore, they resorted to a strategy that Samson had not foreseen. They threatened to burn down our house, with us in it, unless I persuaded Samson to reveal the answer. Horrified, I ran to Samson and begged him to tell me. What was his response?

“I haven’t even told my parents, so why should I tell you?”

Every day during the week of our marriage celebrations, I begged Samson to reveal the answer to his riddle, accusing him of not loving me because he refused to tell me. Eventually my persistence paid off. While on the way to Timna, Samson had spotted a young lion among the vines, which he had killed with his bare hands. After signing the marriage contract he had returned home, leaving me to prepare for our wedding. On the way back to Timna to celebrate our nuptials, after discovering a beehive in the lion’s carcass, Samson had broken off some of the honeycomb to eat.

To save our lives and property, I rushed off to tell the wedding guests the answer. When Samson found out how they obtained it he was so angry that he went to Ashkelon, where he killed thirty men for their clothes, in order to honor his pledge to our guests. Then he left Timna in a huff. Convinced that Samson no longer loved me, I allowed myself to be persuaded by my father to marry someone else instead.¹⁴⁵⁶

A few days later, Samson surprised us all by turning up again, clutching a young kid in his arms as a peace-offering. When he demanded to be let into the house, my father refused him entry, explaining that, in Samson’s absence, he had married me to another, and suggesting that Samson marry my younger sister instead.¹⁴⁵⁷

JUDGE SAMSON'S FIRST WIFE FROM TIMNA

¹⁴⁵⁶ Judges 14:1-20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15822/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁵⁷ Judges 15:1-2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

NARRATOR

The father's rash behavior led to a series of retaliations, resulting in many Philistine deaths. Furious that his intended bride had been married to another, Samson determined to have his revenge. After catching a hundred and fifty pairs of foxes, he tied their tails together, placing a lighted torch between each, and let them loose in the fields, vineyards and olive groves of Timna. Everything was burned to a cinder.

This act of revenge swiftly resulted in two more. Claiming that, by marrying his daughter to someone else, the bride's father had brought Samson's anger down on all their heads, the Philistines punished him by burning down his house with all his family in it. When word reached Samson that his erstwhile bride and her family had died in such a fashion, he retaliated by killing all Timna's able-bodied men. ¹⁴⁵⁸

NARRATOR

¹⁴⁵⁸ Judges 15:1-20

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

JUDGE SAMSON'S WHORE

I don't have a name. In my profession no-one is particularly interested in what you are called, only in what you have between your legs. Yes, that's right. I follow the so-called oldest profession in the world. For those of you who don't approve, try supporting yourselves as a single woman without a man to protect you.

As a prostitute, I was quite well-known in Gaza. Most of my customers were my fellow citizens or those who lived in the area, but I also had my fair share of passing trade. Sometimes these included non-Philistines and, here and there, even an Israelite.

In my profession it pays to keep in with the authorities. Now at the time they were on the lookout for a big, strong Israelite with long, black hair. So, when a young man answering the description started to avail himself of my services, I lost no time in informing them. On what was to be his last visit, after he had done his business, as usual, both of us fell into a deep sleep. I didn't even hear him leave.

When I awoke, it was to find the whole city in an uproar. All night long, the local militia had lain in wait for my Israelite customer, thinking to waylay him as he left the city. Having fallen asleep at their posts, they had woken just in time to see him tear out the gates, lintels, bolts and all, place them on his broad shoulders and carry them off to Hebron.¹⁴⁵⁹

When word got out who my customer was, some had the cheek to say that I should have refused his custom. The truth is, had I known he was so important, I would have charged him double for my services!

JUDGE SAMSON'S WHORE

¹⁴⁵⁹ Judges 16:1-3

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:10

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

JUDGE SAMSON'S MISTRESS, DELILAH

I had a handsome Israelite lover named Samson, who often spent the night with me in the Sorek Valley, where I owned a vineyard. ¹⁴⁶⁰ I had no idea who he was, until the authorities came knocking at my door with an offer I couldn't refuse - in return for providing information about the source of my lover's prodigious strength, they offered me eleven hundred pieces of silver.

Now, you must understand that this was an enormous sum of money to a woman like me, who was entirely dependent on the sale of her home-made wine. It would have been madness to refuse such an offer, so I agreed to do as they asked.

At the first opportune moment I said to Samson,
"I've never asked before, but how is it that you're so strong?
They say you can burst any ropes used to tie you up.
Are there any that you can't?"
Samson replied,
"I doubt if I could break bowstrings made out of freshly-cut vine tendrils."

I relayed this information to my employers, who supplied me with the bowstrings Samson had described. That night, while Samson was asleep, I tied him up as tightly as I could. Being a heavy sleeper, Samson did not stir. Then I summoned the Philistine soldiers waiting outside, crying out,

"Samson, the Philistines are here!"

To my astonishment, he broke the bowstrings with ease and had no difficulty in fighting off the soldiers.

Deciding that attack was the best form of defense, I reproached Samson, saying,

"I thought you said that you would be unable to tear yourself free from freshly-cut bowstrings.

Yet these are exactly what the soldiers used to tie you up.

You lied to me! How could you? This time tell me the truth."

He replied, "Very well.

I am powerless against newly-made rope that has never been put to use."

I tried again with the same result. Samson tore the ropes as if they were made of thread.

JUDGE SAMSON'S MISTRESS, DELILAH

¹⁴⁶⁰ Judges 16:4

מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה ט כד

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Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:11

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

Again I badgered him for the truth. This time he told me that, if his hair was attached to a loom and woven together, his strength would disappear. My third attempt was no more successful than the previous two. Samson simply shook his hair free of the loom and chased away his attackers. ¹⁴⁶¹

I wasn't prepared to give up so easily. After all, a considerable sum of money was involved. I continued to reproach Samson, asking him,
“How can you say you love me when you lie to me all the time?”

I continued nagging him until he was sick and tired of hearing my voice. I even refused to make love until he told me the truth. ¹⁴⁶² Finally, finally, he gave in. He explained that, at birth, he had been dedicated to the service of his God, Yahweh, and that he was forbidden to cut his hair. If his hair was ever cut, then he would only have the strength of an ordinary man. ¹⁴⁶³ Now, I was well aware that my lover never, ever, took his God's name in vain, and so the moment I heard him utter the word 'Yahweh', I knew he must be telling the truth.

I sent word to the authorities that I had finally discovered the real source of Samson's strength, and that, when they came to arrest him, they should bring me my reward. ¹⁴⁶⁴ Then, with his head lying in my lap, I lulled Samson to sleep. Once asleep, I took a razor and gently shaved off his hair.

¹⁴⁶¹ Judges 16:5-14
Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:11
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁶² Judges 16:15-16
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>
Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:11
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁶³ Judges 16:17
Babylonian Talmud: Nazir 4a
http://www.halakhah.com/nazir/nazir_4.html
Antiquities of the Jews Book 5:11
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁶⁴ Judges 16:18
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9b
https://halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_9.html

For the fourth and last time, I shouted at him,
“Samson, the Philistines are here!”
Samson sprang to his feet, clearly thinking he would be able to fight off his enemies
as before, only to find himself as weak as a new-born kitten. ¹⁴⁶⁵

I received my reward and was able to lead a life of luxury ever afterwards.
You may be asking yourselves, “Did she have any regrets about betraying her lover?”
The truth is, Samson had always loved me more than I had loved him. You must also
remember that he was an Israelite, a people we hated and despised. True he was good
in bed, but what was that compared to financial security?

¹⁴⁶⁵ Judges 16:19-21

JUDGE SAMSON'S WHORE

After our failure to capture Samson, I thought I would never see him again. So I was surprised when, sometime later, he was brought in chains to Gaza and thrown into jail. The whole city was agog to see him. We stood lining the streets as he stumbled by. I hardly recognized him. He was blind and had shaved off his lovely, long hair.

We had all heard about his prodigious strength. All our women wanted his child. Accompanied by their husbands, they formed long lines outside the prison, waiting to be impregnated by him. Although exhausted by his work of turning the huge stone wheel used for grinding our corn, Samson managed to find the strength to oblige them all. ¹⁴⁶⁶

To thank our great god, Dagon, for helping us capture such a formidable enemy, the bigwigs decided to hold a feast at the temple. Naturally, as the town whore I was not invited. Nor were any of the poor. Instead we joined the crowd gathered in the town square, hoping to catch a glimpse of the VIPs as they arrived. One of them was Samson, brought along to entertain the guests. As he passed I noticed that his hair had grown long again. ¹⁴⁶⁷

I was on my way home when I heard the most horrific crash. I ran back to the town center and could hardly believe my eyes. Dagon's temple was no more. It had been completely demolished and every one of the guests lay dead under the rubble. To think! One of them could have been me.

A young boy was the only survivor, the one who had held Samson's hand to guide him along the way. It was he who described what had happened. The temple had been crowded with all the members of the Philistine aristocracy. Moreover, there were an additional 3,000 spectators standing on the roof. Once inside, Samson had asked the boy to guide him to the main pillars supporting the roof, so that he could rest against them. The boy heard Samson cry out in anguish,

“Yahweh, remember the twenty years I served my people faithfully,
never lording it over them.
Help me obtain revenge for my two lost eyes
and let me die with my enemies.”

JUDGE SAMSON'S WHORE

¹⁴⁶⁶ Judges 16:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15824/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר פרשת נשא פרשה ט כד

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Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Sotah.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁶⁷ Judges 16:22-25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15824/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

With these words Samson had pushed with all his might, the two pillars had toppled over and the roof had collapsed, burying everyone beneath it. ¹⁴⁶⁸

NARRATOR

By a stroke of luck the temple toppled backward, leaving Samson's body uncrushed. His family arrived with a large escort to convey his corpse back to Israel, where he was buried in the family plot somewhere between Zorah and Eshtaol. ¹⁴⁶⁹

In bringing down the temple of Dagon on the heads of the aristocracy of Gaza, Samson killed more Philistines in one day than he had killed during his entire life. ¹⁴⁷⁰

¹⁴⁶⁸ Judges 16:26-30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15824/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - חומש במדבר נשא פרשה ט כד

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Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

NARRATOR

¹⁴⁶⁹ Judges 16:31

מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית ויגש פרשה צח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁷⁰ Judges 16:30

CHAPTER 30
JUDGE ELI AND HIS SONS
The Book of Samuel I

With Samson dead, we move on to the judgeship of Eli, priest of the Sanctuary at Shiloh.

The wife of Eli's son, Phinehas, describes the catastrophe that occurred when her husband and his brother carried the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines. The Israelites lost the battle and the Ark fell into enemy hands (I Samuel Chapter 4).

Then a Philistine woman from Ekron and an Israelite woman from Beth Shemesh relate how the Ark became 'too hot to handle' (I Samuel Chapter 5) and was immediately returned (I Samuel Chapter 6).

JUDGE ELI'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

Once again we were at war with our perennial enemies, the Philistines. Catastrophe struck when, on the first day of battle, the Philistines overcame our forces and killed 4,000 men. The situation was so dire that it was decided to invoke Yahweh's support. This meant removing the sacred chest from the Sanctuary and taking it out onto the battlefield ahead of our army. The priests chosen for this task were my husband, Phinehas, and his brother, Hophni. ¹⁴⁷¹

When they came to the Sanctuary to take the chest, their father, Eli, guardian of the shrine, tried to bar their way. Now aged ninety-eight and completely blind, ¹⁴⁷² he told them,

“On no account are you to remove the chest.”

His sons merely brushed past him and took it anyway. ¹⁴⁷³

Poor Eli! He was so anxious about the fate of the chest that, all day long, he sat by the city gate to await its return. When he heard his fellow citizens shouting in alarm, he asked in his quavering voice,

“What's all the shouting about?”

A Benjamite named Saul gave us the answer. His clothes torn, his hair covered in earth, a sure sign of mourning among our people, he had just come from the battlefield. He described how, at first, the shout that greeted the sight of the chest had left the Philistines quaking in their boots. However, they had managed to rally and, in the ensuing battle, killed 30,000 of our soldiers, including my husband and brother-in-law. Worse by far for my people, they captured the sacred chest.

When Eli heard this, he was so shocked that he toppled backwards off his chair and broke his neck. ¹⁴⁷⁴

CHAPTER 30 JUDGE ELI AND HIS SONS

JUDGE ELI'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

¹⁴⁷¹ I Samuel 4:1-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15833/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁷² I Samuel 4:15

¹⁴⁷³ Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Ch. 11:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁴⁷⁴ I Samuel 4:13-18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15833/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

NARRATOR

Phineas's wife was already in her last month of pregnancy. When she heard of the death of her husband, the capture of the chest and saw her father-in-law die before her eyes, she immediately went into labor and gave birth on the spot.

Such a traumatic experience proved too much for her. The women who were with her tried to encourage her by saying,
"Don't be afraid! It's a son."

With her dying breath she named her son Ichabod, meaning 'lacking honor', a name only too appropriate for a people who had just lost their most sacred possession.

¹⁴⁷⁵

NARRATOR

¹⁴⁷⁵ I Samuel 4:19-22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15833/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Ch. 11:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

THE PHILISTINE WOMAN FROM EKRON

The story I am about to relate concerns the aftermath of the battle of Aphek, in which we won a great battle against the Israelites, killing 30,000 of them and capturing their sacred chest.¹⁴⁷⁶ The chest was taken to Ashdod, where it was placed in the temple next to the statue of Dagon. The story goes that, when the citizens of Ashdod returned to the temple the next morning, they found the statue of Dagon flat on its face in front of the chest. They quickly replaced it on its pedestal and left, giving no further thought to the matter. Imagine their surprise when, the following morning, they discovered that not only had the statue fallen off its pedestal again, but its head and arms had broken off.

The next calamity was an outbreak of dysentery, together with a plague of mice that ravaged the produce in the fields.¹⁴⁷⁷ It didn't take the good citizens of Ashdod long to realize what lay behind such misfortune. Determined to rid themselves of the chest, they consulted the lords of the five cities.¹⁴⁷⁸ By no means convinced that the chest was connected with the plague, the lords advised them to send it to Gath. With the chest gone, the plague died out and life in Ashdod returned to normal.

Then a similar thing happened in Gath as had in Ashdod. A plague of hemorrhoids caused the Gittites to rid themselves of the chest by passing it on to Ashkelon, after which a plague of dysentery forced the people of Ashkelon to send the chest to us in Ekron.¹⁴⁷⁹

THE PHILISTINE WOMAN FROM EKRON

¹⁴⁷⁶ I Samuel 4:1-11

¹⁴⁷⁷ I Samuel 5:1-6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15834/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

¹⁴⁷⁸ Joshua 13:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15797/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹⁴⁷⁹ I Samuel 5:7-9

Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

I was among the crowd at the city gates, waiting half in fear, half in awe, as a cart bearing the chest rumbled by. We could see nothing, because the chest was covered with a shroud, not to protect it from us but us from it. It was said that anyone who just looked at the chest, let alone touched it, instantly fell down dead. Is it any wonder that we cried out,

“Take it away! We don’t want it. It will only kill us.”¹⁴⁸⁰

This finally convinced the five lords to return the chest to the Israelites - not as easy a task as it sounds.¹⁴⁸¹ After consulting the priests, they decided to send it back with guilt money to fend off the wrath of the Israelites’ powerful God, Yahweh. The guilt money took the form of five gold statues of hemorrhoids and five of mice, representing our five cities and the plagues that had afflicted them.¹⁴⁸²

A brand-new cart was built to carry the chest, while two milking cows that had never been yoked were separated from their young to pull it.¹⁴⁸³ Off went the cows, without a single backward glance at their calves, straight to the Israelite border,¹⁴⁸⁴ proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that we had done the right thing.¹⁴⁸⁵

¹⁴⁸⁰ I Samuel 5: 10-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15834/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁸¹ I Samuel 6:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

¹⁴⁸² I Samuel 6:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁸³ I Samuel 6:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁸⁴ I Samuel 6:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

¹⁴⁸⁵ I Samuel 6:9

Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

THE ISRAELITE WOMAN FROM BETH SHEMESH

It was harvest time. We were out in the fields, gathering in the wheat, when we saw a cart drawn by two cows stop by the big boulder that lay in the field of my neighbor, Joshua. Curious to see what it contained, we laid down our pitchforks and approached. In the cart was a large wooden crate and something covered with a shroud. For some reason I felt very apprehensive. When someone reached out to pull off the shroud, I told them to wait until we had summoned the authorities. Then I turned and ran back to the city to report the matter.

I returned with the Levites to find everyone dancing around with joy. In my absence someone had removed the shroud, revealing what lay underneath. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was our sacred chest, the one captured by the Philistines at the battle of Aphek. I thought we would never see it again, let alone in Beth Shemesh. And yet here it was, safe and sound! ¹⁴⁸⁶

It was now that the Levites took charge. They carefully removed the chest and the crate from the cart and placed them on the boulder. Then they chopped up the wood from the cart to make a fire, and slaughtered the two unfortunate cows as a sacrifice to Yahweh, to express our gratitude for the return of the chest and the laws that it contained. ¹⁴⁸⁷

Then tragedy struck. Many of our citizens dropped dead for no apparent reason. Some said it was because they had looked at the chest, ¹⁴⁸⁸ or had touched it. ¹⁴⁸⁹ Others said it was because they had continued reaping as though nothing had happened, or had greeted the chest with contempt, saying,
“How is it that Yahweh, after being so angry with the Philistines, is now prepared to forgive them?” ¹⁴⁹⁰

THE ISRAELITE WOMAN FROM BETH SHEMESH

¹⁴⁸⁶ I Samuel 6:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁸⁷ I Samuel 6:14-15

¹⁴⁸⁸ I Samuel 6:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15835/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁴⁸⁹ Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Ch. 1:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-6.htm>

¹⁴⁹⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 35a-b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_35.html

After a lengthy consultation as to what to do with the chest, so that it would cause no further harm, it was decided to invite the non-Israelite inhabitants of the Gibeonite city of Kiriath-jearim to take the chest away.¹⁴⁹¹

¹⁴⁹¹ I Samuel 6:20-21

CHAPTER 31
RUTH AND BOAZ – A LOVE STORY
The Scroll of Ruth

According to *The Antiquities of the Jews*, the first-century CE defense of Jewish history written by the Roman-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, the story of Ruth took place during the judgeship of Eli. Therefore, before continuing on to Samuel, the last judge of Israel, our narrative pauses for a romantic interlude.

Naomi and Ruth tell how Ruth, a Moabite, came to marry Boaz, a wealthy Bethlehem landowner and a close relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech. In so doing, she became an ancestor of King David. This version of the tale is based on The Book of Ruth, called in the Hebrew Bible the 'The Scroll of Ruth', embellished by material taken from an Aramaic translation entitled *Targum to Ruth*, as well as various Midrashim (commentaries).

NAOMI, ELIMELECH'S WIFE

For a long time the region had been suffering from a famine caused by drought, not unusual in our part of the world. ¹⁴⁹² When my husband, Elimelech, told me he had decided to leave Bethlehem and try his luck elsewhere, where the famine was said to be less severe, I immediately suspected that my stingy husband was sick and tired of people begging us for food. ¹⁴⁹³ I was horrified. It was well-known that uprooting oneself from all that was familiar and emigrating to a different country, was simply courting disaster. ¹⁴⁹⁴

Pregnant when we left Bethlehem, due to the hardships we encountered on the way, I miscarried. ¹⁴⁹⁵ This was only the first of the many mishaps that were to overtake us. We tried living in the forests, but found them infested with outlaws. We tried the cities, but found them impossible to live in. ¹⁴⁹⁶ We finally settled in the fields of Moab where I gave birth to two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. ¹⁴⁹⁷

CHAPTER 31 RUTH AND BOAZ – A LOVE STORY

NAOMI, ELIMELECH'S WIFE

¹⁴⁹² Ruth 1:1

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

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¹⁴⁹³ Ruth 1:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹⁴⁹⁴ מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

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Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁴⁹⁵ Ruth 1:21

מדרש רבה למגילת רות פרשה ג ז

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¹⁴⁹⁶ מדרש רות - פרשה ב ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁴⁹⁷ Ruth 1:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

After some years Elimelech died unexpectedly, leaving me a widow and my sons as good as orphans. ¹⁴⁹⁸ It's always hard to lose a spouse, even one like Elimelech, but my loss was made harder by the fact that I was living in a foreign country, far from my relatives. ¹⁴⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Mahlon and Chilion had grown up to become so well regarded by the Moabites that they were elected military tribunes, whose function was to protect the people against the aristocracy. ¹⁵⁰⁰ They became so powerful, that King Eglon, the Moabite king, sought an alliance with them, sealing it with their marriage to his two daughters, Ruth and Orpah. ¹⁵⁰¹

Frankly, I was horrified. Yahweh's laws state categorically that we are forbidden to marry people from other tribes. But what could I do? Ours was the only Israelite family living in Moab. Who else but Moabite women could my sons marry? Mahlon, the more forgiving of my two sons, married Ruth, the nicer of the two sisters. All I can say about Chilion and Orpah was that they were well-suited! ¹⁵⁰²

¹⁴⁹⁸ Ruth 1:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁴⁹⁹ מדרש רבה למגילת רות פרשה ב ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Midrash Ruth

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm12.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 22b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_22.html

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ruth 1:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁰¹ Ruth 1:4

מדרש רות פרשה ב ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

זהר חדש מדרש רות

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01782_part_23.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 47a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_47.html

Antiquities of the Jews - Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵⁰² רות זוטא עמוד 2 פרשה א ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

Over the course of the next ten years,¹⁵⁰³ my sons proved they were no better than their father. They showed no signs of returning to Judah, nor made any attempt to convert their wives to our religion, even though they had plenty of opportunity to do so.¹⁵⁰⁴ The result was that first they lost their personal possessions, then their camels and finally their lives.¹⁵⁰⁵ Only then did I recall what our fellow citizens had said about misfortune dogging the steps of all who deserted their country in its hour of need.¹⁵⁰⁶

I now found myself a penniless widow.¹⁵⁰⁷ All because of my husband's stinginess!¹⁵⁰⁸ All because we had left Bethlehem!¹⁵⁰⁹

¹⁵⁰³ Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵⁰⁴ מדרש רות - פרשה ב ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁵⁰⁵ Ruth 1:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁵⁰⁶ מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ruth 1:5

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה למגילת רות - פרשה ב י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵⁰⁸ רות זוטא - פרשה א עמוד 40

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁰⁹ מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

Moab was now experiencing a famine, such as Judah had suffered all those years before, whereas, according to some peddlers returning from a journey there, Judah was enjoying a bountiful harvest. ¹⁵¹⁰ With nothing to keep me in Moab, I decided to return home. I think that my neighbors were genuinely sorry to see me go. One of them even remarked that the city wouldn't be the same without me. ¹⁵¹¹

I set out on my way, accompanied by my two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. ¹⁵¹² When we reached the border, I told them,

“You don't have to come any further.

You're both free to return to your mother.”

(This was the traditional fate of widows and divorced wives.) ¹⁵¹³

I continued, “Thank you for honoring the memory of your dead husbands by not remarrying immediately,

and for providing me with food and lodging. ¹⁵¹⁴

I wish you the best of luck in the future

and hope you will soon find husbands.”

I said this because, as everyone knows, in our society a woman is safe only if under the protection of a man. ¹⁵¹⁵ With these words I kissed each of them goodbye.

¹⁵¹⁰ Ruth Chapter 1:6

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵¹¹ Ruth 1:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵¹² Ruth 1:7

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵¹³ Ruth 1:8

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵¹⁴ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵¹⁵ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב טו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Both raised their voices in protest.

“No,” they cried. “We refuse to leave you.

We’re coming with you and will convert to your religion if need be.”¹⁵¹⁶

I tried to explain.

“What’s the point in coming with me? Whom will you marry?

I can’t provide you with husbands. I’m far too old.

No, it’s better you return to your own people.”

By this I meant that I had no more sons whom they could marry, in order to give birth to a son who would bear their dead husband’s name.¹⁵¹⁷

The truth is, I was somewhat ashamed of Ruth and Orpah,¹⁵¹⁸ and wanted to avoid the embarrassment of turning up in Bethlehem with two Moabite daughters-in-law.¹⁵¹⁹ I feared that, in Bethlehem, instead of managing for themselves,¹⁵²⁰ they might become dependent upon other people, or get into bad company, behave badly¹⁵²¹ and end up giving my family a bad name.¹⁵²²

¹⁵¹⁶ Ruth 1:10

Targum to Ruth Ch.1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵¹⁷ Ruth 1:11-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב טו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵¹⁸ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵¹⁹ רות זוטא עמוד 3 פרשה א ח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵²⁰ רות זוטא עמוד 6 פרשה ב ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵²¹ רות זוטא עמוד 7 פרשה ב יח

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵²² רות זוטא עמוד 7 פרשה ב כב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

Therefore, I tried every stratagem I could think of to persuade them to stay behind. I managed to convince Orpah, who kissed me farewell, before turning her back on me forever. Ruth, however, refused to be persuaded.¹⁵²³ She said,

“Please don’t make return to my family and their idol-worshipping ways.”

I explained what coming with me would entail:¹⁵²⁴

“Are you sure you want to live among us?

We don’t frequent places of idle entertainment,
only houses of study and prayer.¹⁵²⁵

On our Sabbath we are forbidden to walk more than a certain distance
from our homes.”

“Don’t worry. I won’t go any further than you.”

“What’s more, unless you are married to him,
you won’t be allowed to be alone with any man.”

“Since I will be living with you, I won’t need to.”

“You can only worship our God.”

“I already believe in Him.”

“You will have to keep 613 laws.”

“I promise to keep all the laws that you keep.”

“You will be killed if you break any of them.”

“I am prepared to die if I do.”

“If you do, you won’t be able to be buried in the same cemetery as me.”

“I am prepared for that.”¹⁵²⁶

¹⁵²³ Ruth 1:14-15

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵²⁴ Ruth 1:7

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב כב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵²⁵ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ב כב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

¹⁵²⁶ Ruth 1:16-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה למגילת רות - פרשה ב כג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

רות זוטא עמוד 5 פרשה א יב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

מדרש משלי (בובר) לא

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%9C%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%9C%D7%90)

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 47b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_47.html

I could see I was getting nowhere, so I decided to say no more ¹⁵²⁷ and Ruth accompanied me back to Bethlehem.

We arrived at harvest time, to find many of its citizens working in the fields, bringing in the barley. ¹⁵²⁸ I was surprised to see just as many milling around in the city's streets. When I questioned a passer-by, she explained that they had come for the funeral of the judge's wife, who had just died. ¹⁵²⁹

As I led Ruth through the streets, people I had once known gathered round and asked,

“Are you Naomi, the wife of Elimelech?” ¹⁵³⁰

I thought they were talking to Ruth, seeing that she was about the same age as I had been when I left Bethlehem. This was strange, because Ruth may have become as devout as me, but she looked nothing like me. ¹⁵³¹

¹⁵²⁷ Ruth 1:18-19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch. 1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ג ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

Midrash Ruth 2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm12.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews - Book 5 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵²⁸ Ruth 1:22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Targum to Ruth Ch.1

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

¹⁵²⁹ Ruth 1:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רות פרשה ג ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

תלמוד ירושלמי - מסכת כתובות פרק א דף ב,ב פרק א הלכה א גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3201.htm>

¹⁵³⁰ Ruth 1:19

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁵³¹ Ruth 1:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

I realized my mistake when they asked,
“Are you the same Naomi who used to travel everywhere
in a wagon drawn by mules?
Whatever’s happened to you?”¹⁵³²
You were once so pleasant to be with, so pleasing to look at.
Your cheeks used to be so plump and rosy.
Now you look pale from hunger.
You used to wear such fine clothing.
Why are you now dressed in rags?”
I replied, “There’s no point in calling me Naomi anymore.
You might as well as call me Mara.”

By this I meant that I was no longer pleasant but had become an embittered old woman.¹⁵³³

I continued,
“When I left you, I had a husband, a son in my womb and many possessions.
Now I have nothing.
What’s the point in calling me pleasant, a woman cursed by Yahweh?”¹⁵³⁴

From these people I learned that my parents were no longer alive. This left only my brother-in-law, Tov, and a close relative named Boaz. I was far too ashamed to show myself to them in such a state, so I led Ruth to another part of the city where I would not be recognized. There we found somewhere to live.

¹⁵³² Ruth 1:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true
Targum to Ruth Ch. 1
<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵³³ Ruth 1:20

Targum to Ruth
<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רות - פרשה ג' ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

¹⁵³⁴ Ruth 1:21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16453/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true
Targum to Ruth Ch. 1
<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ג' ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

The next question was how to provide for ourselves. The answer was to send Ruth to glean barley in the fields every day. ¹⁵³⁵ Imagine how delighted I was, when she returned home at the end of the first day with the news that my relative, Boaz, had given her permission to glean in his fields till the end of the harvest. ¹⁵³⁶

Once the barley and wheat harvests had been brought in, we were left without any way of feeding ourselves. I realized that we would have to sell the family property that had been rented out all these years. To whom better to sell it than my relative, Boaz, the man who had been so kind to Ruth? The question was how to broach the subject? Then I had an idea, though this involved compromising Ruth's reputation. Fortunately my Moabite daughter-in-law, of whom I had thought so little in the past, now revealed just how far she was prepared to go in order to continue the name of her Israelite husband. I leave her to tell you all about it.

¹⁵³⁵ Leviticus 19:9-10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Ruth 2:2-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵³⁶ Ruth 2:17-23

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2:17-23

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

RUTH, NAOMI'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

My mother-in-law, Naomi, has already described how I accompanied her back to Canaan, to the city of Bethlehem in Judah. To support ourselves, I volunteered to forage for food.¹⁵³⁷ I remember the first morning I set out to glean. So that I wouldn't get lost, on the way I made sure to mark the path back home.¹⁵³⁸ Stopping at each field I passed, I asked the reapers what the owner was like. None of the opinions were favorable, not until I reached a field owned by a man named Boaz.¹⁵³⁹

After receiving permission from his overseer, I began to gather the left-over sheaves and ears of barley. With Naomi's warning ringing in my ears, I made sure to sit down to gather the ears, rather than bend down and reveal myself to public gaze.¹⁵⁴⁰ No-one could see so much as a toe!¹⁵⁴¹

In addition, I did not hitch up my gown like the other women, lest any of the men catch a glimpse of my legs. I also refrained from talking to the reapers, while the other women laughed and joked with them.¹⁵⁴² And, of course, I made sure to gather the ears of barley only from the edges of the field, whereas the other women collected them from the middle. I even took care to take only two ears of barley from any one place, leaving the rest for someone else.¹⁵⁴³

RUTH, NAOMI'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

¹⁵³⁷ Ruth 2:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵³⁸ Ruth 2:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

¹⁵³⁹ Ruth 2:3

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 113b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html

¹⁵⁴⁰ Ruth 2:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁵⁴¹ רות זוטא עמוד 6 פרשה ב ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁴² מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

¹⁵⁴³ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

Towards mid-morning, I noticed a well-dressed man talking to the overseer. From time to time I heard him greeting his workers by saying, "May Yahweh be with you!" to which they would answer, "May Yahweh bless you!" Apparently this was a traditional Israelite custom but nevertheless, I was most impressed.¹⁵⁴⁴

Then I saw him look in my direction.¹⁵⁴⁵ I could just imagine what the overseer was saying - that I was a no-good Moabite convert.¹⁵⁴⁶ I was wrong,¹⁵⁴⁷ for the owner came over to say,

"Please take my advice and remain in this field
with my other women workers.¹⁵⁴⁸

Instead of foraging round the edges, follow behind the reapers.

I have given orders that no-one should interfere with you,
so you will be quite safe.

If you are thirsty, don't be shy.

Take a drink from the jars of water that are provided for all my workers."¹⁵⁴⁹

¹⁵⁴⁴ Ruth Chapter 2:4

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

תלמוד ירושלמי - סדר זרעים מסכת ברכות דף סז,ב פרק ט הלכה ה גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r11.htm>

¹⁵⁴⁵ Ruth 2:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 113b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html

¹⁵⁴⁶ Ruth 2:6-7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁴⁷ רות זוטא עמוד 6 פרשה ב ז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁴⁸ Ruth 2:8

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

¹⁵⁴⁹ Ruth 2:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

I was so overcome by his kindness towards me, a despised Moabite, that I threw myself down at his feet and replied,

“Thank you, sir, for treating me so kindly, even though I am not of your people.”¹⁵⁵⁰

Boaz responded, “I have heard of your kindness to your mother-in-law, and how you have left kith and kin to accompany her to a strange land.”¹⁵⁵¹

I protested, “Sir, I do not deserve such praise.

All your women servants are superior to me.”¹⁵⁵²

“Nonsense!” came his reply. “You are far better than them.”¹⁵⁵³

At noon Boaz invited me to join him and his workers for a meal. I sat a little apart from the rest,¹⁵⁵⁴ so he brought me bread to dip in vinegar.¹⁵⁵⁵ As everyone knows, in hot weather it helps to drink vinegar.¹⁵⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵⁰ Ruth 2:10

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Deuteronomy 23:4

¹⁵⁵¹ Ruth 2:11-12

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה ג

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מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

¹⁵⁵² Ruth 2:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁵³ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

¹⁵⁵⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 113b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html

¹⁵⁵⁵ Ruth 2:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁵⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 113b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html

After the meal was over, I continued to forage, following the reapers as they worked. Boaz kept his word and no-one tried to stop me.¹⁵⁵⁷ I had the feeling that the reapers were purposely leaving some ears of barley standing, to make my work easier.¹⁵⁵⁸ At the end of the day, I gathered together all the ears I had collected and threshed them to separate the chaff. I ended up with about three seahs of barley, not bad for a day's work.¹⁵⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵⁷ Ruth 2:15

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

¹⁵⁵⁸ Ruth 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵⁵⁹ Ruth 2:17

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה ח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

I returned home to Naomi and gave her the leftovers from my lunch as well as the barley. ¹⁵⁶⁰

She asked me, “What good soul let you forage in his fields?”

I replied, “A man named Boaz.” ¹⁵⁶¹

“Good heavens!” Naomi exclaimed. “Boaz? Why he’s my close relative.” ¹⁵⁶²

“He also told me to stay close to his workers for the next three months, until the end of the harvest,” I said. ¹⁵⁶³

Naomi gave me a strange look.

“Are you sure he said his workers, not his women?” she asked.

She was silent for a moment, then said,

“It’s best you stay with Boaz and his women workers.

If you go anywhere else you might be molested.” ¹⁵⁶⁴

¹⁵⁶⁰ Ruth 2:18

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁶¹ Ruth 2:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁶² Ruth 2:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16454/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

¹⁵⁶³ Ruth 2:21

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁴ Ruth 2:22

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה למגילת רות - פרשה ה יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

I did as she said. Every day, from dawn till dusk, I would forage in the fields belonging to Boaz, ¹⁵⁶⁵ continuing to do so until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. ¹⁵⁶⁶ When the harvesting came to an end, I wondered how we would survive, but that very resourceful woman, my mother-in-law, soon came up with a plan. ¹⁵⁶⁷

My late husband, Mahlon, had inherited the family property, which had been rented out all these years. Naomi's plan was to sell it to Boaz. The question was how to convince him to buy it and, according to Israelite law, me with it. Her plan was very simple - to place Boaz in such an incriminating position that he would have no choice but to agree.

When I first heard Naomi's plan, I could scarcely believe my ears. Hadn't she told me not to be alone with a man unless I was married to him? I was prepared to go to great lengths to ensure the continuity of Mahlon's name, but this? I argued,

"If I do as you say, everyone will think I'm a prostitute." ¹⁵⁶⁸
However, since I couldn't think of an alternative, ¹⁵⁶⁹ in the end I agreed. ¹⁵⁷⁰

¹⁵⁶⁵ רות זוטא עמוד 6 פרשה א [ב]

רות זוטא עמוד 7 פרשה א

רות זוטא עמוד 7 פרשה א כב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁶⁶ Ruth 2:23

Targum to Ruth Ch. 2

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁷ Ruth 3:1

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁸ רות זוטא עמוד 5 פרשה א ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁶⁹ מדרש רבה – רות רבה פרשה ה יג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

¹⁵⁷⁰ Ruth 3: 5-6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

As instructed by Naomi, after washing and dressing I went to the threshing floor where Boaz slept every night to guard his grain.¹⁵⁷¹ I remained in concealment until Boaz finished his meal, recited grace, studied the law for a while and then settled down for the night. He seemed to be in a good mood. Once he was asleep, I crept up to him, gently unlaced his sandals and lay down at his feet.¹⁵⁷²

Round about midnight I awoke to find Boaz sitting up in bed, staring at me with a terrified expression on his face,¹⁵⁷³ looking as though he had seen a ghost.¹⁵⁷⁴ When he started screaming, I took him in my arms to soothe him as I would a child.¹⁵⁷⁵ Feeling something hard against my body, I quickly drew away.¹⁵⁷⁶

¹⁵⁷¹ Ruth 3:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה יד

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מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

רות זוטא עמוד 8 פרשה ג [ב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 113

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html

¹⁵⁷² Ruth 3:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה טו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁵⁷³ Ruth 3:8

¹⁵⁷⁴ רות זוטא עמוד 9 פרשה ג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁷⁵ Ruth 3:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁵⁷⁶ Targum to Ruth Ch. 3:8

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

Under the circumstances, Boaz would have been completely justified in being angry. However, in his usual bland voice,¹⁵⁷⁷ he asked,

“Are you a woman or a ghost?”

I replied, “A woman.”

“Married or unmarried?”

“Unmarried.”

“Ritually pure or impure?”

“Pure.”¹⁵⁷⁸

Then he asked, “Just who are you?”

I replied “My name is Ruth, the woman who has been foraging in your fields.

I am a widow. Your close relative, Naomi, is my mother-in-law,

which makes us relatives. My mother-in-law and I are left with no choice

but to sell the family estate which, after my father-in-law’s death,

was inherited by my dead husband, Mahlon. We beg you to buy it and,

in order that Mahlon’s name will continue to be associated with the estate,

accept me as your wife.”¹⁵⁷⁹

¹⁵⁷⁷ Proverbs 29:25

¹⁵⁷⁸ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ו א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L2

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ruth 3:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

I could sense that Boaz was deeply shocked. It took him a while to answer. He explained that my deceased father-in-law, Elimelech, had a brother named Tov, who had prior claim to the estate.¹⁵⁸⁰ If Tov was prepared to waive his right to it, then he, Boaz, would buy it.¹⁵⁸¹ He concluded by saying,

“Sleep at my feet the rest of the night and, in the morning,
I will arrange the matter.”¹⁵⁸²

I doubt if Boaz slept any more than I did that night, knowing that his future spouse was lying so close.¹⁵⁸³

¹⁵⁸⁰ Ruth Chapter 3:12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Targum to Ruth Ch. 3
<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ו ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L2

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא - פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

רות זוטא עמוד 6 פרשה ב [א]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁵⁸¹ Ruth 3:13

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁸² מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ו ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0006_L2

מדרש תנחומא לחומש ויקרא פרשת בהר ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0008_L4

¹⁵⁸³ Ruth 3:13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ו

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מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ז א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

ספרי זוטא על ספר המדבר עמוד 62

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14529>

He woke me before dawn, explaining that, to preserve both our reputations, he didn't want anyone to see me leaving the threshing floor. ¹⁵⁸⁴ Before I left, he told me to hold out my shawl, whereupon he filled it with six seahs of barley. ¹⁵⁸⁵

On my return home, I found Naomi eagerly awaiting my arrival.
“Well?” she asked. “Are you single or engaged?” ¹⁵⁸⁶

After hearing in detail all that had happened, Naomi told me to remain at home while she went to find out who would buy our family estate, and which man I would marry – Boaz or Tov. ¹⁵⁸⁷

Then came some wonderful news! Naomi returned home and told me that her brother-in-law, Tov, had waived his right to the estate and me. I was so relieved! He had wanted to buy the estate but when Boaz reminded him that the transaction included marrying me, a Moabite convert, he had declined on the grounds that he already had a wife and sons, and didn't want to divide the family inheritance among any more children. What a wonderful man Boaz proved to be! He had done everything he promised. ¹⁵⁸⁸

¹⁵⁸⁴ Ruth 3:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁵⁸⁵ Ruth 3:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ז ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

¹⁵⁸⁶ Ruth 3:16

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ז ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

¹⁵⁸⁷ Ruth 3:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16455/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Targum to Ruth Ch. 3

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ז ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

¹⁵⁸⁸ Ruth Chapter 4:1-10

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ז ז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

Boaz and I were married. Neither of us was young. Boaz was eighty and I was forty. Everyone thought that we were far too old to have children. But they were wrong for, on our nuptial night, I conceived.¹⁵⁸⁹ Unfortunately, it all proved too much for Boaz who died the same night. Although I was grief-stricken, my pregnancy helped to console me for his loss.¹⁵⁹⁰

Naomi and I continued to live together. As Boaz's widow, I was a wealthy woman and we were never again in want. After nine months I gave birth to a son whom I named Oved. Naomi and I both doted on him. Naomi looked after him while I managed the estate.¹⁵⁹¹ People began to call Oved Naomi's son, because she spent so much time with him. This did not worry me. I was only too glad that my mother-in-law, of whom I was very fond, had found happiness in her old age.¹⁵⁹²

NARRATOR

Ruth and Boaz's son, Oved, had a son named Jesse and Jesse had a son named David. Thus, Naomi's Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, whom she had feared would give her family a bad name, became an ancestress of King David, the founder of the royal house of Judah.¹⁵⁹³

¹⁵⁸⁹ Ruth 4:13

Targum to Ruth Ch. 4

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ו ב

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מדרש רבה למגילת רות פרשה ז יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L2

¹⁵⁹⁰ רות זוטא עמוד 11 פרשה ד יג

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/midrashzuta/midrashzuta03.pdf>

¹⁵⁹¹ Ruth 4:16

Targum to Ruth Ch. 4

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

¹⁵⁹² Ruth 4:17

Targum to Ruth Ch. 4

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

NARRATOR

¹⁵⁹³ Ruth 4:22

Targum to Ruth Ch. 4

<http://targum.info/meg/ruth.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Berakoth 7b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_7.html

Antiquities of the Jews Book 5 Chapter 9:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-5.htm>

CHAPTER 32
JUDGE SAMUEL AND HIS SONS
The Book of Samuel I
The Book of Joel

We come now to Samuel who was not only a judge but a prophet, as well as being Israel's first kingmaker.

His father, Elkanah, took two wives. The first, Hannah, like the Mothers - Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel - before her, thought herself unable to bear children until Yahweh intervened, while the second, Peninnah, bore him ten sons. The son, to whom Hannah eventually gave birth, was consecrated in gratitude to the service of Yahweh, serving in the Sanctuary at Shiloh under Eli the priest (I Samuel Chapter 1).

The unnamed wife of Judge Samuel's son, Joel, tells us how her husband changed his profession, starting out as one of Yahweh's messengers (the Book of Joel) and ending up as judge of Beer Sheva (I Samuel Chapter 8). The identification of Samuel's son as the prophet, Joel, can be found in Rashi's commentary to Joel, Chapter 1, verse 1.

HANNAH, MOTHER OF JUDGE SAMUEL

For nineteen long years my husband, Elkanah, and I tried in vain to have children. The law states that, if a couple has been married for ten years and the wife has failed to conceive, then the husband must marry again, either divorcing his first wife or allowing her to continue living under his roof.¹⁵⁹⁴ Some think that Elkanah took a second wife in accordance with this law.¹⁵⁹⁵ What they don't know is that the initiative came from me. I thought that, if I told Elkanah to take another wife, perhaps Yahweh would take pity on me.¹⁵⁹⁶

From the beginning, Peninnah and I didn't see eye to eye. She could see that Elkanah preferred me, despite the fact that I was unable to give him sons. She took to taunting me about the fact that I had no children. The more children she had,¹⁵⁹⁷ and she had many,¹⁵⁹⁸ the worse matters became.

Peninnah knew exactly how to rile me. She would ask sarcastically,
"Where's the cloak you bought for your eldest son?
Where's the tunic you bought for your second son?"¹⁵⁹⁹
She would purposely wake me early to ask,
"Aren't you going to wash your children's faces before they go to school?"
Six hours later, when it was time for the children to come home,
she would ask, "Aren't you going to meet your children?"¹⁶⁰⁰

CHAPTER 32 JUDGE SAMUEL AND HIS SONS **HANNAH, MOTHER OF JUDGE SAMUEL**

¹⁵⁹⁴ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת יבמות פרק ו' ו' [ו]

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/h/h31.htm>

¹⁵⁹⁵ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁵⁹⁶ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁵⁹⁷ I Samuel 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁵⁹⁸ I Samuel 1:4

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁵⁹⁹ I Samuel 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש שמואל פרשה א עמוד 42

<http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹⁶⁰⁰ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

Every time we visited the Sanctuary, Peninnah would goad me, bringing tears to my eyes.¹⁶⁰¹ After slaughtering an animal and offering up Yahweh's portion on the altar, Elkanah would distribute the rest of the cooked meat amongst the members of our family.¹⁶⁰² While he was doing so, Peninnah would make a point of reminding him,

“Be sure to give my son his portion” or
“You haven't given my son his portion”,
- words spoken just to annoy me.¹⁶⁰³

In an attempt to make me feel better, Elkanah would always see to it that I received a double portion of the choicest cut.¹⁶⁰⁴ It was in vain. The last thing I wanted to do was eat.¹⁶⁰⁵ The more Elkanah offered me meat, the more Peninnah goaded me, the more I cried and the less I ate.¹⁶⁰⁶

To his credit, Elkanah did more than try to persuade me to eat. He sought to comfort me by saying,

“Hannah, why are you crying?
Why are you so upset?
Aren't I more devoted to you than any number of sons?
Don't I love you more than I love Peninnah's ten sons?”¹⁶⁰⁷

¹⁶⁰¹ Samuel 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁰² I Samuel 1:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁰³ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶⁰⁴ I Samuel 1:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶⁰⁵ מדרש שמואל פרשה א ה עמוד 43 (סה)

<http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹⁶⁰⁶ I Samuel 1:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁰⁷ I Samuel 1:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

As the years passed, I grew more and more bitter. ¹⁶⁰⁸ However, I never ceased making the long journey to the Sanctuary to offer up sacrifices to Yahweh, begging Him to give me a son. ¹⁶⁰⁹

“You Who have created everything,” I prayed,
“is it really so hard for you to give me a son? ¹⁶¹⁰
Everything You have created has a purpose.
Every part of my body has its function.
What am I supposed to do with these breasts of mine
that are meant to suckle a child?” ¹⁶¹¹

I ended up by promising that, if Yahweh granted me a son, the child would serve Him as long as he lived. One son was all I asked. ¹⁶¹²

On one such visit I was on my knees as usual, rocking backwards and forwards as I mouthed a silent prayer, tears streaming down my cheeks, when Judge Eli rose from his seat at the entrance to the Sanctuary and said,

“How long do you intend to carry on in this state?
How dare you come here drunk!” ¹⁶¹³
I looked at him in indignation and responded,
“I assure you that not a drop of wine has passed my lips.
All I was doing was pouring out my heart to Yahweh. ¹⁶¹⁴
Instead of suspecting the worst, show some compassion!” ¹⁶¹⁵

¹⁶⁰⁸ I Samuel 1:10

¹⁶⁰⁹ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶¹⁰ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he
Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 31a and b
http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_31.html

¹⁶¹¹ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 31a and b
http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_31.html

¹⁶¹² I Samuel 1:11 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶¹³ I Samuel 1:9, 12-14 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶¹⁴ I Samuel 1:15 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶¹⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 31a and b
http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_31.html

Then I thought better of speaking so harshly to a priest of Yahweh and moderated my tone.

“I’m sorry. I only spoke so sharply out of unhappiness.

Please don’t leave me to the mercy of that horrible woman, my husband’s second wife.”¹⁶¹⁶

Regarding me with understanding eyes, Eli said,

“Go home. Yahweh will grant whatever request you have made of Him.”¹⁶¹⁷

Yahweh did indeed grant my request. At the start of our New Year, I finally became pregnant.¹⁶¹⁸ My son, Samuel, was born prematurely, after just six months and two days. By a miracle he survived. Moreover, he was followed by brothers and sisters.¹⁶¹⁹

Poor Peninnah! She paid a terrible price for her uncharitable behavior. Every time I gave birth, two of her children died. By the time Peninnah had lost eight children in this fashion and I was pregnant with my fifth child, she begged me to intercede on her behalf. I felt so sorry for her that I did as she asked and prayed to Yahweh to spare her last two sons. He must have listened to my prayers, because the boys survived.¹⁶²⁰

¹⁶¹⁶ I Samuel 1:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶¹⁷ I Samuel 1:17-18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש שמואל פרשה שניה יב עמוד 48

<http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

¹⁶¹⁸ I Samuel 1:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש אגדת בראשית פרק כ"ט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/agadatbereshit/agadatbereshit08.pdf>

¹⁶¹⁹ I Samuel 1:20-21 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶²⁰ I Samuel 2:5 Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15831/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

PENINNAH, ELKANAH'S SECOND WIFE

Whatever Hannah has said about me, ignore it! I am the victim of a complete misunderstanding. People think that I treated Hannah harshly out of jealousy, because our husband, Elkanah, preferred her to me. What they don't realize is that I was acting in her best interests.¹⁶²¹

Unlike Hannah, I had every confidence in Yahweh. I knew that if she prayed to Him for a miracle, He would grant her request.¹⁶²² Knowing she would never do so without being goaded into it, all day long I would think up questions to annoy her. Do you think I enjoyed taunting her in such a way? Of course not!¹⁶²³ Every time we visited the Sanctuary at Shilo I was at my wit's end what to say, to encourage her to offer up a prayer.¹⁶²⁴ I had almost given up trying when at last she saw sense.¹⁶²⁵

The awful thing was that, at the birth of every child of Hannah's, two of mine died. At first, I thought it was just a coincidence. Then I realized there had to be a connection. Since Hannah's prayer to have a child had been so efficacious, I begged her to intervene on my behalf, reminding her of all she owed me. As a result, my last two sons did live. However, I never recovered from losing the first eight, and I took no further pleasure in life.¹⁶²⁶

PENINNAH, ELKANAH'S SECOND WIFE

¹⁶²¹ I Samuel 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶²² Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 16a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_16.html

¹⁶²³ מדרש שמואל פרשה א עמוד 42

<http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶²⁴ פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

¹⁶²⁵ I Samuel 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶²⁶ I Samuel 2:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15831/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי מ"ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.43?lang=he

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JOEL

Times were hard. A plague of locusts threatened to denude the land. It was now that my husband, Joel, had a vision in which he saw four species of locusts descending on our fields, one after the other, each feeding on what the preceding species had left untouched, until there remained nothing,¹⁶²⁷ not even the bark on the trees.¹⁶²⁸

Convinced it was a message from Yahweh, Joel wandered the country, describing what he had seen in his vision. There would be no wine for the drunkards this year, he said,¹⁶²⁹ no wine for the libation, and no grain for the grain offering.¹⁶³⁰ The casks of wine would be moldy, the granaries empty.¹⁶³¹ There would be no grapes, no figs, no pomegranates, dates or apples.¹⁶³² Lowing from hunger, the cattle would wander off in search of pasture, the flocks of sheep too. Even the deer would cry out for lack of water.¹⁶³³

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JOEL

¹⁶²⁷ Joel 1:1-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16169/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

¹⁶²⁸ Joel 1:7

¹⁶²⁹ Joel 1:5

¹⁶³⁰ Joel 1:9

¹⁶³¹ Joel 1:17

¹⁶³² Joel 1:12

¹⁶³³ Joel 1:18-20

Blaming the farmers and vintners for the failed harvests wouldn't help.¹⁶³⁴ The only course of action was for the priests to announce a fast, and summon all the people to the Sanctuary to pray to Yahweh. If we did this, Joel said, Yahweh would hear our prayers and take pity on us.¹⁶³⁵ He would cause the locusts to fly off in another direction,¹⁶³⁶ and provide us with new wine, new grain and new olive oil.¹⁶³⁷

As with all of Yahweh's messengers, his appeal fell on deaf ears so Joel left off preaching and became a judge. Towards the end of his life, Joel's father, Judge Samuel, delegated some of his authority to his two sons by appointing them judges of the region of Beer Sheva.¹⁶³⁸ Great things were expected of them. What people didn't realize is how difficult it was to follow in the footsteps of such a distinguished man as my father-in-law, and how impossible it was for his sons to fulfil such expectations.

In his role of judge, my father-in-law spent much of his time riding round the countryside, hearing cases that required his judgment. This enabled him to come into contact with much of the population, and to understand the background of each case.¹⁶³⁹ Having decided that their father's method was both time-consuming and expensive, Joel and Abijah remained in Beer Sheva, requiring litigants to come to them. When the litigants discovered that they had to pay the cost of a summoner and a recorder of the court out of their own pockets, my husband and his brother became very unpopular. As a result, the people weren't prepared to accept either one of them as Samuel's successor, and demanded a king instead.¹⁶⁴⁰

¹⁶³⁴ Joel 1:11

¹⁶³⁵ Joel 1:13-18
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 3a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_3.html

¹⁶³⁶ Joel 2:20 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16170/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi=true#lt=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sukkah 52a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Sukkah.pdf>

¹⁶³⁷ Joel 2:19

¹⁶³⁸ I Samuel 8:1-2

¹⁶³⁹ I Samuel 7:15-17

¹⁶⁴⁰ I Samuel 8:3-5 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15837/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Part 9
King Saul

CHAPTER 33
SAUL FIRST KING OF ISRAEL
The Book of Judges
The Book of Samuel I

Since the people refused to acknowledge either of his sons as his successor, against his better judgment Judge Samuel was forced to accede to their request for a king. His choice fell on a valiant young Benjamite, named Saul, who started off so well but ended up so badly. After Saul's death in battle, in which his three eldest sons were also killed, his fourth son, Ishboshet, succeeded him to the throne. When Ishboshet was assassinated by his own bodyguards, David, the son of Jesse, was crowned king of Israel.

The tangled tale of Saul and David opens with a description by Ahinoam, Saul's wife, of her unconventional wedding (Judges Chapter 21) and her husband's election as Israel's first king (I Samuel Chapters 9-11).

AHINOAM, KING SAUL'S WIFE

My husband, Saul, belonged to the cursed tribe of the Benjamites, which had almost been wiped out in retaliation for a hideous crime committed by some of its members.¹⁶⁴¹ Only six hundred had survived¹⁶⁴² and it looked as though these would die childless, because the other tribes had banned their women from marrying them.¹⁶⁴³

When it was decided to punish the citizens of Jabesh-gilead for refusing to take part in the slaughter of the Benjamites, a partial solution more or less fell into our laps. All were put to death, apart from four hundred virgins, who were spared to provide brides for the surviving Benjamites. This left two hundred without wives. To solve the problem our elders came up with an ingenious plan.

The remaining Benjamites were instructed to kidnap brides from among those virgins participating in the ritual dances at the Sanctuary in Shiloh. Because it was done without their knowledge, none of the families of the girls involved could be accused of contravening the ban. This is how I and 199 other girls came to marry our Benjamite husbands.¹⁶⁴⁴

However, in my case, Saul didn't chase me. I chased him!

SAUL FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

AHINOAM, KING SAUL'S WIFE

¹⁶⁴¹ Judges 19

¹⁶⁴² Judges 20

¹⁶⁴³ Judges 21:1

¹⁶⁴⁴ Judges 21:4-25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15829/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

You might not think it, but the man who was destined to be our first king was very shy when it came to the opposite sex. While his fellow Benjamites were busy chasing us girls, Saul held back. Fortunately, I was the opposite. Contrary to being shy, I was often accused of being too forward. Realizing that our lives were in no real danger, ¹⁶⁴⁵ I noticed, lurking among the vines, an extremely handsome young man, taller than average, the kind of man we girls would stare at in the street. ¹⁶⁴⁶ The moment I set eyes on him, I decided that he was the man for me, and immediately gave chase.

Although Saul made a pretense of running away, I soon caught up with him. From his behavior, then, in the vineyards of Shiloh, you would never guess that my husband would later earn a reputation for grabbing everything he desired. ¹⁶⁴⁷

After our unorthodox 'wedding', we lived at Gibeah on my father-in-law's estate. It soon became clear that my husband was no womanizer. One wife and one concubine were quite enough for him. ¹⁶⁴⁸ I bore him six children - four sons and two daughters - while his concubine, Rizpah, bore him two sons. ¹⁶⁴⁹

¹⁶⁴⁵ I Samuel 20:30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15849/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁴⁶ 1 Samuel 9:2

1 Samuel 9:10-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15838/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

שמואל א - מצודת דוד שמואל א פרק-ט

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01464.html

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 48b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_48.html

¹⁶⁴⁷ Genesis 49:27 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244/jewish/Chapter-49.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת במדבר פרשה ב: סדר החנייה; מספר בני ישראל; מות בני אהרן ז [צבעי הדגלים וציוריהם סמלו של כל שבט]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/2.htm>

¹⁶⁴⁸ 2 Samuel 21:8

¹⁶⁴⁹ I Samuel 14:49

2 Samuel 2:8

1 Chronicles 8:33

It was Saul's job to tend his father's animals. When the female donkeys were reported missing, Saul was sent to find them.¹⁶⁵⁰ In due course he returned, having successfully completed his mission.¹⁶⁵¹ The following day I couldn't help noticing he was acting rather strangely. I could always tell when Saul was hiding something and soon wormed the truth out of him.

Somehow or other Saul had found his way to the house of Judge Samuel, who had not only helped him find our donkeys,¹⁶⁵² but had also told him that Yahweh had chosen Saul to be our king.¹⁶⁵³ The judge had instructed him to go to the Sanctuary at Kiryat Jearim, where the sacred chest was now located, to be blessed with the power of prophecy.¹⁶⁵⁴ However, for the time being, he was to say nothing of what he had been told.¹⁶⁵⁵ I received this news with mixed feelings. I was not at all sure that my husband possessed the necessary qualities to be king.¹⁶⁵⁶

Soon after this, everyone was summoned to Mizpah, where we were informed that our first king would be selected by lot. First the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, then the Matrite family and finally Saul. My shy husband was discovered hiding among the baggage and had to be dragged forward to accept the nomination. He was so much taller than everyone else, that it should have been obvious that he deserved to be king.¹⁶⁵⁷

¹⁶⁵⁰ I Samuel 9:3

¹⁶⁵¹ I Samuel 10:2

¹⁶⁵² I Samuel 9:19

¹⁶⁵³ I Samuel 10:1

¹⁶⁵⁴ I Samuel 7:1-10

¹⁶⁵⁵ I Samuel 7:14-16

¹⁶⁵⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשה א יב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01636_all.html

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשה כה ג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html

¹⁶⁵⁷ I Samuel 10:17-24 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15839/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

However, there were some mean-spirited people who claimed that he was totally unsuitable, calling out derisively, “How can a man like Saul reign over us?”¹⁶⁵⁸

My husband soon proved himself worthy of the title, uniting our people and leading them to victory in a battle against the Ammonites, who were besieging the newly resettled town of Jabesh-gilead. His victory quietened even his detractors. Now no-one could claim that he was unsuitable to be king.¹⁶⁵⁹

¹⁶⁵⁸ I Samuel 10:27

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 22b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

¹⁶⁵⁹ I Samuel 11:1-15

CHAPTER 34 DAVID THE SHEPHERD

The Book of Samuel I

The Book of Samuel II

Three women tell the tale of David, the shepherd boy. The first is David's mother, Nizbeth, whose name can be found in that valuable source of otherwise unknown names, Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 91a of the *Babylonian Talmud*. The story of David's birth is taken from *Yalkut Hamechiri*, a 13th century CE collection of folk tales and commentaries. His anointment as future king of Israel is described in I Samuel Chapter 16.

The second woman is Orpah, or Harapha, Naomi's widowed Moabite daughter-in-law who, unlike her sister, Ruth, had not accompanied her mother-in-law to Bethlehem, but had returned to Moab. According to Tractate Sotah, Folio 42b of the *Babylonian Talmud*, she married a Philistine giant to whom she bore four sons, one of whom was the Philistine champion, Goliath.

Harapha's daughter-in-law, married to her eldest son, Ishbi-benob, tells us how her husband was killed by the same man who had killed Ishbi-benob's younger brother, Goliath. The tale appears in Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 95 of the *Babylonian Talmud*.

NIZBETH, KING DAVID'S MOTHER

Most people have never heard of me, yet I was the mother of our best-loved king - King David. ¹⁶⁶⁰ I married a wealthy man from Bethlehem named Jesse, the son of Oved, who reared sheep for a living. ¹⁶⁶¹ When we married there was some discussion as to whether or not our marriage was legal, because our laws forbade an Israelite woman like me from marrying a man like Jesse, who had Moabite blood in his veins. ¹⁶⁶² However, my father, Adael, chose to ignore the law and our marriage went ahead as planned.

Jesse was much older than me and, by the time I had borne him seven sons ¹⁶⁶³ and two daughters, ¹⁶⁶⁴ he was already an old man. ¹⁶⁶⁵ I, being much younger, wanted more children. It was now that Jesse had an attack of conscience and decided that our marriage contravened the law. He decreed that from now on, rather than live together as man and wife, we would live apart. In vain did I remonstrate with him, pointing out that, as we already had nine children, it was a bit late for remorse.

After living apart for three years, our Canaanite servant told me that Jesse had approached her, promising to free her if she slept with him and agreeing to recognize any child she might have as a result. Seeing my anguish, she suggested we do the same as the Mothers, Leah and Rachel.

CHAPTER 34 DAVID THE SHEPHERD

NIZBETH, KING DAVID'S MOTHER

¹⁶⁶⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 91a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_91.html

¹⁶⁶¹ I Samuel 16:1

I Samuel 16:11

I Samuel 17:12

I Samuel 17:15

I Samuel 17:20

Psalm 78:70-72

¹⁶⁶² Ruth 4:13-22

I Chronicles 2:11-12

¹⁶⁶³ I Samuel 16:10-11

¹⁶⁶⁴ I Chronicles 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16522/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁶⁶⁵ I Samuel 17:12

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 58a

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_58.html

So that evening, when Jesse summoned our servant to have marital relations with him, she blew out the candle, enabling us to swap places in the dark. It was me that lay down at Jesse's side and conceived that night, not her. After that Jesse ceased having relations altogether.

After three months my pregnancy began to show. My sons suspected me of adultery and wanted to have me and my unborn child put to death. Although Jesse was deeply shocked, he told our sons, "Let her have the child. And don't be angry. Her child shall be treated like a servant, despised by all." Hearing this, I was greatly tempted to reveal how I and our servant had deceived him, but held my tongue lest Jesse punish us both.

So was born our youngest son, David. To complicate matters, unlike the rest of our family, he had red hair and a ruddy complexion, just like our Canaanite servant. This infuriated my sons even more but, as their father had requested, they held their peace and the matter was not raised again for the next twenty-eight years.¹⁶⁶⁶

One day, there turned up on our doorstep an old man with long hair and a white beard, leading a heifer and clutching a phial of oil to his breast. Announcing that he had come to offer up a sacrifice to Yahweh, he requested that Jesse and our sons accompany him.¹⁶⁶⁷ By now I had guessed that this was Judge Samuel, about whom I had heard so much. I was intrigued as to why he had gone to so much trouble to invite my family to the sacrifice.

In due course the heifer was slaughtered and a sacrifice was offered up to Yahweh, after which we sat down to eat. Gazing at each of our sons in turn, Samuel shook his head. Then he asked my husband if he had any other sons at home. Poor Jesse! He must have thought that the judge had come to denounce him for having an illegitimate son. After a long silence, he mumbled that our youngest son was in the fields, tending the sheep, whereupon Samuel insisted that he be summoned.¹⁶⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶⁶ ספר התודעה עמוד 2-302

עיונים בסיפור הולדת דוד המלך - ליעזר שלוסברג

סיפור הולדת דוד מתוך ילקוט המכירי -

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/41319>

<https://www.herzog.ac.il/vtc/0052330.html>

<https://sites.google.com/site/ahik26/step2>

English Paraphrase

<https://torah.org/learning/ruth-class46/>

¹⁶⁶⁷ I Samuel 16:1-5

¹⁶⁶⁸ I Samuel 16:11

The moment David appeared, Samuel jumped to his feet. ¹⁶⁶⁹ I could see that the judge was much taken with this youngest son of ours, with his ruddy complexion, shining eyes and handsome face. Samuel beckoned David forward, told him to kneel down in front of him and poured some drops of oil on his head. ¹⁶⁷⁰ In the sunlight it looked as though he was sprinkling David with precious gems. ¹⁶⁷¹ Everyone was astonished. Instead of being branded as illegitimate, ¹⁶⁷² David had just been anointed as though he was a king. My heart was ready to burst.

“Oh, my son!” I whispered.

¹⁶⁷³ “He whom his brothers have rejected, has become the greatest of them all.”

The next strangers to turn up on our doorstep were King Saul’s retainers. We were completely mystified, until they explained that they had heard of David’s proficiency on the lyre, and had come to escort him to the palace to entertain the king. Powerless to refuse a royal request, Jesse loaded one of our prize donkeys with bread, wine and a young kid, and sent David off to serve the king.

It didn’t surprise me to hear that, within a very short time, David had become the king’s favorite, for not only was my handsome son a talented musician, mature for his years, but also a brave warrior. ¹⁶⁷⁴

¹⁶⁶⁹ מדרש תנחומא בראשית - פרשת וירא ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L4

¹⁶⁷⁰ I Samuel 16:12-13

¹⁶⁷¹ עיונים בסיפור הולדת דוד המלך אליעזר שלוסברג

<https://www.herzog.ac.il/vtc/0052330.html>

¹⁶⁷² Psalm 69:91

סיפור הולדת דוד מתוך ילקוט המכירי -

¹⁶⁷³ Psalm 118:22

<https://sites.google.com/site/ahik26/step2>

¹⁶⁷⁴ I Samuel 16:14-23

From time-to-time David returned home to help tend our sheep.¹⁶⁷⁵ It was during one of his visits that the Philistines started making trouble again,¹⁶⁷⁶ and our three eldest sons were conscripted into the army to fight them.¹⁶⁷⁷

David was sent with provisions for his brothers to the Valley of the Terebinth, where our army was encamped.¹⁶⁷⁸ He left a simple shepherd but returned a hero,¹⁶⁷⁹ having killed the Philistine champion, Goliath, with his sling.¹⁶⁸⁰

¹⁶⁷⁵ I Samuel 17:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15846/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁷⁶ I Samuel 17:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15846/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁷⁷ I Samuel 17:13-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15846/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁷⁸ I Samuel 17:2

¹⁶⁷⁹ I Samuel 18:5

¹⁶⁸⁰ I Samuel 17:49-51

HARAPHA, THE MOTHER OF GOLIATH AND ISHBI BENO B

After leaving Naomi at the border between Moab and Judah, I had returned to my father's palace. When he was assassinated by the Israelite, Ehud, I sought refuge with the Philistines who hated the Israelites no less than we Moabites.

Wandering the streets of Gath, I was accosted by a giant of a man who told me he was looking for a wife of normal proportions, explaining that he did not want his sons to be as tall as the mast of a ship.¹⁶⁸¹ At first I thought he was joking, but it turned out he was perfectly serious. Since I was homeless and alone, with no one to protect me, I didn't think twice. Besides, I found him rather attractive, big as he was.¹⁶⁸²

It did not take long before I became pregnant with the first of my four sons - Ishbi, Saph, Goliath and my youngest, whose name we never mention because he was born with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.¹⁶⁸³ By the time I bore Goliath I was sleeping with so many men that I really don't know who his father was.¹⁶⁸⁴

HARAPHA, THE MOTHER OF GOLIATH AND ISHBI BENO B

¹⁶⁸¹ Babylonian Talmud: Bechoroth 45b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Bechoroth.pdf>

¹⁶⁸² Great Commentary on Genesis 27:7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

¹⁶⁸³ II Samuel 21:22

I Chronicles 20:8

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 42b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_42.html

¹⁶⁸⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 42b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_42.html

Goliath feared nothing, neither man nor god.¹⁶⁸⁵ He soon won a name for himself as the champion of the Philistine army. Before every battle he would challenge the enemy to single combat. Over six cubits tall,¹⁶⁸⁶ built like a house, with no physical flaws, he must have filled the enemy with awe. His weapons and armor alone weighed sixty tons.¹⁶⁸⁷ Was it surprising that rarely was anyone brave enough to face him, until the day that a mere shepherd boy killed him with nothing more than a pebble and a sling?¹⁶⁸⁸

¹⁶⁸⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 42
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_42.html

¹⁶⁸⁶ I Samuel 17:4 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15846/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 42b
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_42.html

¹⁶⁸⁷ I Samuel 17:5-7

ילקוט שמעוני שמואל א פרק יז סימן קכו
http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=8&perek=17&mefaresh=shimoni

¹⁶⁸⁸ I Samuel 17

ISHBI'S PHILISTINE WIFE

My husband, Ishbi, had purchased a new set of armor and was eager to test it in battle. How better to test it than by killing the man who had murdered his brother, Goliath, - the Israelite shepherd boy named David, son of Jesse? All that was lacking was the right opportunity.¹⁶⁸⁹

One day whilst out hunting, he spied his brother's killer tracking a deer in the forest. Ishbi took him captive and brought him home, imprisoning him under our olive press. Then Ishbi went off to catch the deer, leaving me and my Moabite mother-in-law to guard our prisoner. Suddenly I heard Harapha call out,

“Young man, please return my spindle.”

This was followed by a scream.

I picked up a knife and ran outside to see an Israelite standing over the prone body of my mother-in-law. Ignoring me, the Israelite walked over to our olive press and set our prisoner free.

Just then Ishbi returned. Seeing our prisoner about to escape, my husband thrust his spear into the ground, point upwards, grabbed Goliath's killer and was just about to impale him on the spear, when the other Israelite leapt up and saved him. The two ran for their lives with Ishbi hot in pursuit. That was the last I saw of my husband, until his body was brought back for burial.¹⁶⁹⁰

NARRATOR

According to the legend related in the *Babylonian Talmud*, David's rescuer was none other than his nephew, Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. When Ishbibenob finally caught up with the two escaping Israelites, they taunted him with the fact that Abishai had killed his mother, Orpah. Ishbibenob was so shocked that he was unable to move a muscle. The two Israelites took advantage of the fact to kill him on the spot.

ISHBI'S PHILISTINE WIFE

¹⁶⁸⁹ II Samuel 21:15-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 95a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_95.html

¹⁶⁹⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 95a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_95.html

CHAPTER 35
SAUL AND DAVID
The Book of Samuel I

The love-hate relationship between Saul and his nemesis, David, is described by four women - Saul's wife, his unnamed daughter-in-law and his two daughters, Meirav and Michal. Together they create a picture of a family riven by conflicting loyalties, while Saul is revealed as a man given to murderous rages.

Saul's wife, Ahinoam, tells us how David's arrival at court caused a rift between Saul and two of their children (I Samuel Chapters 16-20).

The wife of Jonathan, heir to the throne, describes the close relationship that developed between David and her husband (I Samuel Chapters 18-20).

Meirav, elder daughter of Ahinoam and Saul, discloses how her manipulative father used her as a pawn to further his interests (I Samuel Chapter 18).

Finally Michal, David's first wife and younger daughter of Ahinoam and Saul, relates how she was punished for helping her husband to escape her father's wrath (I Samuel Chapters 18-19)

AHINOAM, KING SAUL'S WIFE

Over the years, my formerly meek and mild husband had developed a foul temper and would alternate between displays of uncontrolled rage and tears of contrition. It transpired that he had never forgiven me for being so forward as to chase after him in the vineyards. The last straw was when he accused me, in front of the whole court, of being a whore. It's a wonder that our eldest son, Jonathan, did not strike him, but his father had always been a stern disciplinarian and he was probably afraid to do so. ¹⁶⁹¹

Who would have believed that the handsome young man with the shock of red hair, who had killed the Philistine giant they called Goliath, would have led to our family's downfall? ¹⁶⁹² For not only did David, son of Jesse, win the hearts of our people by killing more Philistines than Saul, ¹⁶⁹³ but he also won the hearts of two of our children - Jonathan, our eldest son, ¹⁶⁹⁴ and Michal, our youngest daughter. Both aroused Saul's wrath for loving David more than they did him. ¹⁶⁹⁵

CHAPTER 35 SAUL AND DAVID

AHINOAM, KING SAUL'S WIFE

¹⁶⁹¹ I Samuel 20:30 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15849/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

I Samuel 20:34 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15849/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

רד"ק שמואל א. [כ, ל]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=8&perek=20&mefaresh=radak

שמואל א - מצודת דוד שמואל א פרק-כ

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01464.html

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01464.html#HtmpReportNum0019_L2

אלפא ביתא דבן סירא ב ד' דהבא צריך לקמצאה, ועולימא להלקאה.

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_The_Aleph_Bet_of_ben_Sira.1.9-11?lang=he

¹⁶⁹² I Samuel 16:12

I Samuel 16:18

¹⁶⁹³ I Samuel Chapter 18:5-7

I Samuel 18:14-16

¹⁶⁹⁴ I Samuel 18:1

I Samuel 20:30

¹⁶⁹⁵ I Samuel 18:28-29

Whenever Saul found someone who might prove useful to him, he would keep him close. ¹⁶⁹⁶ So, after David's victory over Goliath, Saul insisted that the youth remain at court, where David would soothe my husband's troubled spirits by singing and playing music on a lyre. ¹⁶⁹⁷

Unfortunately David's continued presence at court only exacerbated Saul's jealousy and led my husband to commit crimes that, in other circumstances, he might not have done. On a number of occasions he tried to kill David, ¹⁶⁹⁸ or conspired to have him killed. ¹⁶⁹⁹ He even had all the priests of Nob put to death for harboring David, ¹⁷⁰⁰ and consulted a witch after he himself outlawed the practice. ¹⁷⁰¹

¹⁶⁹⁶ I Samuel 14:52

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15843/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁶⁹⁷ I Samuel 16:23

¹⁶⁹⁸ I Samuel 18:8-11
I Samuel 19:9-10

¹⁶⁹⁹ I Samuel 18:25

¹⁷⁰⁰ I Samuel 22

¹⁷⁰¹ I Samuel 28:7-9

PRINCE JONATHAN'S WIFE

I had the fortune to be married to a handsome prince – every girl’s dream – but also the misfortune to marry a man who preferred his best friend to me.

My husband was Prince Jonathan, the eldest son of King Saul and heir to the throne. Like his father he possessed a fine physique. Strong and agile, he was as proficient with a bow as his father was with a sword. What girl wouldn’t want such a bridegroom? ¹⁷⁰²

A brave and fearless fighter, Jonathan was the apple of his father’s eye. Whenever anyone was praised, the king would say,

“My son, Jonathan, also deserves praise.” ¹⁷⁰³

Jonathan, too, was very fond of his father, purposely hiding from him his more dangerous exploits to avoid causing him worry. ¹⁷⁰⁴

All that changed when a young nobody named David, the son of Jesse, came to the palace to entertain my father-in-law on the lyre. ¹⁷⁰⁵ He and my husband became the best of friends. ¹⁷⁰⁶

I soon wished they had never set eyes on each other. They were closer than brothers, far closer than Jonathan and me, even though we shared the same bed and had a son together. ¹⁷⁰⁷ They would often disappear for what seemed like hours. Goodness knows what they got up to together! ¹⁷⁰⁸

PRINCE JONATHAN'S WIFE

¹⁷⁰² II Samuel 1:22-23

¹⁷⁰³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

¹⁷⁰⁴ I Samuel 14:1

¹⁷⁰⁵ I Samuel 16:23

¹⁷⁰⁶ I Samuel 18:1

¹⁷⁰⁷ II Samuel 1:26

I Samuel 20:17

¹⁷⁰⁸ I Samuel 20:11

When David killed the Philistine champion, Goliath, he became so popular that my father-in-law's attitude towards him changed completely. He began to suspect that David had designs on the throne,¹⁷⁰⁹ and Jonathan soon found himself torn between the two.¹⁷¹⁰ Saul's suspicions increased to such an extent that he made no effort to hide his hatred of David, twice hurling a spear at him, which missed each time.¹⁷¹¹ These incidents achieved their purpose. David disappeared and, as far as I know, he and my husband never met again.¹⁷¹²

Naturally I was not sorry to see David go. I hoped that now Jonathan would turn his attention back to me and give me another son, brother to Mephiboshet. Tragically, before he could do so, he died in the battle of Mount Gilboa, together with his father and two younger brothers.¹⁷¹³

How stupid I had been to wish that Jonathan and David had never met! For, had David fought at Jonathan's side, my husband might still be alive. Better them together than me alone, a grieving widow, and Mephiboshet an orphan.

¹⁷⁰⁹ I Samuel 18:7-9

¹⁷¹⁰ I Samuel 20:30-31

¹⁷¹¹ I Samuel 20:32-33

¹⁷¹² I Samuel 20:41-42

¹⁷¹³ I Samuel 31:1-6

MEIRAV, KING SAUL'S ELDER DAUGHTER

We women are often used as pawns in the struggle for power by our menfolk. For example, my father promised me to any man who would kill the Philistine champion, Goliath.¹⁷¹⁴ The man to do so turned out to be a humble shepherd boy from Bethlehem in Judah, named David, whose father was Jesse. When he tried to claim his reward, my father retracted his promise on the grounds that it was against the law to marry off a daughter to pay a debt, as if she was no more than a slave.¹⁷¹⁵

This didn't stop my father from again offering me to David if he would continue fighting the Philistines.¹⁷¹⁶ This time David declined, probably because he no longer trusted my father's promises. Eventually, to serve some other political end, I was given to Adriel, the son of Barzillai,¹⁷¹⁷ to whom I bore five sons.¹⁷¹⁸

NARRATOR

The luckless Meirav died prematurely, after which her younger sister, Michal, took care of her sons.¹⁷¹⁹ Perhaps it was just as well. At least she was spared the agony of seeing them hung by the Gibeonites to expiate her father's murder of the priests of Nob.¹⁷²⁰

MEIRAV, KING SAUL'S ELDER DAUGHTER

¹⁷¹⁴ I Samuel 17:25

¹⁷¹⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

¹⁷¹⁶ I Samuel 18:17

¹⁷¹⁷ Samuel 18:19

¹⁷¹⁸ II Samuel 21:8

NARRATOR

¹⁷¹⁹ II Samuel 21:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

תלמוד ירושלמי: מסכת קידושין פרק ד דף מב, ב פרק ד הלכה א גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3604.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

¹⁷²⁰ II Samuel 21:1-9

MICHAL, KING DAVID'S FIRST WIFE

My sister-in-law, Jonathan's wife, may have had the misfortune of marrying a man who preferred his best friend, but I had the misfortune of falling in love with a man who loved my brother more than he loved me, and who became my father's mortal enemy. I refer, of course, to David, the son of Jesse, who brought such havoc to our lives.

As the younger daughter of a king, at the very least I expected to be married to a prince. Instead I was married to a mere shepherd boy. Admittedly he had made a name for himself by killing the Philistine champion, Goliath, with nothing more than a sling and a stone,¹⁷²¹ but had I not been wildly in love with him, I would rather have died!¹⁷²²

After David killed Goliath, my father took him into his service, in the course of which David again distinguished himself by killing 10,000 enemy troops. He soon became the people's hero, more popular than my father who suspected David of aspiring to the throne.¹⁷²³

When my father discovered my love for David, I could see he was pleased, not because he was happy for me but because he saw a way to rid himself of David, without anyone suspecting that he was to blame. This he accomplished by ordering our servants to tell David, in private, that he desired him as a son-in-law. David demurred on the grounds that he possessed neither money nor position. Our servants returned with Saul's answer. The king wasn't interested in a dowry for his daughter, merely proof that he had killed one hundred of the enemy. In asking this as the bride-price, my father secretly hoped that David would be killed in the effort to obtain my hand in marriage.

What did David do? He not only returned unharmed, but brought back the proof my father had demanded. Moreover, whereas my father had stipulated one hundred enemy foreskins, David brought back two hundred. My father had no choice but to consent to our marriage. Naturally I was overjoyed to marry the love of my life, even though I already knew that I loved David more than he loved me.¹⁷²⁴

MICHAL, KING DAVID'S FIRST WIFE

¹⁷²¹ I Samuel 17:50

¹⁷²² I Samuel 18:20

¹⁷²³ I Samuel 18:5-9

¹⁷²⁴ I Samuel 18:20-28

My father's jealousy of David continued to grow. Twice he tried to kill David and twice he failed.¹⁷²⁵ On the second occasion, I told David to flee while he still had the chance and helped him escape under cover of night.¹⁷²⁶

The next morning, after being informed that my husband was so sick, he could not stand, my suspicious father ordered his soldiers to bring David to him, bed and all. When my father discovered that the figure in bed wasn't David but one of our household gods, he was furious. He demanded to know why I had allowed his enemy to escape. I explained that, had I not done so, David would have killed me. The look of skepticism on my father's face had to be seen to be believed.¹⁷²⁷

To punish me, he married me to a man named Palti,¹⁷²⁸ resorting to the same excuse he had used with Meirav, claiming that my first marriage to David was invalid, since a woman should not be sold to her husband as if she was a slave.¹⁷²⁹

¹⁷²⁵ I Samuel 18:10-11
I Samuel 19:9

¹⁷²⁶ I Samuel 19:11-13

¹⁷²⁷ I Samuel 19:14-17

¹⁷²⁸ I Samuel 25:44

¹⁷²⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

CHAPTER 36
LIFE ON THE RUN – DAVID THE OUTLAW
The Book of Samuel I
The Book of Samuel II

Fleeing from Saul, in desperation David turned to the high priest of Nob, tricking him into giving him food and a sword. In reprisal for helping a wanted criminal, Saul had all the city's priests killed (I Samuel Chapters 21-22). This cruel act led to the deaths of two of Saul's sons and five of his grandsons (II Samuel Chapter 21).

The next person David turned to was Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. All was well until the king's retainers reminded him of David's reputation as a fierce warrior, capable of taking Achish's throne by force, which caused the king to turn against him. Fearing for his life, David was forced to feign insanity in order to escape (I Samuel Chapter 21).

Continuing to flee Saul's wrath, David was hounded from place to place, eventually gathering around him a band of four hundred malcontents. He made the mistake of placing his family under the protection of the king of Moab (I Samuel Chapter 22) who, according to Rashi, at the first opportunity had all but one of them killed.

During this period, David acquired two more wives in quick succession. One was Abigail from Carmel in Judah, the other Ahinoam from the Jezreel Valley. Here Abigail describes David's life as an outlaw, as recorded in I Samuel Chapter 25, while Ahinoam relates what happened when David once again sought refuge with the king of Gath, this time at the head of six hundred mercenaries (I Samuel Chapters 27-29).

Maacah, David's fourth wife, mentioned in II Samuel Chapter 3 and I Chronicles Chapter 3, explains how she came to be taken into David's harem. The law regarding women like Maacah, who were captured in battle, can be found in Deuteronomy Chapter 21 and in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Yebamoth, Folio 48).

ABIGAIL, KING DAVID'S SECOND WIFE

My husband, Nabal, and I came from the town of Carmel in Judah, where Nabal owned large flocks of sheep. ¹⁷³⁰ For years we had paid protection money to local nomads to protect our flocks from bandits. At the time of my story, we had been paying a local outlaw named David and his band of six hundred followers. ¹⁷³¹ Horrified to learn that my harsh and unforgiving husband ¹⁷³² was refusing to pay them ¹⁷³³ and, realizing that at any moment they might turn up to take their revenge, ¹⁷³⁴ I dropped everything I was doing and gave orders to load some donkeys with all the provisions we had available. These included loaves of bread, jugs of wine, five sheep ready for roasting, flour, raisins and figs. ¹⁷³⁵ Sending my young men on ahead to announce my coming, I told them that I would follow with the supplies. All this I did without telling my husband, lest he try to stop me. ¹⁷³⁶

CHAPTER 36 LIFE ON THE RUN – DAVID THE OUTLAW

ABIGAIL, KING DAVID'S SECOND WIFE

¹⁷³⁰ I Samuel 27:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁷³¹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:6

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷³² I Samuel 25:3

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:6

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷³³ I Samuel 25:14

¹⁷³⁴ I Samuel 25:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷³⁵ I Samuel 25:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁷³⁶ I Samuel 25:19

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

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מדרש תנחומא בראשית פרשת תולדות ו

I met David and his men on their way to attack our estate. ¹⁷³⁷ There must have been at least four hundred of them, far more than we could ever hope to fight. ¹⁷³⁸ Dismounting, I prostrated myself before David. ¹⁷³⁹ My robe must have ridden up above my knees, for when I looked up, I saw David staring at my naked thigh. Although I hastened to cover myself, the damage was already done. The hot look in his eyes warned me that now I had to beg, not just for our lives but also for my honor. ¹⁷⁴⁰

To persuade David to spare our lives I took the blame for what had happened, explaining that, had I been at home when his messenger had arrived, he would never have been sent away empty-handed. ¹⁷⁴¹ I asked David to forgive my husband's boorish behavior by accepting the gifts I had bought in recompense. ¹⁷⁴² To persuade David to spare my honor, I begged him not to do anything he might regret, or anything that would harm his reputation. As an afterthought, I asked him to remember me should my circumstances change. ¹⁷⁴³

¹⁷³⁷ I Samuel 25:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁷³⁸ I Samuel 25:13

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷³⁹ I Samuel 25:23

¹⁷⁴⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a – 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹⁷⁴¹ I Samuel 25:24-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷⁴² I Samuel 25:27

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷⁴³ I Samuel 25:28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

I Samuel 25:31 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a – 14b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Regarding my first request, David replied,
“Had you not intervened, I swear I would have left none of you alive.”¹⁷⁴⁴
It is good that you have prevented the spilling of blood.
Go home. I promise not to harm any of your household.”¹⁷⁴⁵
Regarding the second, he said,
“One day your husband’s ingratitude will be the death of him,
just you see.”¹⁷⁴⁶

When I arrived home, it was to find my husband carousing with his cronies. I could see he was in no fit state to hear what had happened, so decided to wait till morning before telling him. When he had sobered up, I informed him that I had saved all our lives by giving David our provisions. Nabal was so shocked that he had a stroke, which left him paralyzed and unable to talk.¹⁷⁴⁷ Ten days later he had another stroke and died.¹⁷⁴⁸ No-one could reproach me for his death. I had acted as any good wife should.¹⁷⁴⁹

Soon after Nabal’s death, David’s men turned up on my doorstep to inform me that their leader wished to marry me. Without any hesitation I agreed. Telling them to convey my answer to David, I set out after them with five of my women servants.¹⁷⁵⁰

¹⁷⁴⁴ I Samuel 25:34

¹⁷⁴⁵ I Samuel 25:32-33 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true
Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a – 14b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹⁷⁴⁶ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:7
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁷⁴⁷ I Samuel 25:36-37 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true

¹⁷⁴⁸ I Samuel 25:38 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:8
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

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מדרש תנחומא בראשית פרשת תולדות ו

¹⁷⁴⁹ Proverbs 18:22 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16389/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁵⁰ I Samuel 25:39-42 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15854/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L4
מדרש תנחומא בראשית פרשת תולדות ו
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 6 Chapter 13:8
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Please don't think that I married David because I had no choice. The truth is, I had fallen desperately in love with him the moment we met. To my chagrin, David did not feel the same way about me. The love of his life was, and always would be, King Saul's son, Jonathan. ¹⁷⁵¹

Despite our craving for each other, for three months David refused to consummate our marriage. This was to make sure that any child who issued from our union would be his, and not Nabal's. When we finally did sleep together, it didn't take long for me to conceive. The son I bore we named Chileab.

In spite of all David's precautions, people still claimed that the child was Nabal's. However, when they saw that he was the image of his father, they soon ceased their malicious gossip. ¹⁷⁵²

¹⁷⁵¹ II Samuel 1:26

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

מדרש שמואל פרשת כה עמוד 117

¹⁷⁵² II Samuel 3:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15863/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
מדרש תנחומא בראשית פרשת תולדות
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L4

AHINOAM, KING DAVID'S THIRD WIFE

I come from the Jezreel Valley where, during the civil war between Saul and David, I was given to David as his third wife.¹⁷⁵³ His first wife, Michal, had been taken from him and married to another, after which he married a widow from Carmel, named Abigail, whose husband had died of a stroke. As the only two women in David's harem throughout our time in Philistia, Abigail and I became close friends. There was never any rivalry between us as there was between David's other wives.

How did we come to live among our traditional enemies, the Philistines? Having decided that they were less of a threat than Saul,¹⁷⁵⁴ David took us and his band of six hundred men to the Philistine city of Gath. In return for placing himself and his men at the service of its king, David was granted asylum and the town of Ziklag.¹⁷⁵⁵

As the king's vassal, David was expected to fight his battles for him. This our husband did with great success. However, instead of killing our people as the Philistine king had ordered, David killed our enemies instead. None were left alive to reveal the truth.¹⁷⁵⁶

The unsuspecting Achish grew to trust David to such a degree that he appointed him and his men as his personal bodyguard. When the Philistine king took the field against King Saul, our men were summoned to protect the king, leaving Ziklag and us unprotected.¹⁷⁵⁷ While our men were away, tragedy struck when the Amalekites took advantage of their absence to raid our town, take everyone prisoner and burn it down.

AHINOAM, KING DAVID'S THIRD WIFE

¹⁷⁵³ I Samuel 25:43

¹⁷⁵⁴ I Samuel 27:1-3

¹⁷⁵⁵ I Samuel 27:5-6

¹⁷⁵⁶ I Samuel 27:8-12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15856/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁵⁷ I Samuel 28:1-2

Abigail and I were taken prisoner with the rest. ¹⁷⁵⁸ We didn't give up hope, for we knew it was only a matter of time before our menfolk came looking for us. Sure enough, they launched a surprise attack and put the Amalekites to flight. ¹⁷⁵⁹

We returned to Ziklag in triumph, but since the city had been destroyed, didn't remain there long. Instead we made preparations to move to Hebron, ¹⁷⁶⁰ but not before David ensured we would be well received by sending presents to all his Judean friends. ¹⁷⁶¹ As a result, he was welcomed like a returning hero and crowned king. ¹⁷⁶²

¹⁷⁵⁸ I Samuel 30:1-5

¹⁷⁵⁹ I Samuel 30:9-19

¹⁷⁶⁰ II Samuel 2:1-3

¹⁷⁶¹ I Samuel 30:26-31

¹⁷⁶² II Samuel 2:4-7

MAACAH, KING DAVID'S FOURTH WIFE

Although a queen of Israel, as a Canaanite princess I never felt at home among the Israelites. As far as possible, I made it a practice to keep my council and remain aloof from the intrigues of the king's harem. When I was a young girl, growing up in the city of Geshur where my father, Talmai, was king, I never dreamed my life would turn out the way it did. Perhaps it was just as well.¹⁷⁶³

When the Israelites came to the region, led by their leader, Joshua, we didn't know what to make of them, their ways were so different from ours. They had an invisible God who was reputed to be able to perform all sorts of miracles, such as inflicting plagues on their enemies and dividing the sea so they could cross it on foot. Unlike our gods, their God was very strict. The Israelites had to observe 613 laws. Who can possibly remember so many? The most important of these laws were inscribed on two stone tablets which were kept in a gold-plated chest that possessed a very powerful magic. It was rumored that, whenever they carried it into battle, it brought them victory.

The Israelites soon made their intentions clear. Their aim was to drive out the seven main tribes of Canaan and claim the country for themselves. They were convinced they were entitled to do so, because Canaan had been promised to them by their God. Fortunately, our city of Geshur lay outside the borders of Canaan, so they left us alone.¹⁷⁶⁴

MAACAH, KING DAVID'S FOURTH WIFE

¹⁷⁶³ II Samuel 3:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15863/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true

I Chronicles 3:2

¹⁷⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 21:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9985/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 35a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_35.html

All was well until, one day, without any warning, the Israelite king of Hebron, a man named David, attacked our city for no apparent reason, killed most of the citizens and took me prisoner.¹⁷⁶⁵ Standing before the king, I could see that he was entranced by my beauty, which never failed to have the same effect on any man who saw me.¹⁷⁶⁶

Generally speaking the Israelites didn't intermarry with women from other tribes.¹⁷⁶⁷ In fact, there were rules specifically designed to deter them from doing so. However, David managed to find a loophole in the law that enabled him to take me as his wife. First, I had to shave off my hair, cut my nails, wear black and mourn my parents for a month. Only then could our wedding take place.¹⁷⁶⁸

Inevitably my baldness achieved its desired effect. After the initial attraction had worn off, David grew disenchanted and even grew to hate me.¹⁷⁶⁹ I soon found myself in the unenviable position of being an unwanted wife, while David's other two wives, Abigail and Ahinoam, continued to enjoy his affection.¹⁷⁷⁰

¹⁷⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 21:11 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9985/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁶⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

¹⁷⁶⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 21b -22a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

¹⁷⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 21:12-14

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9985/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ספרי על דברים כא

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%93%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%9B%D7%90

מדרש תנחומא לחומש דברים פרשת כי תצא פרק כב סימן א

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/49.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 48a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_48.html

¹⁷⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 21:15-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9985/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Bechoroth 51b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Bechoroth.pdf>

¹⁷⁷⁰ II Samuel 3:2-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15863/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true

CHAPTER 37
SAUL'S DEATH
The Book of Samuel I

Saul's death is related by his aunt, Zephania from Ein Dor, a spiritualist whom Saul consulted before his final battle (I Samuel Chapter 28). The tradition that the spiritualist was Saul's aunt by marriage originates from *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*, a Midrash retelling the stories of the Bible.

ZEPHANIA, THE EIN DOR SPIRITUALIST

Before I commence my story, I must ask you to treat all I you are about to hear in the strictest confidence. If it should be discovered what I have done, my life would be in very great danger.

Every town and village boasted a 'wise woman', a woman living alone who, during her long life, had acquired much skill in the use of natural remedies and much knowledge in matters pertaining to women. Besides being such a woman, I also had a reputation as a successful medium, able to conjure up the spirits of the dead.

Let me explain. When, at the moment of death, the spirit leaves the body, it continues to hover in the vicinity for a year. Therefore, for the first year after a person's death, it is possible to summon up their spirit by means of a talisman or a familiar spirit, which is known as an Ob.¹⁷⁷¹

Anathema to the Yahwist establishment, such practices were strictly forbidden. This did not make them any less popular and my services were often in demand. However, after being crowned king, my nephew, Saul,¹⁷⁷² decided to clamp down on people like me, threatening us with exile or death if we were caught breaking the law.¹⁷⁷³ Forced to cease conducting regular séances, occasionally I would still accept a client if he made it worth my while.

CHAPTER 37 SAUL'S DEATH **ZEPHANIA, THE EIN DOR SPIRITUALIST**

¹⁷⁷¹ Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

¹⁷⁷² I Samuel 14:50-1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15843/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁷³ I Samuel 28:3

Leviticus 20:27 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9921/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז' [שאול ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

Shortly after the death of Judge Samuel,¹⁷⁷⁴ the Philistines gathered an army at Shunem. Without Judge Samuel to guide him, no prophetic dream from any of the priests, nor any answer from the oracle stones known as the Urim and Thummim, Saul did not know what to do.¹⁷⁷⁵ Left with no alternative he raised an army on Mount Gilboa while, throughout the kingdom, we, his subjects, waited apprehensively to see the outcome of battle.¹⁷⁷⁶

The weather was atrocious. Black clouds blocked out the sun, turning day into night. Hearing a loud knock on my door I opened it to find three men standing there,¹⁷⁷⁷ one of whom was unusually tall. When they told me they wanted to avail themselves of my services as a spiritualist, I reminded them that it was against the law and that, if we were caught, the penalty was death. Reassured that I would come to no harm and be paid well for my services, reluctantly I agreed.¹⁷⁷⁸

While two divested themselves of their cloaks, the third kept his face covered.¹⁷⁷⁹ They wanted me to conjure up the spirit of a man who had recently died.¹⁷⁸⁰ When I enquired who, one answered, "Judge Samuel." My instincts told me to refuse but the thought of losing a paying customer, at a time when I very much needed the money, made me reluctant to do so.

¹⁷⁷⁴ I Samuel 28:3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁷⁵ I Samuel 28:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁷⁶ I Samuel 28:4-5

¹⁷⁷⁷ I Samuel 28:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאול ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

¹⁷⁷⁸ Samuel 28:8-10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁷⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאול ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

¹⁷⁸⁰ I Samuel 28:8

It was with a sense of foreboding that I put myself in a trance and commenced the ancient ritual for summoning the dead, as taught to me by my mother. The moment the spirit appeared, it dawned on me that the tall man standing before me, wrapped in his cloak, was none other than my nephew, Saul, the same man who had outlawed the practice of my profession on pain of death. Convinced that he had set a trap to catch me, I shrieked in fright.¹⁷⁸¹ Seeing the state I was in, Saul told me not to be afraid but to tell him what I had seen.

Again I should explain. As the summoner of Samuel's spirit, I could see him but not hear what he said. As the person who had requested his summoning, Saul could hear Samuel but not see him. As for his two companions, they could neither see nor hear him.¹⁷⁸² I reported that I had seen an old man wearing a robe that looked very much like those his mother had made for Samuel while he served at the Sanctuary at Shiloh, and which he had continued to wear throughout his life.¹⁷⁸³

Hearing this, Saul knelt down in front of where he believed the spirit to be and addressed him. Samuel must have asked Saul why he had been summoned, for Saul explained that the Philistines had gathered an army and that he didn't know what to do. None of the legitimate means of augury, such as prophecy or dreams, had worked, so, in the end he had been forced to turn to a spiritualist. The only one he trusted not to reveal what he had done was me, his aunt.¹⁷⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸¹ I Samuel 28:11-12 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאל ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

¹⁷⁸² I Samuel 28:14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא - ויקרא פרשת אמר ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L4

¹⁷⁸³ I Samuel 28:13-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש תנחומא - ויקרא פרשת אמר ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html#HtmpReportNum0007_L4

¹⁷⁸⁴ I Samuel 28:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאל ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

When Saul's face turned as pale as ashes, I guessed what Samuel's answer had been.¹⁷⁸⁵ He must have told Saul that he would be defeated in battle.¹⁷⁸⁶ Saul then asked if there was any way to escape his fate. Whatever the answer was, it almost caused him to faint. His two companions rushed forward to help him, anxiously demanding to know what had happened. With an obvious effort, Saul pulled himself together and announced that, the following day, he would be victorious in battle and his sons would become princes of all the lands they would conquer.¹⁷⁸⁷

Seeing Saul lying on the ground, weak from fear and hunger, I couldn't help taking pity on him. I said,

"I've done everything that you asked, Saul.

Now it is your turn to do everything that I ask.

Before you leave, I want you to have something to eat to replenish your strength."

At first he refused but, in the end, his two companions and I managed to change his mind. I served them roast veal and pita bread. By the time they had eaten and gone on their way, night had already fallen.¹⁷⁸⁸

¹⁷⁸⁵ Samuel 28:16-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁸⁶ I Samuel 28:18-19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer

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¹⁷⁸⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאול ובעלת האוב]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

¹⁷⁸⁸ I Samuel 28:20-25 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15857/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

I couldn't help wondering what Saul had done to deserve such a fate. Was it because he had massacred the priests of Nob, to punish them from harboring David?¹⁷⁸⁹ Was it because he had spared the life of Agag, the Amalekite king, after Samuel had told him to kill all the Amalekites? Was it because he had not waited for Samuel to offer up a sacrifice to Yahweh, but had done so himself? Was it because he had consulted a spiritualist? I shall never know.¹⁷⁹⁰

One thing I will never understand. Why didn't Saul pray to Yahweh for forgiveness? Surely his prayer would have been answered. After all, it's never too late to change one's ways.¹⁷⁹¹

¹⁷⁸⁹ I Samuel 22:17-19

¹⁷⁹⁰ I Chronicles 10:13-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16530/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת אמר פרשה כו: אמרות ה' טהורות ז [שאל ובעלת האוב]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/26.htm>

¹⁷⁹¹ מדרש רבה לחומש דברים - פרשת ואתחנן פרשה ב: פרשת ואתחנן יב [שערי תשובה לעולם פתוחים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba5/2.htm>

מלבי"ם (סבה ד')

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http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01432.html#HtmpReportNum0027_L2

CHAPTER 38
ISHBOSHET AND DAVID
The Book of Samuel II

The events of the short reign of Saul's youngest son, Ishboshet, and the opening years of David's much longer one, are described by Saul's concubine, Rizpah.

The commander-in-chief of Ishboshet's army, General Avner, attempted to take the throne from Ishboshet, by demonstrating that everything belonging to the king, including the king's concubines, was now his (II Samuel Chapter 3).

The chapter concludes with an explanation of how Rizpah's devotion to her sons saved her people from starvation (II Samuel Chapter 21).

KING SAUL'S CONCUBINE, RIZPAH

We women have very little control over our lives. We begin our lives as the property of our fathers, continue as the property of our husbands and end up, if widows, as the property of our sons or, if spinsters, as the property of our brothers. Such was my fate. First I was the property of my father, Aiah, then I became the concubine of King Saul. When Saul died fighting the Philistines, I became the property of his son, Ishbosheth.

Normally no man is allowed to enter the royal harem, so I was very surprised when, one night, the commander-in-chief of Ishboshet's army, General Avner, suddenly appeared in our sleeping quarters and forced himself upon me. Don't think he took me out of lust. No! He wanted to stake his claim to the throne.¹⁷⁹² This resulted in a fierce argument between Ishboshet and the general.¹⁷⁹³ The outcome was that General Avner transferred his allegiance to Ishboshet's enemy, David, the son of Jesse.¹⁷⁹⁴ When both the general and Ishboshet were assassinated,¹⁷⁹⁵ I became the property of King David.¹⁷⁹⁶

Saul's death was followed by three years of drought, resulting in a terrible famine throughout the land.¹⁷⁹⁷ It turned out that we were being punished for two crimes, one committed by Saul and one committed by David. The first was that no restitution had been made to the Gibeonites of Nob, after Saul had killed their priests for harboring David. The second was that David had not given Saul and his sons a proper burial.¹⁷⁹⁸

CHAPTER 38 ISHBOSHET AND DAVID

KING SAUL'S CONCUBINE, RIZPAH

¹⁷⁹² II Samuel 16:21-22

¹⁷⁹³ II Samuel 3:7

¹⁷⁹⁴ II Samuel 3:8-12
II Samuel 3:17-21

¹⁷⁹⁵ II Samuel 3:22-27

¹⁷⁹⁶ II Samuel 12:7-8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15872/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

תלמוד ירושלמי - מסכת יבמות פרק ב דף יב,ב פרק ב הלכה ד גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3102.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי - מסכת סנהדרין פרק ב דף יא,א פרק ב הלכה ג גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4602.htm>

¹⁷⁹⁷ II Samuel 21:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁷⁹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 78b - 79a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_78.html
http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_79.html

To put this right, David invited the Gibeonites to a peace conference. Neither Michal nor I had the slightest idea of why we were invited, together with Saul's grandsons by Michal's sister, Meirav, and my own two sons by Saul.¹⁷⁹⁹ We looked on in silence as our sons were made to walk past the sacred chest from the Sanctuary. Astounded when none of them were able to do so, horrified when they were handed over to the Gibeonites, we were mad with grief when they were hung before our eyes.¹⁸⁰⁰ Michal and I never got over it. Every spring, when the barley is harvested, the memory of seeing them hanging from the gallows returns to haunt me.

You might be thinking that I uttered some words of protest over the death of my two sons, but I did no such thing. What was the point? It wouldn't bring them back to life. All I could do was to whisper to myself, "Surely Yahweh knows what He is doing. There must be a reason for all this."¹⁸⁰¹

After covering the corpses with sackcloth, I stood guard day and night to protect them from being eaten by scavengers. I continued to guard their bodies for seven long months, from the beginning of the harvest to the start of the rainy season, when the ground would be soft enough to bury them.¹⁸⁰²

¹⁷⁹⁹ II Samuel 21:2-6

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 78b - 79a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_78.html

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_79.html

¹⁸⁰⁰ II Samuel 21:8-9

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה ח: גרים ד [תבע הקדוש ברוך הוא עלבונם של הגרים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 78b - 79a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_78.html

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_79.html

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה ח: גרים ד [תבע הקדוש ברוך הוא עלבונם של הגרים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

¹⁸⁰¹ Deuteronomy 32:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9996/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹⁸⁰² II Samuel 21:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה ח: גרים ד [תבע הקדוש ברוך הוא עלבונם של הגרים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

Every passing stranger would stop and stare at the seven bodies lying on the ground, before asking,

“Who are these men?”

I would reply,

“They are royal princes, the sons and grandsons of our dead king.

Two of them are mine.”

Invariably the next question would be, “Then why haven’t they been buried? Isn’t it written in your laws that a corpse must not be left unburied overnight?

Yet these corpses must have been left unburied for months.¹⁸⁰³

What crime did these poor young men commit to be singled out for such treatment?”

This I answered by explaining,

“Their father had some Gibeonite converts from Nob put to death.”¹⁸⁰⁴

To their question,

“What kind of converts were they to be avenged in such a manner?”

I would respond, “Converts of convenience who, to save themselves, converted to our religion when our people conquered Canaan.”

The reaction was always the same.

“Good heavens! If your God can punish royal princes for a crime committed by their father against people who converted just to save their skins, what will he do for people who convert because they believe in him?

Your people are truly extraordinary and your God even more so.

We too want to convert to your religion.”¹⁸⁰⁵

¹⁸⁰³ Deuteronomy 21:23

¹⁸⁰⁴ I Samuel 22:6 20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15851/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

¹⁸⁰⁵ II Samuel 21:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

[תבע הקדוש ברוך הוא עלבונם של הגרים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 78b - 79a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_78.html

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_79.html

The famine ended with the winter rains. Only then did I realize why Yahweh had allowed my sons to die. My lonely vigil over my two dead sons had shamed David into giving Saul and his sons an honorable burial,¹⁸⁰⁶ thereby appeasing Yahweh's wrath, ending the drought and saving our people from starvation.¹⁸⁰⁷

¹⁸⁰⁶ II Samuel 21:11-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸⁰⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה ח: גרים ד [תבע הקדוש ברוך הוא עלבונם של הגרים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/8.htm>

Part 10
King David

CHAPTER 39

DAVID, KING OF HEBRON

The Book of Samuel II
The Book of Chronicles I

In addition to Michal, his first wife from whom he was estranged, Abigail from Carmel, Ahinoam from the Jezreel Valley and Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur on the Golan Heights, David took three additional wives from the region of Hebron where he was now king. They were his fifth, sixth and seventh wives, Haggith, Avital and Eglah, the subject of this chapter. Their names are listed in II Samuel Chapter 3 and I Chronicles Chapter 3.

It was during this period that David's first six sons were born. First was the unprincipled heir to the throne, Prince Amnon, son of his third wife, Ahinoam. Second was Chiliab, sometimes called Daniel, the son of Abigail, who is thought to have died young. Third was Absalom, the handsome son of Maacah, whose lustrous curls led to his death. Fourth was Adonijah, the son of Haggith, whose overarching ambition brought about his end. Fifth and sixth were Shephatiah, the son of Avital, and Ithream, the son of Eglah, about whom nothing is known.

HAGGITH, KING DAVID'S FIFTH WIFE

We are eighteen women who have lived together for years, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. Eight of us are the king's wives, while the remaining ten are his concubines. All but one of us have children. The exception is Michal, the king's first wife who is barren.

Together we bore the king many fine sons, all very handsome with long curly hair. They drove in gold-plated chariots at the head of the king's army and wielded great power at court.¹⁸⁰⁸

We women lived very confined lives within the palace walls. There were the usual squabbles and a great deal of rivalry over whose son would inherit the throne. Some of us were closer than others. For example, Abigail and Ahinoam, the king's second and third wives who were with him in Gath, were like sisters.

When David arrived in Hebron, the ancient capital of our tribe of Judah, with his six hundred followers and two of his wives, everyone turned out to meet their new king. To strengthen his position on the throne, he took three local women as his wives, one of whom was me.

I bore David a son named Adonijah.¹⁸⁰⁹ My beloved son, on whom I placed so many hopes, met a tragic end for which people said I was largely to blame.¹⁸¹⁰ The problem was that, as a first-time mother, I had no idea how to bring up my son, so I simply copied Maacah who had given birth before me. Therefore, it isn't very surprising that her son, Absalom, and my son, Adonijah, both turned out to be hot-headed and rebellious.¹⁸¹¹

CHAPTER 39 DAVID, KING OF HEBRON

HAGGITH, KING DAVID'S FIFTH WIFE

¹⁸⁰⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

¹⁸⁰⁹ II Samuel 3:2-5

I Chronicles 3:2

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

¹⁸¹⁰ I Kings 1:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

אלפא ביתא דבן סירא ב' ד') דהבא צריך לקמצאה, ועולימא להלקאה י

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_The_Aleph_Bet_of_ben_Sira.1.9-11?lang=he

¹⁸¹¹ רלב"ג מלכים א פרק א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01534.html

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 109b

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_109.html

Too late I realized I should have listened to those who warned me not to ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’. Had they been disciplined as children, our sons would never have ended up as they did. ¹⁸¹²

The truth is that nothing Adonijah said or did could make up for the fact that he was totally unsuitable to be king. The royal crown didn’t even fit his head! ¹⁸¹³

¹⁸¹² מדרש קהלת רבה - סדרא תנינא פרשה ז א (ג)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

רד"ק מלכים א א [א, ו]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=10&perek=1&mefaresh=radak

רלב"ג מלכים א פרק-א {ו}

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01534.html

¹⁸¹³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

Babylonian Talmud: Abodah Zarah 44a

http://www.halakhah.com/zarah/zarah_44.html

AVITAL, KING DAVID'S SIXTH WIFE

My father died before I was born,¹⁸¹⁴ as a result of which I was brought up under the protection of my brothers. When I was old enough to marry, it was they who arranged a suitable match. They couldn't have done better, for I became one of the wives of King David.

Although there was not much love between us, at least I did my duty and bore him a son, which is more than can be said for his first wife, Michal. My son was named Shephatiah. He was fifth in line for the throne.¹⁸¹⁵

Although David and I continued to have marital relations, I had no more children.

AVITAL, KING DAVID'S SIXTH WIFE

¹⁸¹⁴ Personal Names in the Bible

https://archive.org/stream/personalnamesinb00wilkuoft/personalnamesinb00wilkuoft_djvu.txt

¹⁸¹⁵ II Samuel 3:2-5

Chronicles Chapter 3:1-3

EGLAH, KING DAVID'S SEVENTH WIFE

Like Haggith and Avital my family also originated from Hebron. When I was born, I was named Eglah or 'heifer'. If you think that this was because I was a large, clumsy female you are wrong. On the contrary, I was as frisky as a new-born calf. ¹⁸¹⁶

My bubbly personality must have appealed to King David, for he took me as his seventh wife after Michal, Abigail, Ahinoam, Maacah, Haggith and Avital. ¹⁸¹⁷ During the seven-and-a-half years we lived in Hebron, I was his favorite wife. I bore him a son whom we named Ithream, the last of David's sons to be born there. ¹⁸¹⁸

After moving to Jerusalem, David took more wives and concubines, among them Bathsheba, with whom he became completely infatuated. From then on he more or less ignored me, apart from the occasional summons to his bed. The same went for all his wives, whom he continued to service lest he be accused of breaking the law requiring every Israelite husband to give his wife sons. However, every time he lay with me, I could tell his heart wasn't in it. ¹⁸¹⁹

I lived out my life in obscurity, taking comfort in Ithream, from whom I expected great things.

EGLAH, KING DAVID'S SEVENTH WIFE

¹⁸¹⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

¹⁸¹⁷ Jewish Encyclopedia

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5450-eglah>

II Samuel 3:2-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15864/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

I Chronicles 3:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16523/showrashi/true#t=primary

¹⁸¹⁸ The name Ithream in the Bible

http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Ithream.html#.Wo_eqoNubIU

II Kings 19:30-31

I Chronicles 3:4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

¹⁸¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

Psalms 6:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16227/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

CHAPTER 40
DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL
The Book of Samuel II

Following Ishboshet's death, David was crowned king of Israel. He moved his capital from Hebron to Jebus, the Jebusite fortress on Mount Zion, which was renamed the City of David.

Michal, King David's first wife, who had fallen head over heels in love with her husband and saved his life, relates how she was taken from her second husband and returned to her first. After she and David were reunited (II Samuel Chapter 3), their relationship was never the same (II Samuel Chapter 6).

In II Samuel Chapter 11 we learn how David seduced a married woman and had her husband murdered in order to marry her. II Samuel Chapter 12 reveals how they were punished. The woman, Bathsheba, David's eighth and favorite wife, became the mother of his heir, Solomon.

Maacah's daughter, Tamar, reveals a shameful episode involving her half-brother, Amnon, heir to the throne (II Samuel Chapter 13).

Amnon's mother, Ahinoam, tells of her shocked reaction when she found out.

MICHAL, KING DAVID'S FIRST WIFE

After I helped David escape my father's wrath and was punished by being married off to Palti,¹⁸²⁰ several years passed before I heard from my first husband again. This was during the short reign of my brother, Ishboshet.¹⁸²¹

One day a surprise visitor turned up at our house. It was General Avner, my brother's commander-in-chief. He informed me that he had come to return me to David. David? I couldn't understand it. Surely my brother would never have agreed to such a thing. He and David were sworn enemies. Who was the general working for?¹⁸²²

Too shocked to protest, I allowed myself to be pulled outside where the general's troops were waiting. Poor Palti was so upset to lose the woman he loved that he followed me all the way, tears streaming down his cheeks, until the general ordered him to return home.¹⁸²³ This is how I came to join all the other women in David's harem in the Jebusite fortress on Mount Zion, now known as the City of David.¹⁸²⁴

Once he was sure it was safe to do so, my husband took steps to transfer the sacred chest from Kiryat Jearim to his new capital. David led the procession himself. When it reached the city, the noise of shouting and the blowing of the ram's horn became positively deafening. I hurried over to the window to see what was happening outside. Looking down, I saw my husband prancing around in the street below, dressed in nothing but a linen tunic. At that moment a wave of loathing swept over me, not just because my husband, the king, was making a fool of himself in front of all his people, but because of all I had suffered.¹⁸²⁵

CHAPTER 40 DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL

MICHAL, KING DAVID'S FIRST WIFE

¹⁸²⁰ I Samuel 25:44

¹⁸²¹ II Samuel 3:6

¹⁸²² II Samuel 3:7-8, 12-14

¹⁸²³ II Samuel 3:15-16

¹⁸²⁴ II Samuel 5:7, 13-16

¹⁸²⁵ II Samuel 6:14-19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15866/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

As David reached the palace, I went out to meet him. My first words were, “I must say, you really distinguished yourself today, appearing half-naked in front of our women servants like any vulgar man.”¹⁸²⁶ His reply was, “It was me who was chosen by Yahweh to rule over the people of Israel, not your father or his descendants. I was merely expressing my gratitude. No matter how undignified I might appear to you, there are some who treat me with respect.”¹⁸²⁷

Even though I had brought up my sister’s children after she died,¹⁸²⁸ in spite of being married twice, I had not yet born a child of my own.¹⁸²⁹ As time went on and I failed to conceive, I had to accept the bitter truth that I would never be a mother.¹⁸³⁰

¹⁸²⁶ II Samuel 6:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15866/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸²⁷ II Samuel 6:21-22 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15866/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸²⁸ II Samuel 21:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15881/jewish/Chapter-21.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

תלמוד ירושלמי: מסכת קידושין פרק ד דף מב,ב פרק ד הלכה א גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3604.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

¹⁸²⁹ II Samuel 3:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15863/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 19b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_19.html

¹⁸³⁰ II Samuel 6:23

BATHSHEBA, KING DAVID'S EIGHTH WIFE

During the summer months, hidden behind a screen, I used to take my daily bath on the roof of our house. One evening, while my husband, Uriah, was away serving in the army, I was taking my bath as usual. Suddenly a bird alighted, followed by an arrow that missed the bird but shattered the screen, exposing me to public view. Covering myself as best as I could, I ran into the house, hoping that no-one had seen me.¹⁸³¹

Soon afterwards a knock came at the door. I opened it to find a troop of the king's guards on my doorstep. When their captain told me he had orders to take me to the king, I had no choice but to obey. On the way I asked myself, what could the king possibly want with me? Like everyone else, I knew that the king had a weakness for beautiful women but surely he would not risk having an affair with one who was married?

After I was ushered into his presence, the king ordered his servants to leave. I had never seen the king in person before. He was still a fine figure of a man, with the red curls for which he was so famous. He ordered me to rise and approach him. It didn't take long before it became obvious why he had summoned me. No-one defies the king if they want to live. After he had finished with me, I was escorted home under guard.¹⁸³²

After a number of similar occasions I discovered that I was pregnant.¹⁸³³ I immediately sent word to the king. I was desperate. All the time I had been with him, not once had I lain with my husband, Uriah, who was still away at the front. The moment Uriah found out I was pregnant, he would immediately realize that I had committed adultery. According to our laws, the punishment for adultery was stoning. Therefore, I begged the king to find some way to save me.¹⁸³⁴

BATHSHEBA, KING DAVID'S EIGHTH WIFE

¹⁸³¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

¹⁸³² II Samuel 11:1-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15871/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸³³ II Samuel 11:5

¹⁸³⁴ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

David did his best. He summoned my husband back from the front and did all in his power to persuade him to come home and lie with me, so that I could claim that the baby was Uriah's. ¹⁸³⁵ Uriah refused to do so, explaining that it didn't seem right for him to enjoy the comforts of home while his fellow soldiers were having a hard time at the front. ¹⁸³⁶

Left with no alternative, David was forced to resort to plan B, which involved arranging for Uriah to be stationed where the fighting was thickest, so that he was bound to be killed. ¹⁸³⁷ This was how my husband met his death. ¹⁸³⁸ Once the traditional period of mourning was over, David and I were married so that our first child, a son, was not born out of wedlock. ¹⁸³⁹

When our son contracted an illness that proved to be fatal, ¹⁸⁴⁰ the holy man, Nathan, told us it was a punishment from Yahweh. ¹⁸⁴¹ David was grief-stricken. For as long as our child lay on his sickbed, David spent every moment praying. No food passed his lips, only a few sips of water. To my grief, his prayers were of no avail. ¹⁸⁴²

¹⁸³⁵ II Samuel 11:6-8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15871/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸³⁶ II Samuel 11:9-13

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸³⁷ II Samuel 11:14-15

¹⁸³⁸ II Samuel 11:16-17-25

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:1-2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸³⁹ II Samuel 11:26-27

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁴⁰ II Samuel 12:15

¹⁸⁴¹ II Samuel 12:9, 13-14

¹⁸⁴² II Samuel 12:16-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15872/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true

After our son's death, I feared that David would be so upset that he might injure himself. ¹⁸⁴³ Instead, while I was sobbing my heart out, David calmly rose, washed himself, changed his clothes and left the palace. When he returned, he sat down to a meal, the first he had eaten in a week. ¹⁸⁴⁴ I couldn't understand it. He had been so upset while our son was fighting for his life. Yet now he was behaving as though nothing had happened.

Then David explained. While our son was alive, he thought there might be some chance of saving him. Now that he was dead, nothing he said or did would bring our son back to life, so what was the point of mourning him? I was aghast at his apparent lack of feeling. I hadn't yet realized that my husband, who was a very passionate man, was also a very practical one. ¹⁸⁴⁵

For a long time I was inconsolable. However, soon we had four other sons to make up for our loss, the youngest of whom was named Solomon. ¹⁸⁴⁶

¹⁸⁴³ II Samuel 12:18

¹⁸⁴⁴ II Samuel 12:19-20

¹⁸⁴⁵ II Samuel 12:21-23
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:4
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁴⁶ II Samuel 12:24
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 7:4
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

TAMAR, DAVID'S DAUGHTER

When I was born, my Canaanite mother, Maacah, had not yet converted to the religion of Yahweh. As a result, I wasn't considered a true Israelite or even a legitimate offspring of the king, unlike my brother, Absalom, who was born after me.¹⁸⁴⁷ This influenced my relationships with my half-brothers and sisters, who did not consider themselves related to me in any way at all.

I lived in the harem with my mother. Like all Israelite maidens I led a very sheltered life.¹⁸⁴⁸ The only males with whom I came in contact, were my half-brothers. One day, my father asked me to visit Amnon, the heir to the throne, who was feeling poorly and had not eaten properly for days. When I entered his apartment Amnon was lying in bed, looking sorry for himself. I decided to make him some dumplings. As everyone knows, dumplings are nutritious, easy on the stomach and good for invalids.¹⁸⁴⁹ Imagine my horror when, instead of eating my dumplings, Amnon pulled me into his bed!¹⁸⁵⁰

I remonstrated with him, saying,

“Amnon, please don't force me like this! Don't put both of us to shame.

If you ask our father, I am sure he will agree to our marriage.”¹⁸⁵¹

Amnon ignored my entreaties and, because he was so much stronger, soon overpowered me.¹⁸⁵²

TAMAR, DAVID'S DAUGHTER

¹⁸⁴⁷ II Samuel 13:12-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15873/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

¹⁸⁴⁸ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8 :1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁴⁹ II Samuel 13:7-9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15873/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁵⁰ II Samuel 13:10-11

¹⁸⁵¹ II Samuel 13:12-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15873/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁵² II Samuel 13:14

As soon as he had finished, he pushed me away and told me to get out. Yes, just like that! I could see the hatred in his eyes.¹⁸⁵³ This just shows that he felt no real love for me, just lust, and once his lust was satisfied, wanted no more to do with me.¹⁸⁵⁴ I begged him not to send me away in broad daylight, when everyone could witness my shame, but again he would not listen to my entreaties and ordered his servant to throw me out.¹⁸⁵⁵

When my brother, Absalom, saw me leaving Amnon's chamber, my hair disheveled and my robe torn, he guessed what had happened.

"Has Amnon done this to you?" he demanded to know.

I nodded in shame and distress.

Absalom continued, "I advise you to keep quiet about it.

After all Amnon is our brother.

You're still alive and that's what really matters."

I did as he said and, from that day forth, lived under Absalom's protection.¹⁸⁵⁶

¹⁸⁵³ II Samuel 13:15 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15873/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁵⁴ Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Five:16

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2099/jewish/Chapter-Five.htm

¹⁸⁵⁵ II Samuel 13:16-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15873/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

¹⁸⁵⁶ II Samuel 13:20

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 8:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

Although I told no-one but my mother, word eventually spread about what had happened. In spite of being extremely angry with Amnon, our father did nothing to punish him.¹⁸⁵⁷ Neither did my brother, Absalom, although I knew that beneath the surface, he was seething with rage.¹⁸⁵⁸ It was two years before he took his revenge. As they say, "*Revenge is a dish best served cold.*"¹⁸⁵⁹

¹⁸⁵⁷ II Samuel 13:21

¹⁸⁵⁸ II Samuel 13:22

¹⁸⁵⁹ II Samuel 13:30-32

AHINOAM, DAVID'S THIRD WIFE

My son, Amnon, was the heir to the throne and, as such, accustomed to getting his own way.¹⁸⁶⁰ He and his friend, Jonadav, my husband's nephew, got up to all sorts of mischief. One day they went too far.

The first I knew about it was when Amnon and the other royal princes accompanied their half-brother, Absalom, Maacah's son, to a feast to celebrate the end of the sheep shearing. A message arrived at the palace informing us that they had all been murdered.¹⁸⁶¹ Jonadav, who had not accompanied them, hastily explained that only Amnon had been killed and that all the other princes were quite safe.

Beside myself with horror and grief, I asked why had Amnon been killed and no-one else? Jonadav replied that it was to revenge the rape of Tamar. My Amnon a rapist? Raping his own half-sister? No - it couldn't possibly be true!

"That's a vicious lie!" I shouted.¹⁸⁶²

Gradually I learned the full details of the whole sordid story – how Jonadav had come up with a plan whereby Amnon could be alone with Tamar without raising suspicion,¹⁸⁶³ how Amnon had had his way with her and then cast her aside. It was just too awful for words.¹⁸⁶⁴

The person I blamed was my husband, David. Apparently he had known all about the rape but had chosen to do nothing about it.¹⁸⁶⁵ Had he done so, perhaps Absalom would not have taken justice into his own hands and my son would still be alive.

I never forgave Absalom for murdering my child, nor his mother, Maacah, to whom I never spoke again.

AHINOAM, DAVID'S THIRD WIFE

¹⁸⁶⁰ II Samuel 3:2

¹⁸⁶¹ II Samuel 13:23-31

¹⁸⁶² II Samuel 13:32

¹⁸⁶³ II Samuel 13:3-5

¹⁸⁶⁴ II Samuel 13:14-18

¹⁸⁶⁵ II Samuel 13:21

NARRATOR

The whole kingdom mourned Amnon, the murdered heir to the throne, and excoriated Absalom for murdering him. Absalom was lucky to escape with his life, which he did by making his way to Geshur where he knew he would be safe under the protection of his grandfather, Talmai. There he remained for three years. ¹⁸⁶⁶

NARRATOR

¹⁸⁶⁶ II Samuel 13:37-38

CHAPTER 41
REBELLION!
The Book of Samuel II

In Jerusalem three of David's sons took steps to secure the throne after their father's death. They were Absalom, Adonijah and Solomon. In Solomon's case, it was his mother, Bathsheba, who was the driving force behind his succession to the throne. The dramatic events that took place during this period are recollected by many women.

A wise woman from Tekoa relates how she helped bring about the reconciliation between David and his son, Absalom (II Samuel Chapter 14).

The story of Absalom's ensuing rebellion against his father can be found in II Samuel Chapters 15-18. After Absalom captured Jerusalem (II Samuel Chapter 17), two women, a launderess from Ein Rogel and the keeper of a safe house in Bahurim, reveal how David's spy ring saved his life.

When David retreated from Jerusalem, his ten concubines were left behind to look after the palace (II Samuel Chapter 15). There, following other examples in the Biblical text, Absalom demonstrated that he was now master of all that his father had owned (II Samuel Chapter 16).

David had two sisters - Zeruiah and Abigail. Both sisters describe the internecine rivalry between the sons of all three siblings (II Samuel Chapters 18 and 20).

Absalom's mother, Maacah, whom we have already met, tells how she and David received the news of their son's death (II Samuel Chapter 18).

David's troubles did not end with the death of Absalom, for a certain Sheba led a rebellion against him by the ten northern tribes. Sheba took refuge in the town of Abel-Beth-Maacah, which would have been destroyed by David's army had not a very old woman used her wits to save her city (II Samuel Chapter 20). In the *Great Commentary on Ecclesiastes* the old woman is identified as Serach, the long-lived daughter of Asher, who has already appeared in our narrative on a number of occasions.

A WISE WOMAN FROM TEKOA

All my life I lived in the city of Tekoa, where my husband and I owned a small olive grove. There was a great demand for Tekoa olives, which were supposed to sharpen one's wits.¹⁸⁶⁷ The income from our olive grove helped me to survive after my husband's death.¹⁸⁶⁸

One day, a man dressed in military uniform appeared at my door. He introduced himself as General Yoav, the head of King David's army. I must have stood there gawking for a while, before I remembered my manners and invited him in. I couldn't begin to imagine what a high-ranking general would want of a poor, insignificant widow like me.

It turned out that he wanted me to do him a favor, by acting the part of a woman recently widowed, by appearing in public unwashed, unkempt, wearing filthy rags.¹⁸⁶⁹ This was how we widows were expected to show our grief. As if we weren't suffering enough after the death of a beloved husband, or at least one who had provided us with a roof over our heads!¹⁸⁷⁰ Dressed in this disguise, General Yoav wanted me to present myself before the king.

I almost laughed out loud. Normally one dresses up in one's finest clothes to appear before royalty. Yet this crazy general wanted me to do the exact opposite. Then he explained his plan and I understood.

CHAPTER 41 REBELLION!

A WISE WOMAN FROM TEKOA

¹⁸⁶⁷ II Samuel 14:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15874/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

BabylonianTalmud: Menachoth 85b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Menachoth.pdf>

¹⁸⁶⁸ Deuteronomy Chapter 33:24 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9997/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני שמואל ב פרק יד

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=9&perek=14&mefaresh=shimoni

BabylonianTalmud: Menachoth 85b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Menachoth.pdf>

¹⁸⁶⁹ II Samuel 14:1-2

¹⁸⁷⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 15a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

In due course I arrived in Jerusalem and made my way to the palace, where I asked to see the king. Naturally the guards took one look at me and turned up their noses.

“What do the likes of you have to do with the king?” one of them demanded.

“Never you mind!” I retorted.

“What I have to say is for the king’s ears only.

Now let me pass, before the king finds out how you’ve treated a poor widow woman who has come to him for justice.

Isn’t anyone allowed to ask the king for justice?”

Looking abashed, the guards let me pass and even directed me to the king’s audience chamber. Finding myself in the presence of the king, I flung myself at his feet. According to General Yoav, this was required of us humble folk in keeping with court etiquette. As I had been coached, I cried out in a loud voice,

“Your majesty, please save me!”

This had the intended effect of gaining the king’s attention.

When the king asked me to explain myself, I told him that I had recently been widowed. To add to my grief, one of my sons had killed the other accidentally in a fight. My relatives were demanding that my remaining son be put to death, not so much because they wanted to see justice done, but because they wanted to inherit our property. If they had their way, I would be left with no son, no property and no descendants to inherit our family name. Therefore, I begged the king to spare my son’s life. Instead of giving me an answer on the spot, the king told me to return home, promising to deal with the matter later.

Now, I’m no fool - didn’t I come from Tekoa where the olive oil was supposed to make us so clever? Realizing that the king had no intention of doing anything, I remained where I was, kneeling on the cold, stone floor.

I said, “If I leave now and nothing is done, then I’ll have only have myself to blame.”

The king replied,

“If anyone talks of harming your son, bring that person to me, and I will personally make sure that he does not carry out his threat.”¹⁸⁷¹

¹⁸⁷¹ II Samuel 14:3-10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15874/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

General Yoav had impressed upon me the importance of what came next, telling me to repeat what he said, word for word.

“Your majesty, according to the law,
the punishment for unpremeditated murder is exile, not death.

Promise me that my son’s life will be spared according to the law.”

The king promised that not a hair on my son’s head would be harmed.¹⁸⁷²

Having caused the king to state publicly that he would treat my son’s case according to the law, I proceeded to the next part of the plan.

“May I continue?” I asked.

The king replied, “Yes.”

“In all honesty, do you think your predicament is any different than mine?

One of your sons has killed the other in a moment of anger.

The law states that the punishment for unpremeditated murder is exile,
not death.

If you are prepared to uphold the law in the matter of my son,
then why not do so in the matter of Prince Absalom?”

I risked a look at the king’s face to see his reaction. I could see he was so astonished at this turn of events that he was unable to speak. I continued,

“I apologize for presenting my case in this roundabout fashion.

I thought that if you could see the situation through my eyes,
you would feel differently about your son.”

I fell silent. The next few moments were critical. Would the king be so angry that he would have me executed on the spot, or would he accept what I had said?

After some moments the king cleared his throat and said,

“Answer me truthfully. Is General Yoav behind this?”

“Is there anything that escapes your majesty?” I marveled.

“In your wisdom you have seen right through our ruse.

Yes, it was General Yoav who told me what to say.

He was only acting in your best interests.”

The king nodded his dismissal. I could see I had given him food for thought, just as General Yoav had intended. Whatever happened next was out of my hands.

¹⁸⁷² II Samuel 14: Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15874/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Deuteronomy 19:6 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9983/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

I set off home, feeling rather satisfied with my performance, and very relieved to still be alive. General Yoav's plan must have worked for, shortly afterwards, Prince Absalom was recalled to Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷³

As for me, I was pleased to have played a part in bringing father and son together. It never occurred to me that, as a result of my acting abilities, I would gain a name for myself. Life can play strange tricks, just like the one General Yoav and I played on King David.

¹⁸⁷³ II Samuel 14:12-24

NARRATOR

Prince Amnon's death meant that Maacah's son, Absalom, was next in line for the throne. Too impatient to wait for his father to die, he attempted to take it by force. Absalom possessed great charm and had no difficulty in winning over the people. In fact, so many joined Absalom's army that it looked as though his rebellion would succeed. However, his plans were thwarted by David's spy ring.

A LAUNDERESS FROM EIN ROGEL

I may be only a servant girl who works in the Sanctuary, but I played an important part in foiling the plot to overthrow the king. It was my job to take the wool from the sheep sacrificed in the Sanctuary and wash it in the Ein Rogel spring, located in the Kidron Valley.¹⁸⁷⁴ The spring was part of the royal estate maintained outside Jerusalem, where our kings sometimes entertained.¹⁸⁷⁵ By the spring was a huge boulder, called Zohelath. Our young men would compete with each other to see which of them was the strongest, by trying to move it.¹⁸⁷⁶

It was a time of great unrest. Despite the fact that his father was still alive, Prince Absalom had declared himself king of Hebron, winning many people to his cause.¹⁸⁷⁷ Violence seemed inevitable. To avoid unnecessary bloodshed, King David made plans to evacuate Jerusalem¹⁸⁷⁸ but, before he did so, he set up a network of spies of whom I was one. The others included the king's companion, Hushai the Archite, the chief priests, Zadok and Aviatar, the sons of both priests, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, and a woman who operated a safe house at Bahurim.

NARRATOR

A LAUNDERESS FROM EIN ROGEL

¹⁸⁷⁴ Joshua 15:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Joshua 18:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15802/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Encyclopaedia Biblica

https://archive.org/stream/encyclopaediabib01cheyuoft/encyclopaediabib01cheyuoft_djvu.txt

¹⁸⁷⁵ Antiquities of the Jews - Book 7 Chapter 14:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-7.htm>

¹⁸⁷⁶ I Kings 1:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Encyclopaedia Biblica

https://archive.org/stream/encyclopaediabib01cheyuoft/encyclopaediabib01cheyuoft_djvu.txt

¹⁸⁷⁷ II Samuel 15:10

¹⁸⁷⁸ II Samuel 15:13-17

It was decided to use the Ein Rogel spring as a rendezvous because, by standing on the rock, one could see for miles.¹⁸⁷⁹ Since I did my washing there every day, I was recruited because my presence at the spring would arouse no suspicion.¹⁸⁸⁰

Soon after King David's retreat, Absalom entered the city.¹⁸⁸¹ Had he set out immediately in pursuit of his father, he would have easily captured the king before he crossed the Jordan. Fortunately our man, Hushai, persuaded him to wait for reinforcements, thus buying time for the king to escape. The problem was how to get a message to the king, telling him to cross the Jordan to safety before Absalom caught up with him.

This is where the rest of us came in. First Hushai informed the priests. Then I took a message to Ahimaaz and Jonathan, who were waiting on the boulder by the spring. The moment I handed it over, the two young men set off to convey it to the king. When they were recognized, they hid in the safe house at Bahurim until receiving the all clear. Then they continued on to the Judean desert to give King David the news.¹⁸⁸²

In this way, Hushai's delaying tactic gave the king the time he needed to cross the River Jordan to safety.

¹⁸⁷⁹ I Kings 1:9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸⁸⁰ Joshua 15:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15799/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸⁸¹ II Samuel 16:15

¹⁸⁸² II Samuel 17:7-22

THE KEEPER OF THE BAHURIM SAFE HOUSE

I too played a not insignificant part in saving King David from the clutches of his rebellious son, Absalom. I come from the city of Bahurim, in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Bahurim was located on the road that led east from Jerusalem down to the Jordan Valley.¹⁸⁸³ Our city was one of the cities of refuge belonging to the Levites, where, under the law, anyone had the right to claim sanctuary.¹⁸⁸⁴ I was recruited to set up a safe house to be used in an emergency.

After the king's retreat from the capital, two members of our spy ring turned up at my house, asking me to hide them. They had been seen at Ein Rogel, talking to a washerwoman known to have connections with the king's supporters among the Sanctuary staff. Realizing that they had been discovered, the two young men had made straight for my house.

In my courtyard there was a well which, fortunately, was almost dry. I removed the wooden cover and told them to climb in. Replacing the cover, I sprinkled it with groats as if to dry them in the sun.

Absalom's men, who had followed the two from Ein Rogel, started a house-to-house search. Upon reaching my house, they questioned me about the whereabouts of the two fugitives. I lied by telling them that the two men in question had left our city and, no doubt, had already crossed the Jordan. Instantly, the soldiers ran off in pursuit. Not surprisingly they did not find the two spies, who were still hiding in my well.

The moment they had left, I removed the cover from the well and told the two young men that it was safe for them to continue their journey. Thereupon, they dashed off to warn the king to cross the Jordan with all possible haste, before Prince Absalom caught up with him.¹⁸⁸⁵

THE KEEPER OF THE BAHURIM SAFE HOUSE

¹⁸⁸³ רד"ק לשמואל ב פרק טז [טז, ה]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=9&perek=16&mefaresh=radak

¹⁸⁸⁴ Joshua 21:19
I Chronicles 6:39-45

¹⁸⁸⁵ II Samuel 17:18-21

ONE OF KING DAVID'S TEN CONCUBINES

There were ten of us concubines in King David's harem, most of us captured in battle and saved from slavery or death by virtue of our beauty.¹⁸⁸⁶ During the civil war between King David and his son, Absalom, when it seemed likely that Absalom and his troops would overrun the city, rather than stay and fight, the king decided to retreat across the border. All the members of the royal household accompanied him, leaving us in charge of the palace.¹⁸⁸⁷

After Absalom entered the city, he ordered all the citizens to gather in front of the palace. Then he had us dragged out to the terrace, where, in full view of the public, he raped us one by one. This was not to demonstrate his sexual prowess, but to illustrate the fact that he was now the ruler of all that had once been his father's.¹⁸⁸⁸

There was no way we could hide our shame. Everyone had seen us. When King David re-entered the city in victory, we were told that, in order to preserve the king's honor, we should have committed suicide rather than submitted to being raped.

Locked up under guard and provided only with the basic necessities, our punishment was never again to be summoned to the king's bed, but to be treated as widows for the rest of our lives.¹⁸⁸⁹ We were told that we were lucky the king had not divorced us, as was his right,¹⁸⁹⁰ for divorced women are vulnerable to the depredations of men.¹⁸⁹¹ As if, as concubines, we had been any less vulnerable!

We lived out the rest of our days in seclusion. Deprived of all other company, we would stand at the window, looking out at the city below, bewailing our fate and mourning the children we would never conceive.

ONE OF KING DAVID'S TEN CONCUBINES

¹⁸⁸⁶ II Samuel 5:13

II Samuel 15:16

¹⁸⁸⁷ II Samuel 15:14-17

¹⁸⁸⁸ II Samuel 16:21-22

¹⁸⁸⁹ II Samuel 20:3

¹⁸⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 24:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9988/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 90b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_90.html

¹⁸⁹¹ Isaiah 4:1

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15935/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ה יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L2

ZERUIAH, KING DAVID'S ELDER SISTER ¹⁸⁹²

No-one dreamed that my youngest brother, David, whom we had all thought illegitimate, would end up king and we his subjects. It took some getting used to, I can tell you. ¹⁸⁹³ For my three sons it was different. They admired his military prowess. When David came to appoint officers of his army and turned to my sons, they were quite happy to serve under him. ¹⁸⁹⁴

During the civil war between David and his son, Absalom, my sons remained loyal to the king, ¹⁸⁹⁵ whereas my nephew, Amasa, Abigail's son, joined Absalom, serving as commander-in-chief of his army.

Before the final battle between the two armies, David gave Abishai and Yoav express instructions to spare Absalom's life. Everyone heard him. ¹⁸⁹⁶ After Absalom was defeated in a battle in which thousands died, in a desperate attempt to escape his pursuers, my nephew's lustrous curls, of which he had always been so proud, became entangled in the branches of an oak tree. This allowed my son, Yoav, to catch up with him and, contrary to orders, kill him out of hand. ¹⁸⁹⁷

No doubt you are asking yourselves why Yoav contravened the king's express instructions. The answer is that my pragmatic son was convinced that, as long as Absalom lived, he would always be a threat to his father.

ZERUIAH, KING DAVID'S ELDER SISTER

¹⁸⁹² I Chronicles 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16522/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 17a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_17.html

¹⁸⁹³ I Samuel 16:13

¹⁸⁹⁴ I Chronicles 18:17
II Samuel 2:17-18

¹⁸⁹⁵ I Kings 2:28

¹⁸⁹⁶ II Samuel 18:5

¹⁸⁹⁷ II Samuel 18:6-17

David was heartbroken and couldn't stop grieving.¹⁸⁹⁸ He made such a pitiful figure that his grief affected everyone.¹⁸⁹⁹

What did Yoav do? He accused his uncle of thinking more of his disloyal son than of those who had been prepared to lay their lives down for him, and he told the king to pull himself together!¹⁹⁰⁰

¹⁸⁹⁸ II Samuel 19:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15879/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁸⁹⁹ II Samuel 19:2-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15879/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁰⁰ II Samuel 19:6-8

MAACAH, KING DAVID'S FOURTH WIFE

One thing I must grant my husband. He may have hated me but he loved our son, Absalom. When news reached us of our son's death,¹⁹⁰¹ both David and I were overcome with grief. David retreated to a room above the city gates to grieve in private and to pray for Absalom's soul.¹⁹⁰² I grieved in the privacy of my quarters. It brought me small comfort to know that David was far more broken-hearted over Absalom's death than he had been over that of Ahinoam's son, Amnon.¹⁹⁰³

Absalom was said to have stolen three hearts - that of his father, that of the court, and that of the people and, for this reason, General Yoav stabbed him three times.¹⁹⁰⁴ Others accused my son of not having a heart at all, claiming that an oak-tree had more of a heart than Absalom.¹⁹⁰⁵

The only thing that I regret is that my son did not succeed in his bid for the throne and lost his life in the process. As for all the deaths he caused, don't think for a moment that they brought me any lack of sleep. The Israelites deserved to die after killing so many of my people.

This is my story - forced to marry a man I didn't love, who ended up hating me, with a daughter who was raped by her own half-brother, and a son who was killed whilst attempting to usurp his father's throne. If I hadn't had my four grandchildren to comfort me, I swear I would have lost my mind.

MAACAH, KING DAVID'S FOURTH WIFE

¹⁹⁰¹ II Samuel 18:19-32

¹⁹⁰² II Samuel 19:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15879/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

¹⁹⁰³ II Samuel 19:2-5

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

¹⁹⁰⁴ תלמוד תוספתא סוטה מסכת סוטה פרק ג

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f35.htm>

¹⁹⁰⁵ מסכתא דשיריה בישלח פרשה ו

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%9E%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%AA_%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A6%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%93%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%97

ABIGAIL, KING DAVID'S YOUNGER SISTER ¹⁹⁰⁶

To punish my nephew, Yoav, for disobeying orders to capture Absalom alive, my brother, David, demoted him, replacing him as commander-in-chief of the army with my son, Amasa. ¹⁹⁰⁷ This was unexpected, because Amasa had served as Absalom's commander-in-chief.

Although an experienced general, Amasa was far more interested in his legal studies than in a military career. When sent to gather an army to put down an uprising led by a man named Sheba, he was late in starting out, because he was busy studying the law. ¹⁹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, my sister's sons, Yoav and Abishai, had lost no time in leaving Jerusalem to quell Sheba's uprising. Furious that Amasa had disobeyed the king by not carrying out his order immediately, when Amasa finally joined them, Yoav killed his unsuspecting cousin out of hand. His corpse lay at the side of the road, covered with a cloak, until word reached us of his death, whereupon we set out to bring him back for burial. ¹⁹⁰⁹

I don't have to tell you that, from that time forth, Zeruah and I never spoke again.

ABIGAIL, KING DAVID'S YOUNGER SISTER

¹⁹⁰⁶ I Chronicles 2:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16522/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 17a

http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_17.html

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 55b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_55.html

¹⁹⁰⁷ II Samuel 19:14

¹⁹⁰⁸ II Samuel 20:1-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁰⁹ II Samuel 20:6-13 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

SERACH, THE WISE WOMAN FROM ABEL-BETH-MAACAH

Very few of us, who had left Egypt, lived long enough to see the land of Canaan. I was fortunate in being one of them.¹⁹¹⁰ In fact, I lived so long that I was still alive when King David ascended the throne. I lived in the city of Abel-Beth-Maacah in the north of the kingdom, a town with strong city walls to defend us.

The civil war between the king and his son, Absalom, had ended with the defeat of Absalom's army and the prince's death. However, the hostility between the two sides continued.¹⁹¹¹ A Benjamite named Sheba, the son of Bichri, took advantage of the continuing unrest to stake his own claim to the throne by raising an army among the northern tribes. When his rebellion failed, he was forced to flee for his life.¹⁹¹² Pursued by the head of King David's army, General Yoav, he took refuge in our city of Abel-Beth-Maacah, which soon found itself under siege.

Once the outer walls were breached, it became clear that it was only a matter of time before the city fell, and we would be killed for sheltering Sheba. In desperation, I decided to take the initiative. Standing on the city ramparts, I called to the soldiers below, saying,

“Tell General Yoav that I wish to speak with him.”

Seeing a soldier approach wearing the insignia of an officer, I called out,

“Are you the same Yoav they say is so astute?

If so, why are you using force when you can achieve your objective without spilling any blood at all?”¹⁹¹³

The man below looked up in astonishment. The last thing he expected was to be berated by a woman.

SERACH, THE WISE WOMAN FROM ABEL-BETH-MAACAH

¹⁹¹⁰ Numbers 26:46 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9954/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#showrashi=true

סדר עולם רבה (ליינר) פרק ט עמוד 15

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sederolam/sederolam01.pdf>

Seder Olam Part 1 The Fortieth Year

<http://www.betemunah.org/sederolam.html>

¹⁹¹¹ II Samuel 19:41-43

¹⁹¹² II Samuel 20:1-2

¹⁹¹³ II Samuel 20:13-17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת ויגש פרשה צד: יעקב יורד למצרים ט [כל הנפש לבית יעקב שבעים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/94.htm>

I continued, “According to the rules of warfare,
before you conquer a city by force you should try to sue for peace.”¹⁹¹⁴
Had you spoken to us first,
you would have learned that peace is all we desire.”¹⁹¹⁵
The general called back, “Who are you?”
to which I replied, “My name is Serach.”¹⁹¹⁶
I am among the many citizens loyal to the king and desirous of peace.
Do you really intend to kill us all, including a woman of my age?”¹⁹¹⁷
Joab could only answer defensively.
“Neither I, nor the King, nor anyone in the kingdom,
would dream of doing such a thing.”¹⁹¹⁸
All we ask is that you hand over the rebel, Sheba,
the son of Bichri, for punishment.”

¹⁹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 20:10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9984/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

[כל הנפש לבית יעקב שבעים] מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת ויגשפרשה צד: יעקב יורד למצרים ט

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/94.htm>

¹⁹¹⁵ II Samuel 20:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹¹⁶ Genesis 46:17

¹⁹¹⁷ II Samuel 20:19 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Samuel 14:16

¹⁹¹⁸ II Samuel 20:20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

I didn't have to think twice, but immediately promised to throw Sheba's head down to him. This was said without consulting my fellow citizens.¹⁹¹⁹ However, I was confident I could persuade them to support me once they heard what I had to say.
1920

After summoning everyone to a meeting, I told them,
"Apparently the whole kingdom is against us
because we have granted asylum to a rebel."
They asked, "What can we do? We dare not break the laws of hospitality."
I told them, "They demand a thousand lives."

What a commotion! After the uproar had subsided, I said,
"Aren't the deaths of a thousand people
better than the destruction of an entire city?"
Again, everyone started protesting.
Finally, they answered, "Very well.
Each family will hand over one of its members."
Having secured their agreement, I said,
"Perhaps I can persuade them to accept fewer than one thousand lives."

I then pretended to go off and negotiate with the army outside the walls, returning with the news that General Yoav was prepared to accept only five hundred lives. Naturally my fellow citizens were only too happy to hear this. Then I went off to negotiate again, returning with the news that the enemy was prepared to accept a hundred lives. This went on until I finally came back to report that the General was prepared to accept the death of only one man who was not even a citizen of our town.

When they asked me, "Who is it?"
I replied, "Sheba, the son of Bichri."

¹⁹¹⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת ויגש פרשה צד: יעקב יורד למצרים ט [כל הנפש לבית יעקב שבעים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/94.htm>

¹⁹²⁰ II Samuel 20:21-22 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15880/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת ויגש פרשה צד: יעקב יורד למצרים ט [כל הנפש לבית יעקב שבעים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/94.htm>

Without another word everyone went off to track down Sheba. When they found him, they beheaded him. True to my word, I hurled his head over the city walls onto the ground at Yoav's feet.¹⁹²¹ Seeing this, Yoav ordered his buglers to sound a retreat.¹⁹²²

This was how I saved my city of Abel Beth Maacah and earned the reputation of a wise woman.¹⁹²³ My wits had proved more than a match for General Yoav and all his weapons of war.¹⁹²⁴

NARRATOR

Legend has it that Serach lived to such an advanced age that she entered Paradise whilst still alive.¹⁹²⁵ There she remained until compelled to intervene in one of the rabbinical discussions about the Exodus from Egypt which was taking place on earth.

A certain Rabbi Johanan was explaining verse 22 from Exodus Chapter 14: "*Then the children of Israel came into the midst of the sea on dry land and the waters were to them as a wall from their right and from their left.*"¹⁹²⁶

When the rabbi posed the question, "How could the water become a wall?" and proceeded to explain that must have been a sort of impervious net, Serach felt obliged to correct him. Appearing out of thin air, she said, "I was there, and the water was definitely not like a net but more like a window."¹⁹²⁷

¹⁹²¹ מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת ויגש פרשה צד: יעקב יורד למצרים ט [כל הנפש לבית יעקב שבעים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/94.htm>

¹⁹²² II Samuel 20:22

¹⁹²³ Proverbs 31:28

מדרש משלי (בובר) לא
[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%9C%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%9C%D7%90)

¹⁹²⁴ Ecclesiastes 9:18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16470/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תליתאה פרשה ט ב
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

NARRATOR

¹⁹²⁵ כלה רבתי פרק ג הלכה כג
<http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=644000&mm15=00003023000>

¹⁹²⁶ Exodus 14:22

¹⁹²⁷ פסיקתא דרב כהנא פסק אי ויהי בשלח עמוד 15
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/psiktakahana/psiktakahana11.pdf>

CHAPTER 42
SAUL'S GRANDSON, MEPHIBOSHETH
The Book of Samuel II

The nurse of Mephibosheth, last of the House of Saul, in trying to save the infant prince from his enemies, accidentally dropped him, resulting in a deformity that would have repercussions throughout his life (II Samuel Chapter 4).

Mephibosheth's wife continues his story, relating how King David took the son of his beloved friend, Jonathan, under his wing, restoring his estates. As a result of a misunderstanding, Mephibosheth was forced to share them with his overseer, Zibah (II Samuel Chapter 9).

MEPHIBOSHETH'S NURSE

When Mephibosheth, Prince Jonathan's son, was born, I was hired as his wet-nurse. I fed him willingly because he was a lovely child, handsome like his father. And then came the terrible day that Prince Jonathan was killed in battle against the Philistines, together with his father and brothers.¹⁹²⁸ At the time Mephibosheth was only five.

When news reached us at the palace, I didn't stop to think, but snatched up the infant prince and ran for our lives. And then, horror of horrors, he slipped out of my arms and fell to the ground.¹⁹²⁹ Doing my best to ignore Mephibosheth's screams of pain, I racked my brains. Where could I take him where he would be safe from the Philistines? It had to be across the border on the east bank of the Jordan, for the Philistines surely would not risk looking for him there. And then I had a brainwave. I would take him to a kinsman of mine, Machir, who lived in the Gilead city of Lo-Debar.¹⁹³⁰

We eventually reached my kinsman's house where, to my great relief, we were welcomed with open arms. Machir was a wealthy man and we lacked for nothing.¹⁹³¹ Although he found someone to set the child's bones, too much time had gone by and Mephiboshet was lame for the rest of his life.

The years passed. Mephiboshet grew into a handsome youth. He took a wife from among the Gileadites, who bore him a son named Micha.¹⁹³² By now I was too old to act as the child's nurse. Nevertheless, I doted on him just as I had doted on his father.

The saddest day of my life came when King David sent for Mephiboshet to attend him at court in Jerusalem. Although I was glad that he had been restored to royal favor, I was far too old to undertake such a journey, and knew I would never see him or little Micha again.¹⁹³³

CHAPTER 42 SAUL'S GRANDSON, MEPHIBOSHETH **MEPHIBOSHETH'S NURSE**

¹⁹²⁸ I Samuel 31:2-6

I Chronicles 10:2-6

¹⁹²⁹ II Samuel 4:4

¹⁹³⁰ II Samuel 9:1-5

¹⁹³¹ II Samuel 17:26-27-29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15877/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹³² II Samuel 9:12

¹⁹³³ II Samuel 9:1-5

MEPHIBOSHET'S WIFE

I was born in Gilead, on the east bank of the Jordan, and married off to a cripple who went by the name of Mephiboshet. He claimed to have royal blood, being descended from King Saul, as his old nurse never failed to remind me every time I complained about my husband.¹⁹³⁴

We lived in the city of Lo-Debar, under the protection of Machir, a wealthy man related to Mephiboshet's nurse in some way. I often lamented the fact that I was married to a nobody like Mephiboshet, instead of to a powerful man like Machir.¹⁹³⁵

I bore Mephiboshet a son whom we named Micha, a lovely-looking child who was immediately snatched out of my hands by my husband's nurse. When I complained to Mephiboshet, he tried to pacify me by claiming that she was more experienced at looking after young children.¹⁹³⁶

We might have remained in Lo-Debar for the rest of our lives, had not the most extraordinary thing happened. One day, a troop of soldiers, wearing royal livery, turned up at Machir's house, asking to speak to my husband. Both nurse and I were agog to know why they had come. When Mephiboshet told us that he had been summoned to Jerusalem to attend the king at court, I could hardly believe my ears. So Mephiboshet and his nurse had been telling the truth all along. Whoever would have thought it?¹⁹³⁷

Then I saw that Mephiboshet's nurse was crying her eyes out. When I asked her why, she replied that she was far too old to start a new life in a strange place. If we left Lo Debar, she would never see us again. This was accompanied by a fresh outburst of tears. I must admit I felt uncomfortable. For all my complaining about her interfering ways, she was a devoted servant.

MEPHIBOSHET'S WIFE

¹⁹³⁴ II Samuel 4:4

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 56b

https://halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_56.html

¹⁹³⁵ II Samuel 17:26-29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15877/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹³⁶ II Samuel 9:12

¹⁹³⁷ II Samuel 9:1-5

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 56a

https://halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_56.html

I had never before left the environs of Lo-Debar and so, for me, everything was new and exciting. After a long but uneventful journey, we arrived in Jerusalem, where we were taken to meet the king. Even I, who could barely take my eyes off my sumptuous surroundings, could see that King David was visibly moved to see a face that reminded him so much of his dead friend, Mephiboshet's father. He told Mephiboshet not to be afraid, for he meant him no harm. On the contrary, he intended to make my husband a ward of court, and to return to him the family estate at Gibeah.¹⁹³⁸

Because Mephiboshet was still very young, the king appointed a man named Zibah steward of his property.¹⁹³⁹ Zibah, a wealthy man in his own right, with fifteen sons and twenty servants, didn't want for anything. My husband assumed that our property was in safe hands,¹⁹⁴⁰ especially after Zibah promised to treat Mephiboshet as if he were one of David's sons.¹⁹⁴¹ I had my reservations, but Mephiboshet, who was an innocent in many ways, was quite happy with this arrangement.

From that time forth, Mephiboshet and I, together with our small son, Micha, lived with Zibah and his family who, I must admit, kept their word and treated us like royalty. Every day my husband attended the king at court, joining him for meals at the royal table.¹⁹⁴²

¹⁹³⁸ I Samuel 10:26

¹⁹³⁹ II Samuel 9:9 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15869/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#lt=primary

¹⁹⁴⁰ II Samuel 9:10

¹⁹⁴¹ II Samuel 9:11 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15869/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#lt=primary

¹⁹⁴² II Samuel 9:13

All was well, until the day that Prince Absalom declared himself king ¹⁹⁴³ and advanced on Jerusalem with a large army. To save the city and its inhabitants, the king beat a strategic retreat. ¹⁹⁴⁴ My husband wanted to join him but Zibah persuaded him to remain at home, saying he would be more of a liability than a help. It would be better if he, Zibah, took the king provisions from Mephiboshet's estate. ¹⁹⁴⁵ We watched as he set off with two donkeys laden with supplies, never dreaming there was anything wrong. ¹⁹⁴⁶

Upon hearing that the king was about to re-enter the city in triumph, my husband made haste to be the first to welcome him. As a result, he left the house without washing, shaving or changing his clothes, leaving him exposed to a charge of disrespect.

When the king demanded to know why Mephiboshet had not joined him in the field, my husband explained that Zibah had advised him not to do so, because he would hold up the advance. ¹⁹⁴⁷ When summoned to explain himself, that lying scoundrel, Zibah, who had professed to love my husband as he would the king's own son, told the king that Mephiboshet had remained in Jerusalem in order to welcome Absalom and claim back the crown for the House of Saul. ¹⁹⁴⁸

The king was obviously in a quandary as to whom to believe. In the end he announced that he wished to hear no more of the matter, and told Mephiboshet and Zibah to divide the estate between them. ¹⁹⁴⁹

¹⁹⁴³ II Samuel 15:10

¹⁹⁴⁴ II Samuel 15:12-14

¹⁹⁴⁵ II Samuel 19:27 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15879/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁴⁶ II Samuel 16:1

¹⁹⁴⁷ II Samuel 19:29 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15879/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁴⁸ II Samuel 16:3

¹⁹⁴⁹ II Samuel 19:30

CHAPTER 43
DAVID IN HIS DOTAGE
The Book of Kings 1

Bathsheba, David's eighth wife, and Abishag, the young woman employed to keep the king warm at night, describe David's last years (I Kings Chapter 1).

BATHSHEBA, KING DAVID'S EIGHTH WIFE

Even kings grow old, including David who had always seemed so indestructible. Towards the end of his life he suffered from bad circulation and was always cold, especially at night.¹⁹⁵⁰ No amount of bedclothes seemed to help the man who had never attached any importance to coverings of any kind.¹⁹⁵¹ It didn't help that he constantly thought about his own death, which was enough to send shivers down anyone's spine.

What was needed was someone to lie with the king at night and warm his body. We knew that if any of us, his wives, was to do so, David would feel obliged to observe Yahweh's commandment to go forth and multiply, thus sapping his energy even further. Therefore, someone had to be found outside of the circle of his wives and concubines. That someone was a beautiful, young, unmarried girl named Abishag from the town of Shunem. She must have been the first beautiful woman to enter David's bed and leave it a virgin.¹⁹⁵²

CHAPTER 43 DAVID IN HIS DOTAGE
BATHSHEBA, KING DAVID'S EIGHTH WIFE

¹⁹⁵⁰ I Kings 1:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁵¹ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 62b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_62.html

¹⁹⁵² I Kings 1:1-4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ABISHAG, KING DAVID'S BED WARMER

When my father heard that the king's servants were searching for a suitable companion for the king, he didn't waste a moment but took me straight to them.¹⁹⁵³ Practically every other father had done the same, so I had to wait in a long line before being interviewed. The successful candidate had to be young and beautiful, and since I was more beautiful than most, it is not surprising that I was chosen.¹⁹⁵⁴ When told what my duties entailed, I was totally taken aback. Had I known that, every night, I was expected to lie in bed with an old man to keep him warm, I would never have agreed. Unfortunately, it was too late.¹⁹⁵⁵

I became the youngest in a harem of nine wives, if you can call me a wife, and ten concubines. The only way to gain status in harem society was to have sons. Even this was denied to me, since there was no sex involved in the relationship. Such a situation was as humiliating for the king as it was for me.¹⁹⁵⁶

On the surface I might have seemed very meek and mild, but I wasn't prepared to accept my fate without a struggle. I demanded that David marry me. His reply was,

"I can't. The law prohibits it."

David was referring to the law that states a king may only have eighteen wives.¹⁹⁵⁷

I retorted, "You're just making excuses for the fact that you're impotent."

ABISHAG, KING DAVID'S BED WARMER

¹⁹⁵³ I Kings 1:3

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

¹⁹⁵⁴ I Kings 1:4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת חיי שרה פרשה ס: שליחותו של אליעזר ה [מעלותיה של רבקה]
<https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/60.htm>

¹⁹⁵⁵ I Kings 1:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁵⁶ רלב"ג מלכים א פרק-ב {מו}

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01534.html

¹⁹⁵⁷ תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין פרק ב דף כב, א גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/1/14402.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

David's answer was to summon Bathsheba and, there and then, have intercourse with her in front of me. And not just once, but a number of times! I was astounded. Who would have believed a man of his age was capable of such a thing?¹⁹⁵⁸

All I can say is that he must have had great self-control to sleep with me in the same bed every night and not have relations.¹⁹⁵⁹

¹⁹⁵⁸ תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין פרק ב דף כב, א גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/1/14402.htm>
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 22a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_22.html

¹⁹⁵⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 22a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_22.html
<https://www.responso.co.il/>

בראשית רבתי פרשת בראשית

BATHSHEBA, KING SOLOMON'S MOTHER

One day the holy man, Nathan, paid me a visit. This was most unusual. Normally he called on David. What he had to tell me was even more surprising.

He said, "Have you heard that Haggith's son, Adonijah, has announced that he is to be the next king?"

I was so shocked that I didn't know what to say.

David had promised me that my son, Solomon, would inherit the throne, not Adonijah.

Nathan continued, "If you want to save your son's life, not to mention your own, you must do as I say."

He then told me his plan.

Following his advice, I asked to see the king and was admitted into the royal bedchamber, where David was lying in bed with Abishag. I knelt down at the side of the bed and reminded my husband of what he had once promised me - that our son, Solomon, would rule after him. Then I revealed Adonijah's plot to seize the throne. I warned him,

"If you don't do something about it, after you die Solomon and I will be put to death."

With these words I rose and left the room. Then, as pre-arranged, Nathan, who had been waiting outside, entered the chamber to corroborate what I had just said.

Soon after, a servant summoned me back to the king's chamber, where David assured me that Solomon was the one who would succeed him on the throne. Just to make sure, he would be crowned king immediately. I flung myself to the ground, crying out in gratitude,

"Long may you continue to reign!"

This is how our son came to be proclaimed king. ¹⁹⁶⁰

BATHSHEBA, KING SOLOMON'S MOTHER

¹⁹⁶⁰ I Kings 1:11-39 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15885/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 7 Chapter 14:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

Part 11
King Solomon

CHAPTER 44

SOLOMON PRINCE OF PEACE

The Book of Kings I
The Book of Chronicles II

The biggest difference between Solomon and his father, David, was that, whereas David carved out an empire for himself by fighting wars, Solomon did so through diplomacy and trade. This is the reason why Solomon, the man of peace, and not David, the man of war, built the first Temple. Solomon is famous for his wisdom, his wealth and his women, especially the foreign ones. Many legends have accrued to the name of this fabulous king. Here some of them are seen through the eyes of the women in his life.

Bathsheba reveals how, from the beginning of his reign, her son displayed far more political acumen than her when, in I Kings Chapter 2, she was tricked into supporting Adoniyahu's rebellious claim to the throne of Israel.

Naamah, the mother of Solomon's heir, Rehoboam, whose name is mentioned in I Kings Chapter 14 and II Chronicles Chapter 12, tells us how she came to be Solomon's first wife. Her story is derived from a collection of legends entitled *Commentaries on King Solomon*.

BATHSHEBA, KING SOLOMON'S MOTHER

Soon after David's death, I was surprised by a visit from Adonijah. Because of the past rivalry between him and my son Solomon, I feared he meant me harm but apparently he had come for an entirely innocent reason.

He asked me politely if he had permission to speak.

(I was, after all, the Queen Mother.)

I replied that he had, and he continued,

"You know very well that the throne was rightfully mine, but that divine providence decreed it should be your son's. It's only fair that I be granted one small request."

That sounded reasonable enough, so I motioned to him to say more.

"Please ask Solomon if I can marry Abishag.

I know he will not refuse his own mother."

Flattered that he should think I had so much influence over the king, I agreed, asking myself, what could be the harm in that?

My request for an audience was immediately granted. As a mark of esteem, Solomon even invited me to sit at his side. After I told him I had one small request to make, and begged him not to refuse, my son assured me he would grant me anything I desired. When I asked him to allow Adonijah to marry Abishag, I was completely unprepared for his reaction. He exploded with anger, saying,

"You might as well ask me to give him the kingdom.

This is the last straw!

Adonijah will die for his impertinence."¹⁹⁶¹

Mouth agape, I asked why. Solomon reminded me that his half-brother, Absalom, had raped their father's concubines for exactly the same reason - to demonstrate that he was now king.¹⁹⁶²

CHAPTER 44 SOLOMON PRINCE OF PEACE **BATHSHEBA, KING SOLOMON'S MOTHER**

¹⁹⁶¹ I Kings 2:14-24

¹⁹⁶² רלב"ג מלכים א פרק-ב {מז}

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01534.html

NAAMAH, KING SOLOMON'S FIRST WIFE

I was born into the Ammonite royal family, the daughter of King Harun.¹⁹⁶³ One day we noticed a significant improvement in the quality of our food. Upon enquiring the reason, it turned out that we had a new cook. After asking to see him, imagine our surprise when, instead of an experienced, middle-aged man, we found ourselves looking at the handsomest youth we had ever seen.¹⁹⁶⁴

From that day forth I couldn't take my eyes off him and sought many a pretext to engage him in conversation. He told me that his name was Solomon, that he was an Israelite and that he came from Judah. He also told me that he wasn't as humble as he seemed, although he refused to go into further detail.¹⁹⁶⁵ I could tell he wasn't insensible to my charms, so once we had declared our love, I told my mother I wanted to marry our cook. She was horrified and did everything she could to dissuade me from such an unsuitable match. When I refused to change my mind, she told my father, who was so furious that he wanted to have us both executed on the spot. Fortunately, he decided to exile us instead.¹⁹⁶⁶

Solomon and I wandered from place to place until, on the verge of starvation, we found ourselves by the sea. There we spent our last coin on a fish. Imagine my surprise when, after cutting open its belly to remove the innards, I found a ring. When I showed it to Solomon, he gave a sudden start and explained that the ring belonged to him. The ring was a magic ring and gave whoever wore it gained control over all living things. How it came to be in the belly of a fish I never did find out.

Solomon then slipped the ring on his finger and, to my utter amazement, I found myself in a city of gold. Solomon told me it was the city of Jerusalem, the city where he had been born and had once ruled as king. I looked at him in disbelief. My Solomon, the palace cook, a king? Surely not!

NAAMAH, KING SOLOMON'S FIRST WIFE

¹⁹⁶³ I Kings 14:21, 31

II Chronicles 12:13

II Samuel 10:1-4

¹⁹⁶⁴ מדרשים על שלמה המלך, שלמה המלך ונעמה העמונית מעשה בשלמה המלך ע"ה [בית המדרש ח"ב 86]

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_The_Marriage_of_Solomon_and_Naamah?lang=he

¹⁹⁶⁵ עמק המלך נפתלי הירץ עמוד 260

<http://beta.hebrewbooks.org/7307>

¹⁹⁶⁶ מדרשים על שלמה המלך, שלמה המלך ונעמה העמונית מעשה בשלמה המלך ע"ה [בית המדרש ח"ב 86]

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_The_Marriage_of_Solomon_and_Naamah?lang=he

Solomon then explained that the man now occupying the throne was an imposter who had tricked my husband into giving him his ring. With it, the imposter had managed to impersonate Solomon so convincingly that no-one would believe that Solomon was the real king.¹⁹⁶⁷ Unable to prove who he was, Solomon was forced to wander from place to place in search of work, which is how he came to be our cook. Suffice it to say that my husband lost no time in hurrying to the palace in order to reclaim his throne.¹⁹⁶⁸

After regaining the throne, one of the first things Solomon did was to summon my father to court, where he charged him with the murder of his cook. Naturally my father did not recognize the splendidly dressed figure sitting on the throne, and was astonished that such an august personage should trouble himself over someone as unimportant as a cook. Protesting that he had not killed him, merely banished him, my father was completely unprepared for what happened next.

The look on his face, when I stepped forward and sat on the throne at Solomon's side, almost made our past suffering worthwhile.¹⁹⁶⁹

¹⁹⁶⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 68a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_68.html

¹⁹⁶⁸ מדרשים על שלמה המלך, שלמה המלך ונעמה העמונית מעשה בשלמה המלך ע"ה [בית המדרש ח"ב 86]

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_The_Marriage_of_Solomon_and_Naamah?lang=he

Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 68a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_68.html

¹⁹⁶⁹ מדרשים על שלמה המלך, שלמה המלך ונעמה העמונית מעשה בשלמה המלך ע"ה [בית המדרש ח"ב 86]

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_The_Marriage_of_Solomon_and_Naamah?lang=he

Legends of the Jews Solomon as Beggar

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/loj/loj406.htm>

CHAPTER 45
TWO MOTHERS
The Book of Kings I

Based on the narrative that appears in I Kings Chapter 3, two mothers relate the famous legend demonstrating Solomon's wisdom. In the Biblical text they are called harlots. However, in a number of rabbinical sources, such as the *Great Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, they are identified as Mother Lilith, the Demon Queen, and her accomplice, Naamah, Noah's wife whom we first met in Part 1. Others describe them as widows, attributing their predicament to the law of levirate marriage as explained below.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

After the death of our husbands, my daughter-in-law and I shared the same house. We earned our living by selling herbal remedies, knowledge of which had been passed on to me by my mother. Like all single women in the same situation, we were soon accused of being witches ¹⁹⁷⁰ or, even worse, prostitutes and our new-born sons bastards, simply because we had no man around to protect us or our good name. ¹⁹⁷¹

And then a tragedy occurred. My daughter-in-law's son died in the night. What did she do? She exchanged her dead son for my live one so that, when I awoke the next morning, I found myself lying next to a dead child. When she refused to return my son to me, I insisted we take our case to the king. The moment we entered the court, before I could even utter a word, my daughter-in-law claimed that the dead child was mine and the live child hers. I burst out,

“You're lying!” My son is the living child. It's your son who's dead.”

To make sure that everyone present understood the case before he passed judgment, the king repeated what we had both said.

“The mother-in-law claims that the living child is hers and that the dead one belongs to her daughter-in-law, while the daughter-in-law claims that

the dead child belongs to her mother-in-law and the living child is hers.”

CHAPTER 45 TWO MOTHERS

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

ילקוט ראובני שדים ד' עמוד 147¹⁹⁷⁰

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/42405>

הרב יהודה אשלג פרי חכם שיחות

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/8366?heb/content/view/full/8366&main>

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תליתאה פרשה יא (טז)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

ילקוט שמעוני על נ"ח קע"ה

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Nach.175.2-5?lang=he

¹⁹⁷¹ מדרש תהילים ע"ב

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.72?lang=he

ילקוט שמעוני על נ"ח קע"ה

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Nach.175.2-5?lang=he

Then, to my utter surprise, the king called for a sword. When he pronounced sentence, it was so shocking, that everyone gasped out loud. He said,
“Cut the living child in half and give a half to each woman.”

I cried out, “No! Don’t kill him!

Let my daughter-in-law have the child. Just don’t harm him.”

Whereupon the king decreed the exact opposite, awarding my son to me. I was so relieved that I barely heard his explanation.

“Only the real mother would be prepared to relinquish her child rather than see it killed.”¹⁹⁷²

NARRATOR

The story of Solomon’s judgment spread like wildfire, increasing the awe in which the king was held, for such wisdom could only have come from Yahweh.¹⁹⁷³

¹⁹⁷² I Kings 3:16-27

NARRATOR

¹⁹⁷³ I Kings 3:28

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

After my husband died, I lived with my mother-in-law. With no-one to provide for me and a child on the way, I had little choice. My mother-in-law and I didn't see eye to eye in many things, but at least we were company for one another, and helped each other to deliver our sons. And then came the awful night that I accidentally rolled over on my side and suffocated my baby. When I realized what I had done, not only was I broken-hearted, but also desperate. In our culture, a childless widow is obliged to marry her brother-in-law, in order to have sons to continue her dead husband's name. This meant that I would have to marry my husband's brother - who was none other than my mother-in-law's new baby! Only when he was thirteen years old could he choose to marry me, or release me from my legal obligation to marry him. Not until then would I be free to marry someone else, by which time I would be far too old to bear children.¹⁹⁷⁴

My mind racing, I came up with a plan to avoid such a fate. I would exchange my dead baby for my mother-in-law's live one. I didn't expect my mother-in-law to be deceived for a moment. After all, a mother always knows who her own child is. However, I felt confident that I could persuade a court of law to accept my version of the story, so I didn't object when my mother-in-law insisted on taking our case to the king.

Determined to be the first to present my case, I cried out,
“Sire, my mother-in-law and I were recently widowed.
When our husbands died, we were both pregnant.
After their deaths we decided to live together in the same house.
Less than a month ago, I gave birth to a son.
Three days later, my mother-in-law gave birth to hers.
One night, my mother-in-law accidentally smothered her son
who was lying next to her in bed.
When she discovered what had happened,
she exchanged her dead son for mine.
I awoke the next morning to breastfeed my son,
only to find myself lying next to a dead child.
When I looked closely, I realized he was not my son
but that of my mother-in-law.”

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

¹⁹⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 87b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_87.html

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 70a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_70.html

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_11.html

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 136a

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_136.html

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 17b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_17.html

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 105b

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_105.html

My mother-in-law was so shocked to hear this that all she could say was that I was lying.

The king repeated what we had said, after which he called for a sword. I couldn't for the life of me think why. From the murmuring going on, neither could anyone else. I could hardly believe my ears when the king ordered the child to be cut in two, so that each of us could have half.

Although shocked by the turn of events, I kept my wits about me. I realized that the death of my mother-in-law's child was a perfect way out of my predicament. With my mother-in-law's son dead, I would be able to marry someone of my own choosing, whilst still young enough to bear children. Therefore, it was without a qualm that I told the king,

“Yes, divide the child into two, then neither of us will have him.”

Hearing this, my mother-in-law capitulated and renounced her claim to her son. The last thing I expected was that the king would award the child to my mother-in-law, realizing my worst fears and consigning me to a bitter fate.¹⁹⁷⁵

NARRATOR

Not everyone applauded the way in which Solomon had established the identity of the real mother. A rabbi, Judah ben Ila'i, declared that, had he been present when Solomon pronounced sentence, he would have placed a rope round Solomon's neck for endangering the child's life.¹⁹⁷⁶

¹⁹⁷⁵ I Kings 3:16-27

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תליתאה פרשה י א (טז)

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ילקוט שמעוני על נ"ח קע"ה

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Yalkut_Shimoni_on_Nach.175.2-5?lang=he

דרשות על התורה לר' יהושע אבן שועיב משפטים עמ' 105

<https://hebrewbooks.org/9416>

NARRATOR

¹⁹⁷⁶ מדרש תהילים ע"ב

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.72?lang=he

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תליתאה פרשה י א (טז)

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CHAPTER 46
SOLOMON'S WOMEN
The Book of Kings I
The Book of Chronicles II

Pharaoh's daughter was the most august of the many foreign women Solomon married to seal a political alliance. She appears in I Kings Chapters 3 and 9, and in II Chronicles Chapter 8. Her marriage to Solomon is described in the *Great Commentary on Leviticus*, Chapter 8, and in the *Great Commentary on Numbers*, Chapter 10.

The Queen of Sheba, whose story is related in I Kings Chapter 10 and II Chronicles Chapter 9, tested Solomon's wisdom by posing a series of riddles. These are taken from a commentary on the Book of Proverbs entitled *He Who Desires Good*. Her story ends with her return to Sheba, having satisfied her curiosity (as explained in *The Second Translation into Aramaic of the Book of Esther* Chapter 4) and obtaining her heart's desire (as related in 'The Alphabet of Ben Sira').

Solomon's concubine, Amina, reveals how her master was chastised for his pride. Her name is taken from medieval Arabic literature, in which the legend of Solomon's magic ring was primarily developed. 'The Story of the Ant' and 'The Sealed Palace', both of which appear in her narrative, are taken from a collection of commentaries on King Solomon.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

I was born an Egyptian princess, the daughter of the reigning Pharaoh of Egypt.¹⁹⁷⁷ My people were famed for their wisdom. Yet there was one man who was wiser than all my father's astrologers and advisors. His name was Solomon, king of the Israelites.¹⁹⁷⁸ Solomon and my father entered into an alliance which was sealed by our betrothal. Until my palace in the City of Jerusalem was ready and we could be married, I resided in the City of David.¹⁹⁷⁹

Our wedding was celebrated in great pomp and circumstance, as befits a marriage between two royal families. In fact, the guests at our wedding made far more noise than my husband's people, who were celebrating the completion of their Temple.¹⁹⁸⁰

According to Egyptian custom, I spent the whole night dancing eighty different dances to entertain my new husband.¹⁹⁸¹ In addition I played the thousand musical instruments I had brought with me from Egypt, each used in the worship of a different god.¹⁹⁸²

CHAPTER 46 SOLOMON'S WOMEN

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

¹⁹⁷⁷ I Kings 3:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15887/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁷⁸ I Kings 5:10-11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15889/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁷⁹ I Kings 9:24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15893/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 8:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16557/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

¹⁹⁸⁰ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד [נשואי שלמה לבת פרעה] ה"ד (משלי לא):

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>

¹⁹⁸¹ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת שמיני פרשה יב: יין ושכר אל תשת ה [אל למלכים שתות יין]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/12.htm>

¹⁹⁸² מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד [נשואי שלמה לבת פרעה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 56b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_56.html

Throughout the seven years spent building his Temple, my husband had allowed no wine to pass his lips. On our wedding night, he took his first sip. By the time we went to bed, he was completely drunk.¹⁹⁸³ To allow him to sleep undisturbed, I hung a canopy over our bed, embroidered with gems which shone like stars. Every time Solomon awoke and saw them, he thought it was still night and went back to sleep.¹⁹⁸⁴

The next thing I knew, his mother stormed into our bedroom, shouting at my husband as if he was a small boy. Apparently, he should have risen hours before. His people were waiting outside the locked gates to their new Temple and only Solomon had the key.¹⁹⁸⁵

My mother-in-law, Bathsheba, was a force to be reckoned with. She didn't stop at merely shouting at him. She even slapped him on the face.¹⁹⁸⁶ I was thunder-struck. If any woman had done that in my country, she would have been put to death.

¹⁹⁸³ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת שמיני פרשה יב: יין ושכר אל תשת ה [אל למלכים שתות יין]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/12.htm>

¹⁹⁸⁴ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד [נשואי שלמה לבת פרעה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>

¹⁹⁸⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד [נשואי שלמה לבת פרעה]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת שמיני פרשה יב: יין ושכר אל תשת ה [אל למלכים שתות יין]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/12.htm>

¹⁹⁸⁶ Proverbs 31:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16402/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת שמיני פרשה יב: יין ושכר אל תשת ה [אל למלכים שתות יין]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/12.htm>

מדרש תנחומא לחומש שמות פרק א סימן א
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/tanhuma/13.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומש במדבר - פרשת נשא פרשה י: פרשת הנזיר ד [נשואי שלמה לבת פרעה]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba4/10a.htm>

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/12.htm>

Great Commentary on Leviticus

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl07.htm>

NARRATOR

Although Israelite law forbade intermarriage, this did not stop Solomon from taking many other non-Israelite wives. Altogether, he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.¹⁹⁸⁷ Every day they would vie with each other to see who could prepare the tastiest dish, each hoping she would be summoned to Solomon's bed that night.¹⁹⁸⁸

NARRATOR

¹⁹⁸⁷ I Kings 11:1-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15895/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Baba Mezi'a 86b

http://www.halakhah.com/babamezia/babamezia_86.html

¹⁹⁸⁸ מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה סדרא תליתאה א (יא)

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

My kingdom of Sheba, bordering both shores of the Red Sea, was exceedingly rich. The streets of its capital, Kitor, were paved with silver and gold. My people were peace-loving and knew nothing of the martial arts. Every morning at dawn, it was my habit to walk down to the beach to worship the god of the sea. One day, a woodcock alighted on the sand with a roll of parchment attached to its wings. The roll turned out to be a letter from a certain Solomon, king of a country named Israel. In his letter, the king ordered me to attend him in his capital city of Jerusalem. He warned that, if I failed to do so, demons would strangle my subjects in their beds, wild beasts would kill us in our homes and birds would devour our flesh in the fields.

Horrified, I hurried back to the palace to consult with my advisors. They told me they had never heard of any King Solomon and advised me to ignore the letter. I considered what to do. If I ignored his letter, would this king carry out his threat? I couldn't take the chance. The best thing was to obey his command.

I dispatched a fleet of ships to Israel, loaded with pearls and precious stones and, even more valuable, 6,000 male and female children of exactly the same age, all dressed in royal blue. They carried a message to the king, saying that I was on my way to visit him by land.¹⁹⁸⁹

Satisfying my curiosity was not the only reason I made haste to meet King Solomon. It had come to my ears that he and King Hiram of Tyre were building a fleet of merchant ships to trade with the east. This meant that the camel trains which normally passed through my kingdom on their way east, would no longer continue do so. The potential loss of revenue for my country had to be prevented at all costs.¹⁹⁹⁰

Eventually, accompanied by my entire court, I arrived in Jerusalem at the head of a long camel train, carrying a valuable load of spices, gold and precious stones. By now, I was eager to meet the king who was reputed to be so wise.¹⁹⁹¹

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

¹⁹⁸⁹ Targum Sheni to Esther 4

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 6:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

¹⁹⁹⁰ אנציקלופדה יהודית

<http://www.daat.ac.il/encyclopedia/value.asp?id1=3611>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 6:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

¹⁹⁹¹ I Kings 10:1-2

II Chronicles 9:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16558/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

We were welcomed by the handsomest man I have ever seen. I dismounted from my camel to kneel before him, whereupon he asked,

“Why have you dismounted?”

“Aren’t you the king?” I asked, nonplussed.

“No” was the answer. “I’m just one of his servants.”

This was not entirely true, because he was in fact General Benaiahu, the commander-in-chief of Solomon’s army.

Turning to my courtiers, I commented,

“Sometimes, you set out to find a lion but find only his cubs.

Sometimes, you set out to find a king and find a handsome man instead.

In both cases it was worth the journey.”

General Benaiahu conducted me to the audience chamber, where the king was sitting on the most unusual throne I had ever seen. Composed of rising tiers of statues of animals and birds, every part was made of gold. The throne was overlaid with precious stones and its canopy constructed of gold vines. But the greatest wonder of all were the mechanical devices that enabled every part of the throne to move to serve the king’s needs, and the animals and birds to utter the cry of their living counterparts, whenever a supplicant told a lie.

This marvelous construction stood in what looked like water. Therefore, as I approached the king, I raised the hem of my robe so that it wouldn’t get wet, revealing my legs. The king took one look and said,

“Your face may be very beautiful, but your legs are as hairy as a man’s.”

This was how I discovered that, in that part of the world, it was the custom for women to shave their legs.¹⁹⁹²

The first thing I did was to ask him,

“Are you the Solomon I have heard so much about?”

He replied that he was.

I continued, “If you are as clever as they say,

then you won’t mind if I ask you a few questions.”

Solomon replied modestly, “My wisdom is from Yahweh.”¹⁹⁹³

Now was my chance to get my own back on the man who had sent me such a threatening letter. I had prepared a list of trick questions, riddles which would stump any man of normal intelligence.¹⁹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁹² Targum Sheni to Esther 4

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

¹⁹⁹³ Proverbs 2:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16373/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש משלי (בובר) [מפיו דעת ותבונה (משלי ב,1)]

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%90)

¹⁹⁹⁴ I Kings 10:1

I asked,

“What are the seven that are outside, the nine that are inside,
the two that provide drinks and the one that drinks?”

Without hesitation, Solomon answered,

“The seven that are outside are the seven days of a woman’s menstruation,
when she must live in seclusion.

The nine that are inside are the nine months she is pregnant.

The two that provide drinks are her breasts
and the one who drinks from them is her baby.”

Would you believe it? I had purposely chosen a subject connected with women, thinking that Solomon, being a man, would be ignorant of such things, yet somehow or other he had guessed the right answer.

Hiding my astonishment, I went on to ask my second riddle. Convinced that Solomon thought me ignorant of everything connected with his people’s history, I purposely chose a question connected with it.

“Which woman can say to her son,

‘Your father is my father, your grandfather my husband,
you are my son and I am your sister?’”

Solomon replied immediately, “The two daughters of Lot.”

Yet again he had given the right answer, for Lot’s daughters had committed incest with their own father and given birth to two sons.

Nevertheless, I wasn’t prepared to give up yet. I sent for the group of children I had dispatched by ship. They all looked exactly alike. They were all the same size and dressed in the same clothes, boys and girls. I asked Solomon,

“Which of these children are boys and which girls?”

The king made a sign to his eunuchs, who brought in nuts and roasted ears of corn, which they scattered on the floor before the children. Some of the children lifted both their under and outer garments to collect them, while others collected them only in their outer garments. Solomon turned to me and said,

“The boys are those who collected the food
in both their under and outer garments.

The girls are those that collected it only in their outer garments,
so as not to reveal themselves in public.”

This time the king surprised me by his knowledge of human nature. ¹⁹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁹⁵ מדרש משלי (בובר) [מפיו דעת ותבונה (משלי ב,ו)]

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%90)

After ordering my servants to bring in a group of men, I asked Solomon,
“Which of these men have been circumcised?”

Solomon immediately made a sign to a member of his court, who was wearing a breastplate studded with precious stones and a tall hat. The man opened a chest standing nearby. The moment he did so, a great light filled the room. Some of the men bowed from the waist, while others threw themselves on the ground. When I turned to Solomon and asked him what this meant, he replied

“The ones who bowed from the waist have been circumcised and, therefore, are able to gaze upon the light from the chest. Those who have not been circumcised are unable to do so.”

I shook my head in amazement.¹⁹⁹⁶

Undaunted, I posed the last riddle I had prepared.

“What foretells a storm, cries out loud, bows its head, is praised by free men but brings shame to the poor, brings honor to the dead, disgrace to the living, makes the birds happy and causes fish much grief?”

“Flax,” came the answer.

“Priests who read oracles, wear only clothes made from flax.”¹⁹⁹⁷

Flax is flattened in a storm while still growing in the field.

Those who own fields of it are provided with a living, while those who don’t have to purchase it for their needs.

Its cloth is used to make shrouds for the dead.

Mixing flax with wool is against our law and disgraces those who mix them.¹⁹⁹⁸

Flax seeds provide food for the birds, while its fibers are used to make sails for fishing boats and nets to catch fish.”

Hearing this I admitted defeat.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Numbers 24:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9952/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

[מפיו דעת ותבונה (משלי ב,ו)] מדרש משלי (בובר)

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_\(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8\)_%D7%90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9_%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99_(%D7%91%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8)_%D7%90)

¹⁹⁹⁷ Leviticus 16:4

¹⁹⁹⁸ Deuteronomy 22:11

Not only did King Solomon impress me with his intelligence but also with his great wealth, which outstripped even mine. In fact, it left me breathless.¹⁹⁹⁹ I admitted to him,

“Up till now I haven’t believed a word of what people say about you. However, having seen it with my own eyes, I realize that not only is everything true, but it barely does you justice.²⁰⁰⁰ How lucky your people are to have such a king!”²⁰⁰¹

Following this, I presented Solomon with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and huge quantities of spices and precious stones.²⁰⁰² I also gave him logs of balsam wood, which no-one in that part of the world had ever seen.²⁰⁰³

¹⁹⁹⁹ I Kings 10:4-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15894/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 9:3-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16558/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰⁰⁰ I Kings 10:6-7

II Chronicles 9:5-6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16558/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁰¹ I Kings 10:8

²⁰⁰² I Kings 10:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15894/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 9:9

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

[מדרש רבה לחומש שמות פרשת יתרו פרשה כז: בואו של יתרו ד [הגויים התקרבו לישראל בזכות הנסים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/27.htm>

²⁰⁰³ Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 6:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

After obtaining my heart's desire, I took my leave of this great king and embarked on the long journey back to Sheba.²⁰⁰⁴ What was my heart's desire? It was nothing less than to have a son sired by such a wise king.²⁰⁰⁵ However, before he agreed to impregnate me, Solomon insisted that I shave off all my body hair, so that I would look more feminine!²⁰⁰⁶

²⁰⁰⁴ I Kings 10:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15894/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰⁰⁵ II Chronicles 9:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16558/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 6:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁰⁶ אוצר המדרשים בן סירא

[https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim,_The_Aleph_Bet_of_ben_Sira,_The_Alphabet_of_ben_Sira,__\(alternative_version\)?lang=he](https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim,_The_Aleph_Bet_of_ben_Sira,_The_Alphabet_of_ben_Sira,__(alternative_version)?lang=he)

אלפא-ביתא דבן סירא (כ"י תימן)

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%A9%D7%94_%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%9B%D7%AA_%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%90

AMINA, SOLOMON'S CONCUBINE

I was one of King Solomon's three hundred concubines, the woman he trusted most to guard his magic ring, whenever he removed it to bathe. This ring gave him power over all living things, including spirits, animals, water and wind.²⁰⁰⁷

For Solomon, horses and chariots were not fast enough. He preferred to travel on the wings of an eagle or on a magic carpet. The eagle could fly so fast that the king was able to reach the desert city of Tadmor (Palmyra) in only one day.²⁰⁰⁸ The carpet was huge, at least sixty miles long and sixty miles wide, made of green silk interwoven with pure gold and embroidered with decorative figures. It flew so fast that Solomon was able to have breakfast in Damascus and supper in Media.

One day, whilst flying on the carpet, Solomon was heard to boast,
"There's no other person in the world
whom Yahweh has blessed with such wisdom, understanding,
knowledge and intellect to rule over His creation."

A sudden gust of wind shook the carpet so hard that 40,000 people fell off.

Greatly alarmed, Solomon shouted to the wind,
"Bring them back! Bring them back!"
The wind replied,
"If you return to worshipping Yahweh and stop boasting how great you are,
then I'll bring your people back."

I am happy to report that Solomon looked suitably abashed.

This was not the only occasion that the king was reprimanded for his boastfulness. One day, while out flying, Solomon noticed swarms of ants scurrying about on the ground below. He heard one of them say,

"Take cover, otherwise you'll be destroyed by Solomon and his retinue."

Solomon called down to ask the ant why she had given such an order.

The ant replied,

"I was afraid that if my ants stopped to look at you and your retinue,
they would forget to worship Yahweh.

As their queen, it is my job to prevent such a thing."

"Can I ask you a question?" asked Solomon.

"Of course," came the reply, "but we can hardly conduct a conversation with you up there and me down here."

AMINA, SOLOMON'S CONCUBINE

²⁰⁰⁷ Jewish Encyclopedia: Seal of Solomon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_of_Solomon

²⁰⁰⁸ מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה פתיחא דחכימי פרשה ב א (כה)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

Solomon had the ant brought up to where he was sitting on his throne.
The Queen Ant looked up at him and said,
“We need to talk face-to-face.”
Solomon picked her up in his hand and asked,
“Is there anyone else in the world greater than me?”
“I am,” came the reply.
“Otherwise, why would you bother to bend down and pick me up?”
Hearing this, Solomon was so furious at this that he threw her back
on the ground.
“How dare you!” he said.
“Don’t you know to whom you are talking?
I am Solomon, the son of King David.”
The Queen Ant calmly replied,
“I know you are made out of the same dust as everyone else,
so what right do you have to be so proud?”
Solomon looked away to hide his shame.²⁰⁰⁹

It was on the same journey that Solomon saw a large palace made out of gold.
Unable to find the entrance, he sent some demons up onto the roof, in the hope they
would find a way of getting in. There they found three generations of eagles, a son,
his father and his grandfather.

The grandfather eagle remembered that, once, there had been an entrance to
the palace, but now it was covered by sand. Inside the palace was an idol with a silver
tablet in its mouth. The tablet bore an inscription in Greek, saying:

*“I, Shaddad, the son of Ad, reigned over a million cities, rode on a million
horses, had under me a million vassals and slew a million warriors, yet I could not
resist the angel of death.”*²⁰¹⁰

After this particular journey, Solomon ceased to boast about how great he was.

²⁰⁰⁹ מעשה הנמלה אוצר מדרשים מעשה הנמלה

<http://folkmasa.org/ozar/oz040.htm>

מדרש רבה לחומר דברים - פרשת שופטים פרשה ה: פרשת שופטים: מינוי מלך, מעלת השלום ב [מינוי שופטים ושופטים]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba5/5.htm>

²⁰¹⁰ מעשה הנמלה אוצר מדרשים

<http://folkmasa.org/ozar/oz040.htm>

Alternative Versions in Hebrew

http://folkmasa.org/ozar/nemala_ozar.pdf

Alternative Version in Hebrew

http://folkmasa.org/ozar/nemala_bet_hamidrash_yel.pdf

כל המדרשים כולל מעשה הנמלה

https://www.sefaria.org/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_The_Story_of_the_Ant_and_the_Sealed_Palace?lang=he

CHAPTER 47
SOLOMON'S DAUGHTERS
The Book of Kings I

Three women reveal that the great King Solomon was far from perfect. His two daughters, Tapath and Basemath, describe their father's extraordinary organizational ability on the one hand (I Kings Chapter 4), and his weaknesses on the other. According to the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 21), these were having too many horses, too much wealth and too many wives.

Another daughter shows that her all-powerful father was unable to change the course of destiny. Her story appears in *The Midrash of Rabbi Tanchuma*.

A description of Solomon's less than glorious end is taken from the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 20b).

TAPATH AND BASEMATH, SOLOMON'S DAUGHTERS

It wasn't easy being the children of a man like our father, whose wisdom was legendary, whose wealth was beyond compare, whose sexual prowess was unquestioned, whose building projects filled everyone with awe and who knew so many languages that no-one could hide anything from him. To top it all, he was an author of note, with a number of published works to his name.

So much was expected of his children, especially of our brothers, none of whom proved able to live up to our father's name. Yet our father was not perfect. He was accused of breaking three of our laws, each limiting the number of horses, gold and wives a king was permitted to have.²⁰¹¹ For he owned a thousand chariots and horses, the streets of Jerusalem ran with silver²⁰¹² and he kept a thousand women in his harem.²⁰¹³

CHAPTER 47 SOLOMON'S DAUGHTERS

TAPATH AND BASEMATH, SOLOMON'S DAUGHTERS

²⁰¹¹ Deuteronomy 17:16-17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9981/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש שמות - פרשת וארא פרשה ו: משה מתדיין עם ה' א [מה האדם שיבא אחרי המלך]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/6.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 21a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_21.html

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק ב דף יג,א פרק ב הלכה ו גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4602.htm>

²⁰¹² I Kings 10:26-27 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15894/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰¹³ I Kings 11:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15895/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 7:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

Once our father had brought peace and prosperity to our land, ²⁰¹⁴ he set about organizing a line of supply to our capital city of Jerusalem, which now become a world center of trade and pilgrimage. ²⁰¹⁵ From the Euphrates in the north to Egypt in the south, the country was divided up into twelve commissariats, each of which was responsible for provisioning the royal palace and the Temple with a month's supply of food and fodder. ²⁰¹⁶

My sister, Basemath, and I were married to two of our father's commissaries. I was married to Abinadav, the commissary for the territory of West Manasseh which lay between the River Jordan and the Great Sea, ²⁰¹⁷ whilst Basemath was married to Achimaaz, the commissary for the territory of Naphtali, in the far north of the country. ²⁰¹⁸

During the month allotted to my husband, Abinadav, every day we sent off to Jerusalem thirty measures of barley, sixty measures of flour, ten cattle fattened on bread, oil and milk, twenty cattle pastured in fields of barley, a hundred sheep, a hundred deer, thirty lambs, twenty donkeys, goats, fowl and all manner of delicacies. ²⁰¹⁹

²⁰¹⁴ I Kings 5:4-5

²⁰¹⁵ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

²⁰¹⁶ I Kings 5:1

I Kings 4:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15888/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰¹⁷ I Kings 4:11

²⁰¹⁸ I Kings 4:15

²⁰¹⁹ I Kings 5:2-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15889/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

[מדרשים על שלמה המלך, כסא ואיפודרומין של שלמה המלך כסא ואיפודרומין של שלמה המלך [בית המדרש ח"ה צד 34]
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim_Midrashim_on_King_Solomon_Throne_and_Hippodrome_of_King_Solomon.4?lang=he&with=all&lang2=he

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 2:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

You are probably thinking that, once our month was up, we were able to rest.
²⁰²⁰ Nothing could be further from the truth. The remaining eleven months were spent in making sure that everything would be available the following year, when again it was our turn to supply the king.

SOLOMON'S UNNAMED DAUGHTER

Sometimes my father would go to extraordinary lengths just to get his own way. I found this out to my cost when, one day, I was forcibly taken from the royal harem and conducted under armed guard to a distant outpost of the kingdom. This turned out to be a lonely island off the coast of Acre, where my father had built a watch tower. At least, that's what I assumed it to be, until, immediately after our entrance, the only gate was blocked up. This set me to wondering whether the purpose of the tower was to keep people in, or to keep people out.

Seventy elderly eunuchs had been imprisoned with me to act as my servants. When I finally convinced them to tell me why I had been brought to such a place, they explained that my father had read in the stars that I was destined to marry a pauper. To prevent this from happening, I was to live out the rest of my days in complete isolation from any eligible male. My immediate response was to burst out saying,

“But our religion forbids us from consulting the stars!”

Knowing it was useless to gainsay my father, I set about making myself as comfortable as possible, swearing to have my revenge at the first opportunity. Every morning I would go out on the terrace to look at the view. Not that there was much to see, apart from the sea. Everything else was far too distant.

One morning, hearing a noise above me, I looked up to see a man perched on the roof. Too astonished to feel any fear, I called out,

“Who are you and how did you get up there?”

The man jumped down onto the terrace beside me and said,

“I'm from the city of Acre and a bird brought me here.”

I barely took in what he was saying. Instead, my eyes were riveted on his practically naked body. Remember, living with seventy elderly servants, I had not set eyes on a young man in months. Even though he was filthy dirty, barefoot and so thin that his ribs protruded, I could see that after a bath, dressed in decent clothes and with some food in his belly, he had potential. So that's exactly what I did - gave him a hot bath, some warm clothes and a hot meal.

My instinct had been correct. My surprise visitor turned out to be the handsomest man I had ever laid eyes on and, even more unexpectedly, very intelligent and a great scholar. I was careful to keep him far from prying eyes, which meant hiding him from my servants. This wasn't difficult to do. Every time one of them entered my chamber, he hid outside on the terrace.

I expect you can guess what happened next. We fell deeply in love.

I told my lover,

“I wish we could get married.”

“Why can’t we?” he asked.

“Who’s going to marry us?” I replied.

“That’s easy,” was his answer. “I’ll draw up a marriage document.”

“How can you do that? There’s nothing to write with.”

“Yes there is. Look!”

With that, he cut his skin with a knife and used the blood to write with. Then we exchanged marriage vows and called Yahweh and the angels, Michael and Gabriel, as our witnesses.

As usually happens when two young people marry, I soon became pregnant. Eventually even my short-sighted servants noticed my condition and a delegation asked to see me. After a lot of humming and hawing, they finally overcame their embarrassment and asked,

“It is possible that your highness is with child?”

“Yes,” I replied. “It’s entirely possible.”

After further muttering between them, they continued,

“May we know who is the father?”

“No, you may not,” was my answer.

Poor men! They must have been scared out of their wits. How would they explain such a shameful situation to my father, who had placed me in their care? The outcome was that they sent for my father, to inform him in person what had happened and beg mercy for their lives.

My father arrived in the royal barge. I soon found myself standing before him, ordered to give an account of myself. This was my chance to obtain my revenge. If my father could base his actions on the stars, then I could base mine on an even higher power. I said,

“Yahweh has sent me a handsome and pious young husband,
a Talmudist and a scholar. Blessed be Yahweh!”

To prove that we had been married according to the law, I called to my husband who showed my father the marriage document, drawn up in his own blood. After a short conversation, my father realized that my husband was no other than the penniless young man he had seen in the stars, and that all his efforts to prevent me from marrying a pauper had been in vain.²⁰²¹

SOLOMON’S UNNAMED DAUGHTER

²⁰²¹ מדרש תנחומא עמוד 21 מעשה בשלמה המלך שהייתה לו בת יפיייה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/tanhumavo/tanhumavo07.pdf>

NARRATOR

Towards the end of his life Solomon found himself beleaguered by a number of enemies, including one of his own officials, who would later rebel against his son and heir, Prince Rehoboam. Moreover, the high taxes imposed on his people to finance his grandiose building projects made him more and more unpopular.²⁰²² However, what seems to have annoyed his subjects most of all was the tolerance he displayed towards the religious traditions of his foreign wives. Indeed, as he grew older, he seemed to take more of an interest in their gods than in Yahweh.²⁰²³

Therefore, it is not surprising that his foreign wives were blamed when Solomon lost everything - his throne, wealth and wits.²⁰²⁴ It is said that first, the whole world was his, then only Israel, then only Jerusalem, then only his bed and, finally, only his walking stick.²⁰²⁵

NARRATOR

²⁰²² I Kings 11:4-10 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15895/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 7:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰²³ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 56b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_56.html

²⁰²⁴ Ecclesiastes 1:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16462/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה פתיחא דחכימי פרשה א ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

²⁰²⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 20b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_20.html

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק ב דף יג,א פרק ב הלכה ו גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4602.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

CHAPTER 48
SHULAMIT'S STORY
The Scroll of the Song of Songs

The Song of Songs, attributed to King Solomon, is interpreted in two ways - as a passionate romance between a shepherdess and her lover, and as a description of the relationship between Yahweh and His people. The first interpretation is presented here. The text hints at two lovers, one a shepherd and one a king.

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE SHEPHERD

My name is Shulamit. I was born in this village. After my father died, my brothers became my guardians. We owned a herd of goats. Every day it was my job to take them out to pasture, as a result of which my skin was tanned a deep brown. Because of my dark skin, the villagers used to look down on me, even though, in all other respects, I was considered very beautiful. My brothers were especially angry, because they feared that no man would want me for a wife. ²⁰²⁶

They would have been angrier still, had they known I was no longer a virgin, for they talked much about guarding my purity. They would say,
“We have a little sister who has not yet developed any breasts.
How can we protect her until the day she is spoken for?” ²⁰²⁷

When I fell in love with a shepherd, I told him,
“I am no longer anyone’s little sister.
I have grown tall and my breasts have developed.” ²⁰²⁸

Hearing this, my lover came running to me as light-footed as a gazelle. He waited behind the wall of our house, peeping in through the window, peering through the lattice, just to catch a glimpse of me, and calling in a low voice,
“Arise my love and come away with me.
Winter is over, the rains are no more.
The trees are in blossom, the birds are singing, the turtle dove is calling.
There are green figs on the trees and small grapes on the vines.” ²⁰²⁹

I asked my lover where he pastured his flocks and rested in the heat of the day, so that I wouldn’t have to search for him among the other shepherds. He suggested I pasture my flock with theirs, so that we could meet without raising suspicion. He laughed at the thought, saying that it would be like sending a mare to graze among stallions, for my beauty, enhanced by all my gold jewelry, would only unsettle all the men who saw me. ²⁰³⁰

CHAPTER 48 SHULAMIT’S STORY THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE SHEPHERD

²⁰²⁶ Song of Songs 1:5-6

²⁰²⁷ Song of Songs 8:8-9

²⁰²⁸ Song of Songs 8:10

²⁰²⁹ Song of Songs 2:9-14

²⁰³⁰ Song of Songs 1:7-10

I remember the first time we made love. We lay in the shade of an apple tree,
²⁰³¹ pretending that the branches over our heads were the cedar and cypress beams of
our palace. ²⁰³² I told my lover that it was under such a tree that I had been conceived
and born. ²⁰³³

I remember how he praised my beauty, comparing my eyes to those of a dove
peeping out from under my kerchief. When I loosened and shook free my long black
hair, it was like seeing a flock of sleek black goats streaming down a hill in Gilead.
My teeth reminded him of a flock of ewes emerging from a sheep dip with shining
white fleece. He told me that my lips were as scarlet as the finest thread, and my
cheeks, under my kerchief, pink and round like ripe pomegranates. My erect
bespangled neck reminded him of the Tower of David, adorned with a thousand
warrior shields. ²⁰³⁴ He said,

“You are like a locked garden, a dammed-up spring or a blocked fountain,
waiting for someone to open you.

The dry fields of your body wait only to be watered
to produce juicy pomegranates, sweet-smelling herbs and spices.” ²⁰³⁵

Then he buried his head between my breasts, describing them as small, delicate and
alike as twin fawns. ²⁰³⁶

After we made love, he said,

“Now I have possessed your garden of delights, making it wholly mine,
gathering its myrrh and spice, eating its sugar and sugar-cane
and drinking its wine and milk.” ²⁰³⁷

²⁰³¹ Song of Songs 8:5

²⁰³² Song of Songs 1:17

²⁰³³ Song of Songs 8:5

²⁰³⁴ Song of Songs 4:1-4

²⁰³⁵ Song of Songs 4:12-15

²⁰³⁶ Song of Songs 4:5

²⁰³⁷ Song of Songs 5:1

All night long we remained together. Before the sun rose and chased away the shadows of night, ²⁰³⁸ in the cool of dawn again we made love. ²⁰³⁹ He was totally mine and I was completely his. ²⁰⁴⁰

At sunrise, I told him to flee away over the mountain, before we were discovered. I said,

“If only you were my brother.
Then I would be able to be seen with you in public and kiss you openly,
without arousing anyone’s suspicion.
I would take you home, as if I had been instructed to do so by my mother.
I would ply you with spiced wine
and allow you to quench your thirst on my juices.” ²⁰⁴¹

We continued to meet in secret. Then, one night, while I was half-awake, waiting for my lover, I heard a knocking at the door and a voice calling,

“Open quickly, my love. My hair is damp from the night air.”
Hesitating a moment, I answered,
“I have already washed my feet. I am already undressed.”

When a hand reached through the opening, I recognized it as belonging to my lover and my stomach melted with love for him. Perfuming my hands and fingers with myrrh, I quickly rose to open the door. I was too late. He had already gone.

I searched but could not find him. I called his name but he did not answer. ²⁰⁴²
I wandered the streets of Jerusalem until the night watch found me, abused me and pulled off the scarf that hid my face. Yet, desperate, I continued in my search. ²⁰⁴³

²⁰³⁸ Song of Songs 4:6

²⁰³⁹ Song of Songs 2:17

²⁰⁴⁰ Song of Songs 2:16

²⁰⁴¹ Song of Songs 8:1-2

²⁰⁴² Song of Songs 5:2-6

²⁰⁴³ Song of Songs 5:7

I begged the women I met that, if they saw my lover, they should tell him I was lovesick for him. They asked,

“What is so special about your lover
that he should deserve such a beautiful woman as you?”²⁰⁴⁴

I replied, “My lover’s beauty is quite dazzling.
He has ruddy cheeks, shining black curls and perfectly set, sparkling eyes.
His rounded cheeks are covered by soft, fragrant hair,
like beds of balsam or banks of sweet-smelling herbs,
while his lips are like lilies, moist with myrrh.
His mouth is full of sweetness and every part of him awakens desire.
Such a one as this is my lover.”²⁰⁴⁵

After listening to my words, they asked me which direction had he taken so that they could help me in my search. I replied that, no doubt, he had gone in search of me, to graze and pluck the flowers in the garden of my delights, for we were devoted to each other.²⁰⁴⁶

When I finally found him, my lover told me he had gone down to the orchards, to see if the nut trees in blossom, whether the vine had budded and the pomegranate flowers had bloomed. Only then would he know whether I was ready to resume our lovemaking.²⁰⁴⁷

I replied, “The fragrance of mandrakes has aroused me.
I know that you desire me. Let us go out into the country.
Let us find lodging in the villages for the night.
Let us wake early and go down together to the orchards.
There I shall give myself to you.
There you shall taste the fruits that I have been saving only for you.”²⁰⁴⁸

Afterwards, I said, “Promise me you will never leave me.
Promise me you will never forget me.
My jealousy is unbearable.
Love such as this cannot be bought for all the riches in the world.
For the love I feel for you is as strong as death.
It consumes me like a fire. A river cannot quench it.”²⁰⁴⁹

²⁰⁴⁴ Song of Songs 5:8-9

²⁰⁴⁵ Song of Songs 5:10--16

²⁰⁴⁶ Song of Songs 6:1-3

²⁰⁴⁷ Song of Songs 6:11

²⁰⁴⁸ Song of Songs 7:12-14

²⁰⁴⁹ Song of Songs 8:6-7

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE KING

I shall never forget the first time I saw the king. One day, we saw a cloud of dust in the distance, coming from the direction of the desert. A rich palanquin came into view, surrounded by a personal bodyguard of some sixty soldiers, swords drawn, ready to protect the life of whoever was inside. The palanquin was made of cedar wood, its posts of silver and its curtains dyed deep purple. We had never seen anything like it.²⁰⁵⁰

As we stood gaping, the curtains slightly parted and a hand beckoned to one of the soldiers. The soldier turned and walked in my direction. I looked behind me to see whom he sought. Before I knew it, he was standing before me, explaining that the king wished to speak to me. The king! I was so astonished, that I didn't resist as the soldier took my arm and led me to the palanquin.

The curtains again parted, and the same hand that I had seen before took mine and drew me inside. The interior was richly furnished with a gold couch and soft cushions. Exotic scents perfumed the air, barely masking the smell of all the lovemaking that must have taken place inside.²⁰⁵¹

Reclining on the couch was the most imposing man I had ever seen. Tall, black-haired, with piercing black eyes, dressed in a sumptuous robe, encrusted with precious jewels, he gently pulled me towards him, laid me on the couch and took me without further ado. I was so shocked, that I remained completely supine.

Afterwards, he offered me wine and sweetmeats, placed his left hand under my head, fondled my breasts with his right, told me I was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen and then took me again. This continued all the way to Jerusalem.

As we entered the city, it looked as though the whole female population had turned out to see the king's latest conquest. While the king drew aside the curtain to acknowledge his people's adulation, I shrank back from public view.²⁰⁵²

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE KING

²⁰⁵⁰ Song of Songs 3:6-10

²⁰⁵¹ Song of Songs 3:10

²⁰⁵² Song of Songs 3:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16447/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

On our arrival at the royal palace, the king escorted me inside. I entered in a daze. Placing me in charge of the keeper of the harem, the king ordered him to bring me to the banqueting hall, once I was properly attired.

The women of the harem gathered around me. Knowing that I was now the object of the king's desire, they realized that I also had his ear and that, for as long as I held his attention, I held them in my power. Therefore, instead of deriding me for my dark looks, as the people in my village had done, they lavished compliments on me, saying,

"How lovely you are.

From head to foot you look like the daughter of a high-born noble,
not a shepherdess.

Your feet are perfectly formed,

your hips look as though sculpted by a master craftsman,²⁰⁵³

your navel perfectly round like a wine-filled goblet,

your belly like a wheat-colored mound surrounded by lilies,

your tiny breasts identical like twin fawns,

your neck erect as an ivory tower,

your eyes limpid like pools of water,

your face held high as though you were standing on a mountain

gazing into the distance,

your head with its richly colored braids like a crown.

Is it any wonder that you have caught the king's heart

in the snare of your beauty?"²⁰⁵⁴

I didn't know what to say. I had never heard anyone talk in such a fashion and had no idea it was part of court etiquette, not to be taken too seriously.

When I was conducted into the banqueting hall, everyone present fell silent and craned their necks to see who had now caught the king's fancy.²⁰⁵⁵ The king beckoned me to recline with him on his couch, telling me that he could smell the nard with which I had perfumed myself, even as I entered the hall.²⁰⁵⁶

²⁰⁵³ Song of Songs 7:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16451/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁰⁵⁴ Song of Songs 7:3-6

²⁰⁵⁵ Song of Songs 2:4

²⁰⁵⁶ Song of Songs 1:12

All the time he kept whispering compliments in my ear, telling me that, although there were sixty queens, eighty concubines and innumerable maidens in his harem, there was none to compare with me. Just as my mother must love me, so would all the women in the kingdom come to love me, saying, "Who is this who lightens the dawn, is as lovely as the moon, as pure as the sun and whose beauty is truly overwhelming?" His words were hypnotic. ²⁰⁵⁷

For as long as I was in the palace, I was brought to the king's bed every night. I knew that all the other women in his harem must be jealous, because all they could talk of was how they couldn't wait to be summoned to his chamber, smell again his delicious masculine odor and enjoy his languorous lovemaking. ²⁰⁵⁸

I, on the other hand, pined more and more for my shepherd lover. He might not have been as rich as the king, or even as handsome, and certainly not as experienced with women, but his ardent caresses stirred me like no other. I became so weak that I had to ask for apples and wine to sustain me. ²⁰⁵⁹

Every time the king and I made love, I would fall asleep almost immediately, whereas the king would rise from his bed full of energy and order the women not to wake me, but to let me sleep until I awoke of my own accord. Only then were they to send word that I was awake, so that he could return and make love to me again. ²⁰⁶⁰

I don't know where I found the courage to put an end to it. It came to my knowledge that the king owned a vineyard in nearby Baal-Hamon, which he rented out for a thousand silver coins. ²⁰⁶¹ I thought, My body is just like that vineyard, except that the king does not own it. I do. If I pay him the equivalent of a thousand silver coins, then I can buy it back. ²⁰⁶²

²⁰⁵⁷ Song of Songs 6:8-10

²⁰⁵⁸ Song of Songs 1:3-4

²⁰⁵⁹ Song of Songs 2:5

²⁰⁶⁰ Song of Songs 2:7
Song of Songs 8:4

²⁰⁶¹ Song of Songs 8:11

²⁰⁶² Song of Songs 8:12

Now, I knew that the king never forced himself on a woman, but relied on his position, riches and charm to seduce any woman he desired. Had he not done so with me? Therefore, after submitting myself to him 1,200 times, I told him that I wished to return to my village. I explained that I had lain with him the same number of times as the number of silver coins paid to him for his grapes in the vineyard of Baal-Hamon, and had added another two hundred times as payment for those who had attended me.

He smiled, shrugged his shoulders and gave me permission to go. I left him knowing that within the hour, another would share his bed.

When the women of the harem saw me leaving the palace, they called out after me,

"Come back Shulamit. Don't go.

Don't deprive us of your beauty."

I thought to myself,

Am I nothing more than something pretty to look at? ²⁰⁶³

I suppose you would like to know how my story ended. My shepherd lover married another. When I showed no sign of returning his love, the king eventually lost interest. I never married. I never had children. I never had grandchildren. And all for the sake of love!"

²⁰⁶³ Song of Songs 7:1

Part 12
The Divided Kingdom

CHAPTER 49
CIVIL WAR! THE NORTHERN KINGDOM
The Book of Kings I

Unfortunately, Solomon's best qualities were not inherited by any of his sons. Therefore, after his death, the kingdom which David had struggled so hard to unify and which, under his son, had attained its greatest glory, was irreversibly divided between the ten northern tribes of Israel and the two southern tribes of Judah. The northern kingdom was ruled by Jeroboam, the southern by Solomon's heir, Rehoboam. The cause of the division was Rehoboam's ill-considered decision to increase taxation, something which had made his father so unpopular at the end of his life.

The kingdom of Judah was at a disadvantage, in that it was smaller both in territory and population. Moreover, most of it was desert, whereas the north received more rain and, therefore, was more fertile. Yet both kingdoms were coveted by greedy neighbors, Judah by the Philistines and Egyptians, and Israel by the Syrians of Damascus.

From now on we find ourselves confronted by a bewildering array of kings, who are described as being 'good' or 'bad', depending on whether or not they enforced the worship of Yahweh. Thus, after Jeroboam I established alternative places of worship to that of the Temple and his people gradually lapsed into idol-worship, all the kings of the northern kingdom were labelled as 'bad'.

Telling the story of Jeroboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom, are:
Zeruah, King Jeroboam's mother (I Kings Chapter 11).

Ano, his Egyptian wife (I Kings Chapter 14). Her name appears in the *Septuagint*, a very early third or second century BCE translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek.

The unnamed wives of two prophets. The first is the wife of Ahijah, who foretold that Jeroboam would be king (I Kings Chapters 11 and 14). The second is the wife of Iddo, who did not fear to venture into enemy territory to carry out his mission.

The last narrator is the wife of an astrologer who was prepared to take drastic steps to preserve his reputation (I Kings Chapter 13).

ZERUAH, MOTHER OF KING JEROBOAM I OF ISRAEL

My husband, Nabat, and I lived in the town of Zeredah in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. ²⁰⁶⁴ One night, Nabat had a dream in which his chest emitted flames. ²⁰⁶⁵ Convinced he knew its meaning – that he was destined for great things – he couldn't wait to tell me. ²⁰⁶⁶ Shaking me awake, he described his dream and asked me what I thought. Still drowsy, I replied,

“That’s nice dear.”

Then I turned over and went back to sleep.

The truth is that I had no illusions about my husband’s limitations and thought it highly unlikely that he was destined for great things. Shortly after, I conceived and bore a son, whom we named Jeroboam. Unfortunately, Nabat died without his dream showing any signs of coming true. ²⁰⁶⁷

As he grew up, Jeroboam became renowned for his bravery and strength. When he was appointed tax collector of our area by none other than King Solomon, I was sure that he could rise no higher. ²⁰⁶⁸ However, after he dared criticize the king to his face, I was sure he could sink no lower.

CHAPTER 49 CIVIL WAR! THE NORTHERN KINGDOM **ZERUAH, MOTHER OF KING JEROBOAM I OF ISRAEL**

²⁰⁶⁴ I Kings 11:26

²⁰⁶⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html

²⁰⁶⁶ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א פרק יא סימן קצ"ו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=10&perek=11

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html

²⁰⁶⁷ I Kings 11:26

²⁰⁶⁸ I Kings 11:28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15895/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

What did Jeroboam say that so angered the king? He pointed out that, whereas King David had made it easier to offer up sacrifices at the Temple by increasing the number of gates to Jerusalem, Solomon had made it harder by blocking them up.²⁰⁶⁹

Realizing he had gone too far, Jeroboam thought it prudent to flee the city and seek refuge in Egypt. On the way he met a holy man named Ahijah, who told him he would be our next king.²⁰⁷⁰ The holy man's prediction came true when the ten northern tribes summoned Jeroboam home to rule them, instead of King Solomon's avaricious son, Rehoboam.

It did not take me long to make the connection between Nabat's dream and Ahijah's prediction. The dream had not been about Nabat, but about Jeroboam!

²⁰⁶⁹ I Kings 11:26-27 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15895/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א פרק יא סימן קצו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?mefareash=shimoni&book=10&perek=11

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html

²⁰⁷⁰ I Kings 11:29-31

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א פרק יא סימן קצו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?mefareash=shimoni&book=10&perek=11

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_102.html

ANO, JEROBOAM'S EGYPTIAN WIFE

My younger sister, Thekemina, was married to Pharaoh Shishak. As a woman of rank, I could expect to be married to someone with whom my brother-in-law wished to seal an alliance. This occurred when I was married to an important Israelite named Jeroboam who, after angering his king, the famous King Solomon, had sought sanctuary in our country.

After Solomon's death, Jeroboam decided to return to Israel,²⁰⁷¹ where he was elected to represent his people's interests before Solomon's son, Rehoboam. The new king made himself so unpopular, that civil war broke out. Of the twelve tribes that made up the Israelite nation, the ten northernmost tribes elected my husband king, while the two southernmost tribes remained faithful to Rehoboam.²⁰⁷²

In the resulting conflict between the two Israelite kingdoms, Jeroboam activated the alliance he had forged with my brother-in-law, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who invaded Judah from the south in return for booty from the fabulously wealthy Temple in Jerusalem.²⁰⁷³

It is never easy leaving one's home and family and, at first, it was hard for me to adjust to Jeroboam's people and their peculiar ways. Continuing to worship the gods of my fathers, I encouraged my husband in his program of religious reform.

Unfortunately, not everyone was as supportive as I was. The followers of Yahweh objected strongly to the new shrines my husband erected at Dan and Beth-el, each with its sacred gold calf. They failed to realize that, in erecting them, Jeroboam was motivated less by religion than by politics, determined to prevent his people from visiting Yahweh's Temple in Jerusalem, thereby coming under the influence of his arch-enemy, King Rehoboam of Judah.²⁰⁷⁴

ANO, JEROBOAM'S EGYPTIAN WIFE

²⁰⁷¹ Septuagint Kings III = I Kings 12

<http://ecmarsh.com/lxx/Kings%20III/index.htm>

²⁰⁷² I Kings 12:26-29

II Kings 17:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15923/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰⁷³ I Kings 14:24-26

²⁰⁷⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html

And then came the awful day that our eldest son, Abijah, fell ill with an incurable disease. In desperation Jeroboam decided to seek the help of Ahijah, the holy man who had prophesied he would be king. Instead of going himself, he sent me in disguise, hoping that the old man, who had turned against him, wouldn't recognize me.

Ahijah, who lived with his wife in the city of Shiloh, was reputed to be blind. Therefore, I was completely taken aback when he recognized me the moment I walked through the door. After warning me that he had nothing good to say, he told me that, since Jeroboam had turned his back on the worship of Yahweh and had encouraged his people to do the same, our family would be extinguished. None of our descendants would survive.

With these terrible words ringing in my ears, I made my way back to our palace in Tirzah, only to be met with the news that Abijah had just died. A public funeral was held in his honor, at which many attested to his good qualities. This was poor consolation for a mother who had just lost her son. ²⁰⁷⁵

²⁰⁷⁵ I Kings 14:1-19

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, AHIJAH

My husband, Ahijah, was so renowned for his learning that many young men came to Shiloh to study under him. His most promising pupil was a young man named Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, the only one to whom my husband taught the hidden meaning of the law.²⁰⁷⁶

Just before King Solomon's death, someone brought my husband a petition recommending that Jeroboam, who was at the time in Egypt, be elected king. Convinced that his favorite pupil would make a much better king than spoiled Prince Rehoboam, Ahijah was the first to sign, after which many followed his example.²⁰⁷⁷

It was at this point that Ahijah had a vision according to which Jeroboam would indeed be our next king.²⁰⁷⁸ His vision came true when, after Solomon's death, Rehoboam announced an increase in our taxes. This was such an unpopular measure that the ten northern tribes rose up in rebellion and elected Jeroboam as their king.²⁰⁷⁹

You should have seen the look of joy on my husband's face when he heard the news of his pupil's coronation, and the look of abject disappointment when he learned of the idols that Jeroboam had established at the shrines at Dan and Beth-el.²⁰⁸⁰ This was followed by Ahijah's second vision, predicting Jeroboam's fall.

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, AHIJAH

²⁰⁷⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>

²⁰⁷⁷ II Chronicles 13:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16562/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>

²⁰⁷⁸ I Kings 11:29-39

²⁰⁷⁹ I Kings 12:2-15

²⁰⁸⁰ I Kings 12:26-29

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - סדר תולדת פרשה סה י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0064_L2

By now Ahijah was a very old man, ²⁰⁸¹ so old, that he could barely see. Very few came to consult him. Therefore, I was taken by surprise when, one evening, a woman came to the door, seeking his advice. Very tall, her face covered by the hood of her long cloak, she handed me a large basket containing ten loaves of bread, biscuits and a flask of honey as payment for my husband's services. In no position to refuse, I accepted it with gratitude.

Before she could utter a word, Ahijah addressed her as Queen Ano, the wife of his former pupil, King Jeroboam. He told her of his second vision and warned her of what would befall her family. She entered our house a queen. She left it a broken woman. ²⁰⁸²

²⁰⁸¹ Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 121b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_121.html

²⁰⁸² I Kings 14:1-18

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, IDDO

My husband, Iddo, received his call during the reign of King Solomon, continuing to preach the word of Yahweh during the reigns of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and grandson, Abijah.

During Solomon's reign, on the three pilgrimage festivals our people had come from all over the empire to worship in the Temple. However, following the secession of the ten northern tribes, the state of war between our two kingdoms prevented the people of the northern kingdom from visiting Jerusalem. Instead, encouraged by their king, Jeroboam, they now worshipped idols at Dan and Beth-el. This was anathema to all us Yahwists. ²⁰⁸³

Therefore, I was unsurprised when Iddo informed me that he had been ordered to Beth-el, to prevent Jeroboam from committing sacrilege by celebrating the Feast of Booths, with himself acting the part of High Priest. ²⁰⁸⁴ Although I was dismayed at the thought of my husband undertaking such a dangerous mission, I knew better than to argue, since visions from Yahweh cannot be denied.

With a sense of foreboding, I watched as he set out on his journey north. My fears were justified, for I never saw him again. I learned that, on his way back to Judah, Iddo had been attacked by a lion. ²⁰⁸⁵ Because his death had occurred in enemy territory, I was unable to retrieve his corpse which, apparently, was buried in a double grave somewhere in Beth-el. ²⁰⁸⁶

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, IDDO

²⁰⁸³ I Kings 12:19-21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15896/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰⁸⁴ I Kings 12:31-33 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15896/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews Chapter 8:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁸⁵ I Kings 13:24

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁸⁶ I Kings 13:31

NARRATOR

A historian by profession, Iddo was the author of a number of books. Besides a genealogy, he is also credited with writing biographies of Solomon,²⁰⁸⁷ Rehoboam and Abijah.²⁰⁸⁸

NARRATOR

²⁰⁸⁷ II Chronicles 9:29 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16558/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁰⁸⁸ II Chronicles 12:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16561/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

AN ASTROLOGER'S WIFE

I come from Samaria, a town in the hills of Ephraim, a few miles northwest of the city of Shechem, the city that had served as King Jeroboam's capital before he moved to Penuel. Our town was built on an oblong hill with steep sides and a long, flat top, surrounded by vineyards famous for their wine.

My story starts a short time after we crowned Jeroboam king of all the northern tribes. By this time, my husband, a wealthy astrologer, was already an old man and our sons fully grown. Most of the time, my husband was confined to his bed, where he received clients who sought his advice. Even King Jeroboam visited our house from time to time to consult him on matters of state.²⁰⁸⁹

Following my husband's advice, one of Jeroboam's first acts as king had been to establish alternative places of worship to the Temple in Jerusalem. Instead of the sacred chest in the Holy of Holies, we now worshipped heifers made of gold, one in the north of the kingdom at Dan and one in the south at Beth-el. It was while visiting our son in Beth-el that we heard that King Jeroboam was due to consecrate the new Sanctuary, performing the functions of High Priest himself. Too weak to attend the ceremony, my husband sent our son instead, who returned with the following account.²⁰⁹⁰

Just as the king had set light to the slaughtered animal on the altar, a Judean appeared out of nowhere and cried out that, on the same altar, a future king of Judah would sacrifice any priest who had officiated at it, including the corpses of those long dead. This was a terrible curse because, without a corpse, how could we be resurrected?

King Jeroboam was so furious that he reached out to have the Judean arrested, only to discover that he couldn't move his arm. It hung motionless, as if paralyzed. Then the altar cracked in two and the ashes from the sacrifice spilled on the ground. The king looked at the altar, then at his arm, turned to the holy man and begged him to pray to Yahweh for mercy. His arm was restored.

Refusing a reward and the offer of a meal, the Judean explained that Yahweh had forbidden him to eat or drink before returning to Judah. With these words he disappeared just as suddenly as he had appeared.²⁰⁹¹

AN ASTROLOGER'S WIFE

²⁰⁸⁹ Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁹⁰ I Kings 13:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15897/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁹¹ I Kings 13:1-10

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 8:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

Fearing for his position as one of the king's advisers, my husband decided to take action. Despite his enfeebled state, he set out on a donkey in the direction of Judah, following the same road that our son reported the Judean had taken. Not long after, he returned with the Judean who, my husband announced, had decided to break his fast with us.

No doubt you are asking yourselves, what caused the Judean to change his mind about breaking his fast before he returned to Judah? Apparently, my husband had told him that he, too, was a messenger from Yahweh, and that Yahweh had ordered him to invite the holy man to dine. In fact, Yahweh had given him no such instruction. My husband had lied so that the Judean would break his vow.

At this point the most extraordinary thing happened. My husband fell to the ground, unconscious.²⁰⁹² When he recovered, he turned to the Judean and recited in a hollow voice,

“Because you did not carry out Yahweh’s orders
and broke your fast before leaving our country,
you will remain here forever.”

I cannot imagine how the Judean felt, being told that he had disobeyed Yahweh, when all the time he thought he was performing Yahweh’s will. He said not a word, merely finished eating and left. His corpse was later discovered lying in the middle of the road, his donkey standing quietly on one side and the lion that had killed him, on the other.²⁰⁹³

We buried the Judean in the grave my husband had prepared for himself. Whilst mourning his death, my husband turned to our sons and said,

“When I die, I want you to place my body next to that of the Judean.
Then, when his prophecy comes true
and the bones of all those who officiated at Beth-el are burned on the altar,
my corpse will remain untouched.”²⁰⁹⁴

²⁰⁹² I Kings 13:12-20

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 104a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_104.html

²⁰⁹³ I Kings 13:21-24

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁹⁴ I Kings 13:29-32 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15897/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

It didn't take long before my husband returned to his usual ways. With new-found strength, he presented himself at the palace and requested an audience with the king. In order to discredit the Judean, he assured the king, that contrary to what everyone thought, no miracle had taken place at the Beth-El Sanctuary. Instead, both the momentary cramp in the king's arm and the crack in the altar, were to be explained by the large number of sacrifices made the same day. He added that, had the Judean been a genuine messenger from Yahweh, he would never have disobeyed Yahweh's order to refrain from eating till he reached Judah. Convinced by my husband that the Judean was an imposter, Jeroboam renewed his habit of coming to him for advice.²⁰⁹⁵

After my husband's death, I regularly visited his grave. One side was overgrown with thorns and thistles, while on the other grew myrtles and spices.²⁰⁹⁶ I leave you to guess on which side my husband was buried, and on which side the Judean.

²⁰⁹⁵ Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 9:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²⁰⁹⁶ II Kings 23:17 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

CHAPTER 50
CIVIL WAR! THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM
The Book of Kings I
The Book of Chronicles II

In the southern kingdom the House of David produced a dynasty of kings of varying piety, some of whom, such as Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah, were ‘good’, but most of whom were ‘bad’.

The wives of three of them – Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, his grandson, Abijah, and his great grandson, Asa – tell us their stories.

Maacah, King Rehoboam’s wife (I Kings Chapters 12-14 and II Chronicles Chapters 11-12), describes the enmity between Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

Michaiah, King Abijah’s wife (II Chronicles Chapter 13), a devotee of the goddess Asherah, explains why the Israelite women were so attracted to her cult.

Azubah, King Asa’s wife (I Kings Chapter 15 and II Chronicles Chapter 16), provides us with an insight into the character of her husband.

MAACAH, KING REHOBOAM'S WIFE

When my husband, Rehoboam, was a small child, he remembers sitting on his grandfather's knee and hearing him sing praises to Yahweh, thanking Him for the law allowing Israelite men to take non-Israelite converts as wives. At the time, Rehoboam had no idea what this meant. Only later did he realize that, without this law, both he and his grandfather would have been considered illegitimate - his grandfather, King David, because he was descended from a Moabite woman named Ruth, and Rehoboam, because his mother, Naamah, was an Ammonite.²⁰⁹⁷

Grandfather and grandson had something else in common - both were unrepentant womanizers. Like his grandfather, Rehoboam took eighteen wives. However, Rehoboam went one stage further. Instead of ten concubines, he had sixty. With these seventy-eight women he fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.²⁰⁹⁸

His first two wives were distant relatives, one named Mahalath, who remained childless, and the other, Abihail,²⁰⁹⁹ who bore him three sons. I was Rehoboam's third wife. By rights, Abihail's eldest son, Jeush, should have inherited the throne, but I had other ideas entirely.²¹⁰⁰ What helped was the fact that I was Rehoboam's favorite. After we made love, it was me to whom he poured out his woes, and me to whom he turned for advice.²¹⁰¹

CHAPTER 50 CIVIL WAR! THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

MAACAH, KING REHOBOAM'S WIFE

²⁰⁹⁷ Psalm 40:6

Babylonian Talmud: Yebamoth 77a

http://www.halakhah.com/yebamoth/yebamoth_77.html

²⁰⁹⁸ II Chronicles 11:21

²⁰⁹⁹ II Chronicles 11:18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16560/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²¹⁰⁰ II Chronicles 11:19-22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16560/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²¹⁰¹ Chronicles 11:21

Unfortunately Rehoboam's woes were many. While still fresh to the throne, he had made some unwise choices, ²¹⁰² among them the rash decision to raise his deceased father's unpopular taxes, an act that had resulted in the secession of the ten northern tribes, ²¹⁰³ under the leadership of a man named Jeroboam. Only the intervention of a holy man named Shemaiah had prevented the outbreak of civil war. ²¹⁰⁴

Rehoboam spent the seventeen years of his reign fighting his enemies, both domestic and foreign. ²¹⁰⁵ All his efforts to fortify our southern borders proved fruitless, when Jeroboam's ally, Pharaoh Shishak, invaded our country, lured by promises of rich booty. With the enemy at the gates of Jerusalem, we were terrified. Fortunately Shishak contented himself with plunder from the Temple before withdrawing back to Egypt. ²¹⁰⁶ This merely fanned the flames of my husband's hatred of Jeroboam, and the two remained bitter enemies till his dying day. ²¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, I had born my husband four sons and a daughter. Our eldest son, Abijah, was as ambitious as me. However, as the son of the king's third wife, he could expect nothing better than a small fiefdom or high rank in the army. I was determined that he would have more.

Therefore, I importuned Rehoboam to make him his heir. I pointed out how much more suitable for the position was Abijah, rather than the retiring Jeush. Night after night after making love, I would whisper in his ear, begging him to change the law of succession until, unable to withstand my importuning any longer, he agreed. Can you imagine the look on Abihail's face when our husband announced that Abijah was his heir? ²¹⁰⁸

²¹⁰² I Kings 14:21

²¹⁰³ II Chronicles 10:6-14-16 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16559/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²¹⁰⁴ I Kings 12:21-24

²¹⁰⁵ I Kings 15:3-5

²¹⁰⁶ I Kings 14:25-26
II Chronicles 12:2-9
Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 119a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>
Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 10:2-3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹⁰⁷ I Kings 15:6

²¹⁰⁸ II Chronicles 11:21-22

MICHAIAH, KING ABIJAH'S WIFE

My father, Uriel, was a devout worshipper of Yahweh, who regularly made the pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer up sacrifices to Yahweh. Because of my father's piety, I was considered a suitable bride for Prince Abijah, the son of King Rehoboam and heir to the throne. I was the first of fourteen wives. Between us we bore him twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. My son, Asa, was his heir.

Devout as my father was, he was unable to prevail upon my mother to abandon her worship of the goddess, Asherah, or to prevent her from passing on her religious beliefs to me.

You must understand the depth of our belief. We regarded Asherah as a fitting consort for her husband, whom the Yahwists called Yahweh and we called Baal. She, alone, understood our suffering and shared our many sorrows. She, alone, felt the pain of menstruation, conception, pregnancy and childbirth. She, alone, appreciated the burden of suckling our babies and caring for our children. She, alone, knew the agony of watching them die a painful and sometimes violent death before our very eyes.²¹⁰⁹

Therefore, on every hill and mountain top, under every tall tree, by every likeness of Baal, we erected Asherah's carved wooden pole, so that the two could copulate and fertilize both us and the land, for a woman without a son to take care of her in her old age and a land without rain, are equally as good as dead.²¹¹⁰

Both in the Sanctuary at Beth-el²¹¹¹ and in the Temple in Jerusalem you could find Asherah's sacred pole next to the altar of Yahweh.²¹¹² Indeed, we women were allotted a room in the Temple, specifically for the purpose of weaving cloth with which to dress our goddess,²¹¹³ while her four hundred priests used Yahweh's utensils in their religious rites.²¹¹⁴

MICHAIAH, KING ABIJAH'S WIFE

²¹⁰⁹ Numbers 11:12-13

Isaiah 45:9-10

Isaiah 49:15

Isaiah 66:13

²¹¹⁰ Jeremiah 17:2

²¹¹¹ II Kings 23:15

²¹¹² II Kings 21:7

II Kings 23:6

²¹¹³ II Kings 23:7

²¹¹⁴ II Kings 23:4

Fortunately my husband, Abijah, made no attempt to interfere with my worship of the goddess - he was far too busy fighting King Jeroboam of Israel. By defeating him in battle, Abijah succeeded where his father, Rehoboam, had failed.²¹¹⁵ This was Jeroboam's last attempt to overthrow Abijah during my husband's lifetime.²¹¹⁶ I'm sure my husband would have succeeded in reuniting the two kingdoms, had he not died prematurely, less than three years into his reign.²¹¹⁷

At the time of his death, our son, Asa, was still a minor. I acted as regent until he came of age. I enjoyed great influence at court - that is, until the day that Asa took over the reins of government, stripped me of my titles and removed all the idols I had erected to Asherah.

After this, the Yahwists spread malicious rumors about me, claiming I worshipped the goddess by copulating with a statue of a penis!²¹¹⁸ They could rant and rave as much as they liked, warning us of Yahweh's anger. We worshippers of Asherah simply ignored them. To us, Yahweh was a distant God, a jealous God, who seemed to be angry with us most of the time, instead of bringing us consolation for the harshness of our lives.

²¹¹⁵ II Chronicles 13:15
Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 11:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹¹⁶ II Chronicles 13:20 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16562/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities Book 8 Chapter 11:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹¹⁷ II Chronicles 13:2 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16562/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²¹¹⁸ II Chronicles 13:13 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15899/jewish/Chapter-15.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

AZUBAH, KING ASA'S WIFE

It's well-known that mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law rarely see eye to eye. Yet I never had any trouble with my mother-in-law, Queen Michaiah. The reason was simple. Asa's father had died when my husband was still a child and, until he was old enough to rule in his own right, his idol-worshipping mother had acted as his regent. When Asa finally came of age, under the influence of a holy man named Azariah, he cast his mother aside and reinstated the worship of Yahweh. After that, his mother lived in seclusion and had no opportunity to bother me or anyone else. ²¹¹⁹

There's no doubt about it. My husband, Asa, was an outstandingly successful king, mainly because he believed that 'Yahweh helps those who help themselves'. I'll give you two examples.

When King Baasha of Israel tried to blockade the road in and out of Jerusalem by building a strong fort, what did my husband do? He ignored the advice of a holy man named Hanani to place our trust in Yahweh. ²¹²⁰ Instead, he bribed the king of Syria to invade Baasha's kingdom, forcing Baasha to leave off building the fort in order to fight the invaders. ²¹²¹ As for Hanani, he was thrown into prison by my husband, angry that the holy man had dared question his policies. ²¹²²

The second example occurred towards the end of Asa's long reign, ²¹²³ when my husband was afflicted by gout. ²¹²⁴ Again, instead of trusting in Yahweh, he placed his trust in his physicians. ²¹²⁵ Perhaps, on this occasion, he should have turned to Yahweh, because his physicians were unable to cure him.

AZUBAH, KING ASA'S WIFE

²¹¹⁹ I Kings 15:9-15

²¹²⁰ II Chronicles 16:7-9

²¹²¹ I Kings 15:16-22
II Chronicles 16:1-6

²¹²² II Chronicles 16:10

²¹²³ II Chronicles 16:13

²¹²⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_10.html

²¹²⁵ I Kings 15:23
II Chronicles 16:11-12

Part 13
Monarchs of Israel

CHAPTER 51
KINGS OF ISRAEL
The Book of Kings I

There was a marked difference between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Whereas, throughout its history, the smaller kingdom of Judah was ruled by one dynasty - the House of David - the larger kingdom of Israel was ruled by seven, plus a succession of individual kings who, having ousted their predecessors, were themselves ousted in turn.

The seven dynasties that ruled Israel were those of Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea. This chapter covers the period of the two longest - the House of Omri and the House of Jehu.

Omri displayed great statesmanship by marrying his daughter to a prince of Judah, thus putting an end to the enmity existing between the two kingdoms, after which the history of the two kingdoms became intertwined. Just to complicate matters, there were two Ahaziah's, two Jehoram's and two Joash's, each ruling their respective kingdoms at more or less the same time.

Here an anonymous woman of Israel describes the bewildering succession of kings in the northern kingdom of Israel (I Kings Chapter 15-16).

A WOMAN OF ISRAEL

I'm just a simple woman, who lived in the kingdom of Israel during a period in which our kings seemed to come and go all the time. I could hardly keep up with it all. Just after I had got used to one king, along came another. This caused us citizens a great deal of alarm. If the ones at the top couldn't get on together, what chance did the rest of us have?

It all started when Nadav, the son of Jeroboam, founder of our kingdom, ²¹²⁶ was murdered by General Baasha, ²¹²⁷ who wiped out all the other members of the royal family to seize power for himself. ²¹²⁸ Baasha had come from nowhere. He was a commoner like us. At first we tended to sympathize with his cause. However, as the years passed and he revealed his true character, he gradually lost our support. ²¹²⁹ He spent most of his long reign fighting the king of Judah. ²¹³⁰ The last straw was when his opponent bribed the Syrians to attack us and Baasha proved unable to defend us. ²¹³¹

Baasha's son, Elah, succeeded his father. He didn't last long – only two years – not even that. ²¹³² It just goes to show how much a person's character is shaped by their upbringing. Baasha was reared in the home of a commoner, whereas his son was reared in a palace, where he was terribly spoiled. The result was that, after being crowned king, instead of ruling the kingdom, Elah spent his days carousing with his crony, Arza, whom he had appointed chief steward of his household. ²¹³³

CHAPTER 51 KINGS OF ISRAEL

A WOMAN OF ISRAEL

²¹²⁶ I Kings 15:25

²¹²⁷ I Kings 15:27-28

²¹²⁸ I Kings 15:29

²¹²⁹ I Kings 16:1-2

²¹³⁰ I Kings 15:16

I Kings 15:32

²¹³¹ I Kings 15:20-21

II Chronicles 16:4-5

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 12:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹³² I Kings 16:8

²¹³³ I Kings 16:9

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 12:4-5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

Taking advantage of Elah's permanently drunken state and the fact that most of the army was away at the siege of Gibbethon,²¹³⁴ the captain of one of the chariot divisions murdered Elah in cold blood and had himself crowned king.²¹³⁵ And Zimri didn't stop at murdering King Elah. Oh no! Instead, he had every last man from Baasha's house put to death. Even Baasha's friends died in the general slaughter.²¹³⁶

So now we had another king. Upon hearing the news of Elah's assassination, the army immediately proclaimed General Omri king, instead of Zimri.²¹³⁷ Omri lost no time in marching to Tirzah at the head of his troops, and capturing it without opposition. Realizing all was lost, Zimri set fire to the palace and died in the flames. He had reigned for exactly seven days, not even long enough to impose taxes.²¹³⁸

This was not the end of the story. The people were now divided between those who supported Omri and those who supported a man named Tibni. Eventually Omri's party gained the upper hand and Tibni died.²¹³⁹

Omri was different from the others. He believed in diplomacy rather than duress.²¹⁴⁰ During his twelve-year reign we finally had some peace and quiet.²¹⁴¹ Upon his death he was succeeded by his son, Prince Ahab.

²¹³⁴ I Kings 16:15

²¹³⁵ I Kings 16:9-10

²¹³⁶ I Kings 16:11-14

²¹³⁷ I Kings 16:16

²¹³⁸ I Kings 16:18-20
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 12
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹³⁹ I Kings 16:21-22
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 12:5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/sederolam/sederolam01.pdf>

סדר עולם פרק יז עמוד 23-24 ²¹⁴⁰

²¹⁴¹ I Kings 16:23

Part 14
Prophets of Israel

CHAPTER 52
BAAL VERSUS YAHWEH

The Book of Kings I
The Book of Kings II
The Book of Chronicles II

As the northern kingdom neared its end, two ‘miracle workers’ tried to prevent the rising tide of idol-worship. One was the prophet, Elijah, the other his pupil, Elisha.

The following women bear witness to the miracles Elijah wrought:

A widow from Zarephath who, according to Rashi, was the mother of the prophet, Jonah, describes how she and her son were saved from starvation. Her story comes from I Kings Chapter 17, drawing on additional material from the *Great Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

Jezebel, King Ahab’s Phoenician queen whose religious abominations so incensed the Yahwists, then takes up the narrative, based on I Kings Chapters 16-22.

Finally, the unnamed wife of King Jehoshaphat of Judah tells us of her husband’s reign, describing how he helped two kings of Israel to fight their wars (I Kings Chapter 22 and II Chronicles Chapter 18).

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, JONAH

A Phoenician by birth, I was born in the town of Zarephath, located between Sidon and Tyre on the shores of the Great Sea. I married an Israelite named Amitai from the village of Gath Hopher in the kingdom of Israel. Shortly after the birth of our son my husband died, so I returned to the town of my birth. ²¹⁴²

For three years there had been a succession of droughts. Every country in the region was affected. As a result, there was no food to be had anywhere in Zarephath. My son, Jonah, and I were down to the last of our flour and oil, with which I planned to make our final meal, before we starved to death.

I was outside the city gates gathering sticks for a fire, when an elderly Israelite stopped me and begged for a drink of water. As I gave him what little I had, he added, “Can you spare me a morsel of bread too?”

I hesitated before explaining our situation - that we were down to the last of our food and, once we had eaten what was left, we would die of hunger. The Israelite told me not to fear, but to return home and bake him a small cake out of our remaining flour and oil. If there was any left over, then I could make another cake for me and my son. He explained that if I did so, we would have enough food to last us until the rains. ²¹⁴³

I looked at him in shock. Did he really expect me to feed him first, before my beloved son? Surely no-one could be that unfeeling? However, something about him caused me to do as he said. ²¹⁴⁴

CHAPTER 52 BAAL VERSUS YAHWEH

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, JONAH

²¹⁴² II Kings 14:23-25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15920/jewish/Chapter-14.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Jerome's commentary on Jonah P. 67

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.co.uk/&httpsredir=1&article=1114&context=etd>

The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl20.htm>

²¹⁴³ I Kings 17:1-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15901/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

²¹⁴⁴ מדרש רבה למגילת שיר השירים פרשה ב [סמכוני באישיות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/shir/2-2.htm>

מדרש רבה - שיר השירים רבה פתיחתא דחכימי פרשה ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L2

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

My guest obviously didn't like to be a nuisance. After entering my house, he took out an oil lamp that he had brought with him and lit the wick so that we could see what we were doing.²¹⁴⁵ To my astonishment, there was more than enough flour and oil for two small cakes, for which our guest reverentially offered up a prayer of thanks to his God, Yahweh.

Not only did we have enough to eat that evening, but every evening afterwards. No matter how many cakes I made, there was always enough flour and oil left to make more. This just proves that one good turn deserves another. By being prepared to give our guest the last of our food, the last of our food sufficed for the rest of our days.

From that day forth, the old man, whose name was Elijah, was a permanent guest in our house. All was well until the day that my son, Jonah, fell ill with some incurable disease. Within days he was dead. As I cradled my son's cold body in my arms, I turned to Elijah and said in a bitter voice,

“What was the point of saving us from starvation, if my son is now dead?”²¹⁴⁶
In reply Elijah held out his arms to take Jonah, whom he carried upstairs to his room.²¹⁴⁷

²¹⁴⁵ מדרש רבה למגילת שיר השירים פרשה ב [סמכוני באשיות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/shir/2-2.htm>

²¹⁴⁶ I Kings 17:15-18 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15901/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי פרשה ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.3.1?lang=he

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13:3

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

²¹⁴⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

I stood outside the door, straining my ears to hear what was going on inside. It sounded as if he was pleading with his God.²¹⁴⁸ The next thing I knew, he emerged from his room, carrying Jonah in his arms. Handing him to me, he said,
“See, your son is alive.”²¹⁴⁹

Like many Phoenicians, all my life I had been a worshipper of Tanit-Ashtart.
²¹⁵⁰ From that moment on, I became a worshipper of Yahweh.

²¹⁴⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות פרשה ה ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01634_all.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

²¹⁴⁹ I Kings 17:19-23

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

²¹⁵⁰ Sarepta

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarepta>

JEZEBEL, KING AHAB'S PHOENICIAN WIFE

We Phoenicians were a trading people. While our rivals, the Greeks, traded with the nations living along the western shores of the Great Sea, we traded with those living along its eastern shores.²¹⁵¹ This policy worked to the benefit of both, as my father never tired of telling me in his lectures on kingship - for I was brought up to be, not just a consort and mother of kings, a mere adornment of the court, but a queen able to rule in her own right.²¹⁵² The opportunity to do so arose when a dynastic marriage was arranged for me with Ahab, the son of Omri, who ruled the neighboring kingdom of Israel.²¹⁵³

After my marriage to Ahab, I discovered that my husband didn't particularly enjoy sexual relations. Since the primary role of any queen is to provide her husband with heirs, to awaken his lust I had images of prostitutes painted on the walls of our bedchamber, while to encourage his martial spirit, I had the same images painted on the sides of his chariot.²¹⁵⁴

As a devout follower of Baal, I went to great lengths to reform my husband's state religion, the worship of Yahweh. Like Baal, Yahweh was a storm god associated with high places,²¹⁵⁵ so all that was required was to set up statues to which the people could pray and to change some of the rituals.²¹⁵⁶

JEZEBEL, KING AHAB'S PHOENICIAN WIFE

²¹⁵¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Lebanon/Phoenicia-as-a-colonial-and-commercial-power>

Phoenicia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

²¹⁵² I Kings 16:31

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

²¹⁵³ I Kings 16:29

²¹⁵⁴ I Kings 22:38 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15906/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

²¹⁵⁵ I Kings 21:25

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/eliyahurabazuta/eliyahurabazuta15.pdf>

סדר אליהו רבה עמוד 2

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifri/sifri08.pdf>

ספרי ספר דברים עמוד 6

²¹⁵⁶ I Kings 16:32-33

Hosea 12:12

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_102.html

My efforts were totally misunderstood. Some thought I was trying to abolish the worship of Yahweh. On the contrary, I named my three eldest children after Yahweh – Ahaziah, Jehoram and Athaliah – and never failed to honor the Israelite dead. My palace in Samaria overlooked the marketplace. Whenever I saw a funeral procession passing by, I would follow it, taking care to walk ten paces behind the deceased, clapping my hands and uttering praises all the way to the cemetery. Unfortunately this was misinterpreted as expressing my glee over their deaths.²¹⁵⁷

The problem was that the Yahwist establishment absolutely forbade the use of images in their worship, and were horrified by human sacrifice and sacred prostitution, all of which I tried to introduce to Ahab's backward people. What especially annoyed the Yahwists was my practice of maintaining the many prophets of Baal and his wife, Asherah, at public expense.²¹⁵⁸

During my husband's reign we were hounded by a Yahwist holy man named Elijah of Tishbi. On his first visit to the palace, he warned us of a region-wide drought.²¹⁵⁹ On his second, he suggested a contest to see which god could end the drought - his God, Yahweh, or my god, Baal. The contest took place on Mount Carmel. When Yahweh bested Baal and all my priests were put to death, I was so incensed with rage that I gave orders to have Elijah killed. Before my order could be carried out, he escaped to the city of Beersheba in Judah, where we had no jurisdiction.²¹⁶⁰

Adjoining our palace in Jezreel was a vineyard belonging to a man named Naboth. Having decided that the land would be perfect for growing vegetables for the palace, Ahab offered Naboth good money for it. Naboth refused to sell, claiming that the plot had been in his family for generations and he wanted to pass it on to his sons. Unused to being gainsaid, Ahab returned home so depressed that he refused all food and drink.

²¹⁵⁷ Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 17

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²¹⁵⁸ פתיחתא דחכימי פרשה א ד מדרש רבה - שיר השירים רבה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

²¹⁵⁹ I Kings 17:1

²¹⁶⁰ I Kings 18:16-20

I Kings 19:1-3

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

When I learned of this, I went to his chamber and asked him what was wrong. Ahab told me what had transpired between him and Naboth.

“Good heavens!” I responded. “Is that all? Aren’t you the king? You should behave like one. Don’t worry. I’ll get you the land. Now just have something to eat.”

What did I do? I simply forged my husband’s name on a royal edict and sent it to the Jezreel authorities. The edict ordered them to announce a day of fasting, on which Naboth would be summoned before all the people, ²¹⁶¹ accused of blasphemy against God and king by any two witnesses who could be bribed to do so, and stoned to death. ²¹⁶²

As I foresaw, the edict was carried out to the letter. After a messenger arrived to report Naboth’s death, I informed my husband that the vineyard was now his. If Ahab had his suspicions he said nothing, but went off to inspect his new property.

Shortly afterwards, that prophet of doom, Elijah of Tishbi, had the effrontery to accost my husband in his new vegetable patch and warn him that he would suffer the same fate as Naboth, whose corpse had been licked clean by dogs. ²¹⁶³ None of his descendants would be spared, leaving no-one to carry on his name. ²¹⁶⁴ When Ahab heard Elijah’s words he was beside himself with grief. For weeks he went around as if the world had come to an end. ²¹⁶⁵

²¹⁶¹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

²¹⁶² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 29
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_29.html

²¹⁶³ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

²¹⁶⁴ I Kings 21:1-22

²¹⁶⁵ I Kings 21:27
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 13
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

KING JEHOSHAPHAT'S WIFE

For years the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had been at war. It was only when my father, Omri, was elected king of Israel that this changed. One of the first things he did was to marry me to Prince Jehoshaphat of Judah, to seal an alliance between our two kingdoms.²¹⁶⁶

Like most of our people in the northern kingdom, my father had deserted the religion of Yahweh for that of Asherah and Baal. My husband, on the other hand, was a devout worshipper of Yahweh. So you can understand how hard it was for me to accustom myself to the Yahwist faith, which required keeping so many laws.

The alliance between our two kingdoms was soon put to the test, when my brother, Ahab, asked my husband, Jehoshaphat, if he was prepared to undertake a joint invasion of Ramot Gilead, to recapture it from the Syrians.²¹⁶⁷ Jehoshaphat, who was not only devout but also cautious by nature, suggested they first seek the advice of Yahweh's holy men, as to the outcome of the campaign. While four hundred favored the invasion, only one advised against it.

Against his better judgment, Jehoshaphat was persuaded to set out for Ramot Gilead at the head of his army. My brother should have obeyed my husband's instincts, for, in the ensuing battle, Ahab was killed while Jehoshaphat survived.²¹⁶⁸

KING JEHOSHAPHAT'S WIFE

²¹⁶⁶ I Kings 22:45 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15906/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²¹⁶⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 15:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²¹⁶⁸ II Chronicles 18:1-34 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16567/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

JEZEBEL, KING AHAB'S PHOENICIAN WIFE

Despite his alliance with King Jehoshaphat of Judah, ²¹⁶⁹ my husband not only lost the battle to retake Ramot Gilead from the Syrians, but also his life. ²¹⁷⁰ His corpse was brought back to our palace at Samaria for burial. ²¹⁷¹ Just as that cursed Yahwist prophet, Elijah, had foretold, before our servants could wash off the blood from his chariot, a pack of dogs licked it clean. No trace was left of the pornographic images painted on its sides. ²¹⁷²

That was not the end of our misfortunes. Ahab was succeeded by our eldest son, Ahaziah, who met with his death when he accidentally fell out of a window. ²¹⁷³ Since he died childless, our younger son, Jehoram, was crowned king in his stead. ²¹⁷⁴

To secure the alliance between our two kingdoms, Ahab and I had married our daughter, Athaliah, to King Jehoram of Judah. When my son-in-law died from some mysterious bowel ailment, he was succeeded by my grandson, Ahaziah. Thus, while my son, Jehoram, ruled Israel, my grandson, Ahaziah, ruled Judah. Never had the House of Omri wielded such power.

Just as Ahab had previously joined forces with Jehoshaphat to reclaim Israeli territory captured by the Syrians, it was now that my son and grandson did the same. However, during the campaign a coup took place, in which both were slain, and an army general named Jehu claimed the throne.

JEZEBEL, KING AHAB'S PHOENICIAN WIFE

²¹⁶⁹ I Kings 22:3-4

²¹⁷⁰ I Kings 22:34-35
II Chronicles 18:33-34

²¹⁷¹ I Kings 22:37

²¹⁷² I Kings 22:38 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15906/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

²¹⁷³ II Kings 1:2
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 2:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²¹⁷⁴ II Kings 3:1
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 2:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

Temporarily protected by the thick walls of the palace in Samaria, I realized that it was only a matter of time before Jehu arrived to kill me. Therefore, I devised a plan to save myself. Still an attractive woman, after carefully applying make-up and loosening my hair, I stood at the palace window to await his arrival. My plan was to charm Jehu into marrying me instead of murdering me.

At his approach, I called down,
“Well, Jehu, do you come in peace,
or do you intend to murder your rightful ruler?”
Jehu shouted, “Is there anyone up there who supports my cause?”
Three of my servants stepped forward
and poked their heads out of the window.
“Good.” he said. “Push her out for me.”²¹⁷⁵

NARRATOR

Jezebel was tossed to the ground and her corpse eaten by dogs. By the time Jehu sent his soldiers to bury her, all that was left were her hands, feet and skull.²¹⁷⁶

²¹⁷⁵ II Kings 9:31-33

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 6:4

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_IX

NARRATOR

²¹⁷⁶ II Kings 9:34-5

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 6

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_VIII

CHAPTER 53 PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

The Book of Kings II

The Book of Jonah

When Elijah ascended to heaven, his mantle fell on his disciple, Elisha, who, like his teacher, was also able to perform miracles. Elisha led a school of prophets known as ‘the sons of the prophets’, among whom were Ovadia, Gehazi and Jonah, the last of whom became a prophet in his own right. The wives of all three tell their stories in this chapter. Joining them are five other women, each with her own story to tell, shedding light on the life and times of Elisha.

The wife of Ovadia tells us how her sons were saved from slavery. Her story can be found in II Kings Chapter 4, plus in a commentary entitled *One of the Wives of the Sons of the Prophets*.

A Shunamite describes the miracle of the resuscitation of her dead child, as told in II Kings Chapter 4. The identification of the child as the prophet, Habakkuk, is found in the *Zohar*, Genesis, Paragraph 7. The tradition that King David’s bed warmer, Abishag, and the Shunamite were sisters, although defying all chronological probability, comes from *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* and the collection of Biblical folk tales known as *Yalkut Shimoni*.

The Israelite maid of a Syrian general, named Naaman, relates how, as a result of her advice, her master was cured of leprosy, as narrated in II Kings Chapter 5.

Two mothers of Samaria reveal what caused King Jehoram of Israel to tear out his hair (II Kings Chapter 6).

The wife of Gehazi provides us with an account of her unscrupulous husband (II Kings Chapters 4-8).

An unnamed servant from the palace at Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, relates the history of the House of Jehu (II Kings Chapters 9, 10, 13 and 15).

The wondrous tale of Jonah, as related by his wife, ends this chapter. Her story is based on Jonah Chapters 1-3.

OVADIA'S WIFE

It says something about my husband, Ovadia, that an idol-worshipping couple like King Ahab and his Phoenician queen, Jezebel, trusted him to manage the royal household. For Ovadia was a devout worshipper of Yahweh, some say even more devout than Father Abraham himself.

When Queen Jezebel started hunting down and executing the priests of Yahweh, Ovadia and I hid as many as we could. We hid them in two caves so that, if one cave was discovered, the priests in the other would survive.²¹⁷⁷ Although my husband was a wealthy man, supporting so many priests soon swallowed up all our savings. Left with no alternative, Ovadia was forced to borrow money from Prince Jehoram at an exorbitant rate of interest.²¹⁷⁸ He died penniless, leaving me a widow with two sons to support.

Learning of my husband's death, Jehoram, who was now our king, sent his men to collect the debt. Since we had no means of repaying it, they demanded that I hand over my two sons to serve the king as slaves. The situation seemed utterly hopeless. So I went to the cemetery where Ovadia was buried, knelt by his grave and prayed for a solution. A voice in my head said,

“Find the holy man, Elisha. He will tell you what to do.”

My sons and I set off for Elisha's house.²¹⁷⁹ When we arrived, I cried out, “Rabbi, please help my sons.

They are being forced to repay a debt that is not even theirs.”²¹⁸⁰

CHAPTER 53 PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

OVADIA'S WIFE

²¹⁷⁷ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א פרק יח סימן רי

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=10&perek=18&mefaresh=shimoni

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

²¹⁷⁸ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות פרשת משפטים ג [עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/31.htm>

²¹⁷⁹ מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים י. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

²¹⁸⁰ II Kings 4:1 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

144 מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים י. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק א

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

Elisha had the most penetrating eyes you ever saw. I felt that he could read my mind.²¹⁸¹ He said,

“Let’s see. What can I do to help? What do you have in your house?”

I told him, “Nothing.”

“Do you have anything in the way of food?”

“Nothing but an almost empty jug of oil.”

“Ah!” he said, “Oil! You can do a lot with a few drops of oil.

Olive oil has many uses, such as illuminating Yahweh’s Sanctuary, anointing a legitimate king,

and anointing a leader to lead our people in battle.²¹⁸²

Right, listen carefully and do exactly as I say.”

Mystified, I followed his instructions. I sent my sons round to our neighbors to borrow as many empty jugs as possible, even cracked and broken ones.²¹⁸³ After barring the door so that no-one could see what we were doing,²¹⁸⁴ I poured our last remaining oil into one of the jugs. To our astonishment the oil kept on coming. The moment one jug was full, my sons replaced it with another. The three of us took turns holding the jug of oil, not stopping until the last of the jugs was full.²¹⁸⁵ Then the oil stopped of its own accord. It was truly miraculous.²¹⁸⁶

²¹⁸¹ מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

²¹⁸² II Kings 4:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ב

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

144 מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים י. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

²¹⁸³ II Kings 4:3

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ג

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²¹⁸⁴ II Kings 4:4 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ד

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²¹⁸⁵ II Kings 4:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

144 מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים י. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

²¹⁸⁶ II Kings 4:6

144 מדרש ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים י. ד. אייזנשטיין מלכים ב' ד אוצר המדרשים ע' 144

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/midrash-2.htm>

I want you to understand what this miracle meant. By now the price of oil had soared. In fact, you couldn't obtain olive oil for love or money.²¹⁸⁷ I returned to Elisha to ask him whether or not to sell the oil immediately, or to wait until the price had risen even higher. He told me to sell as much oil as was needed to pay off my husband's debt and to save the rest.²¹⁸⁸

Thanks to Yahweh and Elisha's miracle, I lived in plenty for the rest of my days, as did my two sons. Both those who bought my oil and those who didn't, did me a service. Those who bought it provided me with money, while those who didn't, enabled the oil to last longer.²¹⁸⁹

²¹⁸⁷ II Kings 4:6

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefareash=metsudot

²¹⁸⁸ II Kings 4:7 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ז

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefareash=metsudot

²¹⁸⁹ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefareash.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefareash=shimoni

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews

THE WOMAN FROM SHUNEM

My sister, Abishag, and I were born into a wealthy Shunem family.²¹⁹⁰ After my marriage I remained in Shunem while, after being chosen as a companion for the aging King David, Abishag moved to Jerusalem.²¹⁹¹ Unable to bear children, I devoted myself to good works. Therefore, when I heard that the holy man, Elisha, had arrived in Shunem, I insisted that he dine with my husband and me. From that day forth, every time the holy man passed through our town, he would lodge with us.²¹⁹²

They say that a woman knows a guest's character better than a man,²¹⁹³ but this is only because we women tend to the personal needs of our guests. Like every holy man,²¹⁹⁴ Elisha always kept his eyes averted, because holy men are not allowed to look at married women.²¹⁹⁵

THE WOMAN FROM SHUNEM

²¹⁹⁰ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²¹⁹¹ I Kings 1:3

²¹⁹² II Kings 4:8 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

האישה משונם מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ח

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²¹⁹³ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

²¹⁹⁴ II Kings 4:9

²¹⁹⁵ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשה כד ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_part_7.html#HttpReportNum0000_L2

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ט

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

In addition, there were never any flies on his plate, for, as everyone knows, flies are a manifestation of evil. ²¹⁹⁶ Nor were there any semen stains on his sheets, which proved that he never entertained inappropriate thoughts. ²¹⁹⁷

During one of Elisha's visits, his servant, Gehazi, told me his master wanted to see me. ²¹⁹⁸ I stood by the door, carefully averting my gaze, since it is well known that no woman may look upon the face of a holy man and live. ²¹⁹⁹ Elisha informed me that within a year I would be nursing a son. I begged him not to joke about such a serious matter, or to promise me the impossible, ²²⁰⁰ since my husband was already an old man and I was long passed child-bearing age. ²²⁰¹ Elisha merely repeated what he had said.

²¹⁹⁶ Ecclesiastes 10:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16471/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 61a

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_61.html

Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Five:5

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2099/jewish/Chapter-Five.htm

²¹⁹⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשה כד ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_part_7.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

²¹⁹⁸ II Kings 4:11-12

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק יא

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²¹⁹⁹ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁰⁰ II Kings 4:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק טז

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²⁰¹ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

A year passed and, just as Elisha had foretold, I gave birth to a son. ²²⁰² I don't think two people could be happier than my husband and me. We named our son, Habakkuk. ²²⁰³ One day Habakkuk begged to be allowed to join his father, who was out in the fields supervising the reapers. Since it was an unusually hot day, I warned him to keep out of the sun. ²²⁰⁴ However, Habakkuk must have ignored my warning, for he was brought back to the house suffering from sunstroke. There was nothing I could do except hold him in my arms, as the life ebbed from his body. ²²⁰⁵

Carrying him up to the room we kept for Elisha, I laid him on the holy man's bed. Then I left the room, locking the door behind me. I asked my husband for a donkey and one of our servants to accompany me, telling him that I was going to find Elisha. ²²⁰⁶ I was sure that, having performed one miracle, the holy man could perform another. ²²⁰⁷ However, I said nothing of this to my husband, not wishing to raise his hopes in vain.

²²⁰² II Kings 4:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק יז

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²⁰³ Habakkuk

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0008_0_08076.html

הזוהר הקדוש - הקדמת הזוהר רבי חזקיה דף ז ע"ב

http://ha-zohar.com/ZOHAR_BRESHITH_1.htm

²²⁰⁴ II Kings 4:18

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק יח

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²⁰⁵ II Kings 4:19-20 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק יט

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁰⁶ II Kings 4:21-22

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק כג ²²⁰⁷

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

At the time Elisha was at Mount Carmel. When we arrived, it was to find Elisha talking to his servant. ²²⁰⁸ Expecting to be welcomed, I was totally unprepared for what happened next - Gehazi tried to prevent me from approaching his master by seemingly pushing me away but in actual fact surreptitiously squeezing my breast. ²²⁰⁹ Before I could say anything, Elisha, completely ignorant of what had just happened, called out to his servant, telling him to let me be. ²²¹⁰

Putting aside my indignation at Gehazi's impropriety, the moment I reached Elisha I threw myself down at his feet, crying,
 "If only I had never given birth to a son,
 because now he is dead and his birth was in vain." ²²¹¹
 Elisha looked shocked and replied,
 "Yahweh usually tells me everything,
 but He made no mention of your son's death." ²²¹²

²²⁰⁸ II Kings 4:25

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד סוק כה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²⁰⁹ Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.33.17?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא כ"ד

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.24.6?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת יבמות ב דף יב,א פרק ב הלכה ד גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3102.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין י דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא / דף נג,א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

²²¹⁰ II Kings 4:27-28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²¹¹ II Kings 4:28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק כה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²¹² II Kings 4:27

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק כז

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

Losing no time, the holy man sent Gehazi on ahead to Shunem to cure my son with the help of his walking stick, with us following on behind. ²²¹³ We met Gehazi on his way back from my house, where he claimed the stick had failed in its purpose. ²²¹⁴ My grief knew no bounds. Without a word, Elisha took the stick from Gehazi and quickened his pace. ²²¹⁵ It soon became clear why Gehazi had failed. He had not believed a word that Elisha had said. On the way, we met many people who reported that, after showing them Elisha's walking stick, Gehazi had asked,
 "Do you think this stick can bring the dead back to life?" ²²¹⁶

When we arrived, Elisha went upstairs to where my poor son's dead body was laid out on his bed. ²²¹⁷ From time to time he would emerge and walk round the house, before returning to his room. After the seventh time I heard a sneeze. ²²¹⁸

²²¹³ II Kings 4:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק כט

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²¹⁴ II Kings 4:31

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק לא

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²¹⁵ II Kings 4:30

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק ל

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²¹⁶ ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²¹⁷ II Kings 4:32-34 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק לד

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

²²¹⁸ II Kings 4:35

מצודות דוד מלכים ב פרק ד פסוק לה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=metsudot

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק ד סימן רכה

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=4&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Elisha summoned his servant who was waiting downstairs. After entering Elisha's room, Gehazi reappeared and beckoned me to join them. I ran up the stairs and what did I see? My son, sitting up in bed, with a bewildered expression on his face!

I threw myself down at Elisha's feet and kissed them in gratitude.²²¹⁹ I had been right to place my trust in him. It was a pity that the insolent Gehazi had not done the same.²²²⁰

²²¹⁹ II Kings 4:36-37

²²²⁰ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא/ דף נג,א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא
<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/t/r4610.htm>

NAAMAN'S MAID

I was only a child when Syrian troops attacked our town of Naaran and took me captive. My captor was Naaman, commander-in-chief of the Syrian army, who took me to his palace where I served as his wife's personal maid. Lest you pity me, let me assure you that my fate could have been much worse. ²²²¹

Naaman's family was not unkind to me and I served them to the best of my ability, mainly because I felt sorry for my master who was a leper. ²²²² Eventually I summoned up the courage to tell him that, in my country, there was a holy man named Elisha, famous for his miracles, who I was sure, could cure him of his leprosy. ²²²³ The next thing I knew, the Syrian king had given his permission for Naaman to visit Israel, providing him with many costly gifts and a letter of introduction to King Jehoram. ²²²⁴ Naaman returned home completely cured. People could talk of nothing else.

When Naaman had arrived at the town where Elisha was staying, instead of welcoming him in person, Elisha had sent his servant to tell Naaman to immerse himself seven times in the River Jordan, whereupon his leprosy would disappear. Instead of thanking him, Naaman had turned on his heel in anger, saying,

“Here I was, thinking that this so-called holy man would at least have the courtesy to come out, point to the sores on my body and ask his God to cure me. Instead, what does he do?

He sends out a mere lackey to tell me to wash myself in a muddy little river.

If it was so easy to cure leprosy,

then I could have done so in the River Abana or the River Pharpar in my own country. Both are bigger than the Jordan.”

NAAMAN'S MAID

²²²¹ II Kings 5:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²²² II Kings 5:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²²³ II Kings 5:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - חומש דברים סדר האזינו פרשה י

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01637_all.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

²²²⁴ II Kings 5:4-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Fortunately Naaman's retainers reacted in a more sensible fashion than their master, pointing out that following Elisha's advice was easy enough, and asking him what harm could it do? So Naaman reluctantly did as Elisha had instructed. As a result, after immersing himself seven times in the waters of the Jordan, his skin was as soft and smooth as a baby's.²²²⁵

Naaman returned to Elisha's house to thank the man who had brought about his cure. This time Elisha met him in person. Naaman said,

"I know now that there is only one true God and that He is Yahweh.

Allow me to pay you for what you have done."²²²⁶

Elisha's replied, "Under no circumstances will I accept payment."²²²⁷

With that Elisha sent my master on his way.²²²⁸

Naaman had only travelled a short distance when he noticed Elisha's servant running after him. He stopped and asked if all was well. Gehazi, for that was the servant's name, replied,

"Yes, all is well. However, my master asks if you can spare a silver talent and two suits of clothing for two new pupils, who have just arrived from the Ephraim Mountains."

Naturally my grateful master was more than ready to give the servant what he asked for. Indeed, instead of giving him only one silver talent, he gave him two, one for each pupil, and, in addition, appointed two members of his retinue to carry the garments for Gehazi.²²²⁹

²²²⁵ II Kings 5:10-14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

²²²⁶ II Kings 5:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/akedat/arama04.pdf>

עקידת יצחק לרבי יצחק עראמה ספר שמות

²²²⁷ I Kings 5:16

²²²⁸ II Kings 5:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²²⁹ II Kings 5:21-23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15911/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Naaman returned home to Syria with eight sacks of soil from Israel, on which he secretly erected an altar to Yahweh. While pretending in public to worship the Syrian god, Hadad Rimmon, in the privacy of his own home he worshipped Yahweh.
2230

²²³⁰ II Kings 5:17-18
The Pagan Gods of Mesopotamia.
<http://tcoto.klaxo.net/re/PAGANGOD.HTM>

A MOTHER FROM SAMARIA

King Ben Hadad of Syria had invaded our country ²²³¹ and was laying siege to our city of Samaria. ²²³² There was such a shortage of food in the city that prices soared and our dietary laws were forgotten. ²²³³ Even the least edible part of an unclean animal, such as a donkey's head, cost eighty silver coins, while the tiniest amount of doves' dung cost five. ²²³⁴

I had a good friend in the city who, like me, was a war widow. At the start of the siege we decided to pool our resources. Eventually our food ran out and we and our babies faced starvation. There was nothing for it but to do what many have done in such a situation - to kill the weakest among us and eat their flesh to survive. It may seem cruel but what choice did we have?

We drew lots to see whose baby would be first. I lost. I lost, and handed my half-dead child to my friend, turning away as she put it out of its misery. Then we sat down to share the stew made from its flesh. At first the meat stuck in my throat, but my hunger was so great that I forced it down. That first time was the hardest. Afterwards it was easier.

After the stew was finished, the time came for my friend to hand over her baby. When she started making excuses, I reminded her of our agreement, pointing out that, since I had already shared my baby with her, it was only fair that she share hers with me. Eventually she revealed that she had hidden her child so that I couldn't kill it. ²²³⁵

A MOTHER FROM SAMARIA

²²³¹ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³² II Kings 6:24
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³³ Leviticus 11:1-7
Deuteronomy 14:4-8

²²³⁴ II Kings 6:25
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³⁵ II Kings 6:28-29

I decided to take my case to King Jehoram who, I knew, toured the city walls every evening to check the city's defenses.²²³⁶ As he was making his usual rounds, I called out to him,

“Your majesty, save me!”

With a sardonic expression on his face, he turned to me and replied,

“Just how do you expect me to do that?”

Do you see any bread or wine in my hands?”²²³⁷

I explained about the agreement my friend and I had reached to survive the siege.²²³⁸ To my consternation, the king's face turned white with shock, he threw up his hands in horror and stalked off without a word. I gazed after him in astonishment, my mouth open. As he continued his walk along the walls, I could see him tearing at his clothes. Underneath his finery he was wearing a vest made out of sackcloth, goodness knows why. The people who passed him looked at him as if he was mad.²²³⁹

The siege ended when four lepers decided to take their chances and go over to the enemy. They returned with the astounding news that the Syrian camp was deserted.²²⁴⁰ We all flocked out of the city to collect the booty the enemy had left behind. After this, the price of food plummeted.²²⁴¹ As a result, both my friend and I survived the siege. So did my friend's baby. All I was left with were some bones.

²²³⁶ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³⁷ II Kings 6:26-27 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15912/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³⁸ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²³⁹ II Kings 6:30

²²⁴⁰ I Kings 7:3-5
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁴¹ II Kings 7:16
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 4:5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

THE WIFE OF GEHAZI

I come from the city of Samaria where my parents married me to a very learned man named Gehazi, the foremost pupil of the holy man, Elisha. I was considered very lucky to have made such a good match, but, alas, it did not take long before I realized that I had made a very bad one. My husband may have been learned in the law, but he was also jealous, lecherous, cynical and greedy.²²⁴² I'll give you some examples.

Jealous of anyone who might threaten his status as Elisha's foremost pupil, he refused to allow anyone but himself to sit at his master's feet. It was only after he was banished from his master's presence, that his fellow disciples were able to enjoy the same privilege.²²⁴³

Worse, it soon became apparent that my lecherous husband couldn't keep his hands to himself. I heard that he had sexually harassed a married woman from Shunem, who had caught his fancy.²²⁴⁴

As for his cynicism, this came to light when Elisha sent him on a mission to revive a dead child with his staff, ordering him to refrain from conversation on the way. Do you think he followed his master's instructions? Quite the opposite! Treating the whole thing as a complete joke, he went out of his way to ask every person he met, whether they believed his master's staff had the power to revive the dead.²²⁴⁵

THE WIFE OF GEHAZI

²²⁴² תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין י דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

²²⁴³ II Kings 6:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15912/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 107b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

²²⁴⁴ II Kings 4:25-28 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא כ"ד

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.24.6?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת יבמות ב דף יב,א פרק ב הלכה ד גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3102.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין י דף נב,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא / דף נג,א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10b

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer 33

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.33.17?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

²²⁴⁵ II Kings 4:29 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15910/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

When I heard this particular story, I shook my head. Making a joke of a subject as serious as resurrection was just asking for trouble. It probably jeopardized his chances of having a place in the afterlife.²²⁴⁶

One day Gehazi went too far. When his master refused all payment for curing a Syrian general of leprosy, my husband decided it was too good an opportunity to miss. After the general had set out home, Gehazi ran after him and convinced him to part with two talents of silver, as well as two sets of clothes. The unsuspecting general not only gave Gehazi what he asked, but even supplied him with two servants to carry the clothes for him.

After making sure his ill-gotten gains were well-hidden, Gehazi returned to his master. When questioned by Elisha, he had lied about where he had been. How he thought that he could deceive a holy man, gifted with the power of second sight, I cannot imagine. His punishment was to be afflicted with the same leprosy of which the Syrian general had just been cured.²²⁴⁷

Some say that his punishment was far too harsh. Instead of pushing my husband away with both hands, Elisha should have pushed him away with one and drawn him close with the other,²²⁴⁸ just like punishing a naughty child, for not only was my husband punished with leprosy, but our three sons too.²²⁴⁹

²²⁴⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 90a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_90.html

²²⁴⁷ II Kings 5:1-27
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

²²⁴⁸ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין י דף נג, א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא
<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

²²⁴⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html

Elisha must have regretted his hasty action, because he followed Gehazi to Damascus, hoping to persuade my husband to repent. ²²⁵⁰ Unfortunately, he had taught Gehazi only too well, for my husband merely quoted back at him what he himself had said - that he who leads others into sin, such as Gehazi, is beyond redemption. ²²⁵¹

The siege of Samaria by the Syrians found my leprous husband and sons back in the city, living as outcasts outside the gates. ²²⁵² I fed them for as long as I could, until our food supply was finished and we found ourselves facing starvation.

Doomed to certain death, regardless of whether they were inside the city or outside its walls, my husband and sons decided to surrender to the enemy. To their astonishment, they found the Syrian camp deserted. After eating and drinking their fill, they hastened to inform the authorities, not out of love for our fellow citizens, but fearing punishment if they didn't. ²²⁵³

Ironically my husband did perform one good deed. On a visit home to Samaria, Gehazi was asked by King Jehoram to tell him all about the miracles wrought by his master, Elisha.. When he reached the story of how his master had revived a dead child, who should burst into the throne room but the child's mother. ²²⁵⁴

²²⁵⁰ II Kings 8:7 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15914/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²⁵¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 107b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_107.html
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 47a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_47.html

²²⁵² II Kings 7:1-3 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15913/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 47a
http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_47.html

²²⁵³ II Kings 7:4-11

²²⁵⁴ II Kings 8:4-5

It appears that, following Elisha's advice, she and her entire household had moved to Philistia to avoid a seven year-long drought. On their return to Shunem, they had found their house and land occupied by robbers. The woman had come to beg the king for justice.

Once Gehazi had confirmed her story, the king ordered the return of her property. ²²⁵⁵ So at least my unprincipled husband did something praiseworthy in his life.

²²⁵⁵ II Kings 8:1-3,6 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15914/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

A SERVANT FROM THE PALACE AT SAMARIA

When I was a small child, I remember my parents talking about the merciless Jehu, who, claiming he had been anointed our next king, had murdered the entire house of Omri in order to seize the throne. Who exactly had anointed him, that's what they wanted to know. It could hardly have been the young boy he claimed it was. No, he must have made up the whole story to legitimize his claim to the throne. The only reason he had succeeded was because he had the support of the army. ²²⁵⁶ To further legitimize his rule, Jehu pretended that it was Yahweh who had told him to lure Baal's followers to their temple, where they were all murdered. Then Baal's temple was demolished and the area used as a public toilet. My father said that, had Jehu been as devoted to Yahweh as he made out, he would hardly have left the statue of the heifer in the Sanctuary. ²²⁵⁷

Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, did not even pretend to be a Yahwist. ²²⁵⁸ He did nothing to stop our people from worshipping other gods. He even erected a statue of Asherah, the wife of Baal, in the Sanctuary. ²²⁵⁹ Nor was he a great general like his father, suffering defeat after defeat at the hands of the Syrians ²²⁶⁰ until our army was reduced to fifty cavalry and ten chariots. ²²⁶¹ It was only then that Jehoahaz had a change of heart, donning the sackcloth of the penitent, groveling in the dirt before the altar to Yahweh and begging Him to save us. ²²⁶²

A SERVANT FROM THE PALACE AT SAMARIA

²²⁵⁶ II Kings 9:1-13

Babylonian Talmud: Horayoth 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/horayoth/horayoth_11.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 6:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁵⁷ I Kings 10:18-29

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 102a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_102.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 6:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁵⁸ II Kings 13:1-2

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁵⁹ II Kings 13:6

²²⁶⁰ II Kings 13:3

²²⁶¹ II Kings 13:7

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁶² II Kings 13:4

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

By the time his son, Jehoash, ascended the throne, I was twenty-three, married and the mother of children. Jehoash was considered a better man than his father,²²⁶³ even though he, too, encouraged idol-worship.²²⁶⁴ He was genuinely upset when our holy man, Elisha, fell ill with the disease that led to his death. It is rumored that, while visiting Elisha on his deathbed, Jehoash broke down, crying,

“Elisha my teacher and guide, if you die, what will become of us?
It is only through your intervention
that we have survived the Syrian attacks up till now.”

The story goes that Elisha told the king to bring his bow and quiver. Guiding the king’s hand, he told him to shoot an arrow towards the east, in the direction of Syria. After the king had done so, Elisha said,

“This arrow symbolizes the defeat of the Syrians at Aphek,
where they will be utterly destroyed.”

Then Elisha told the king to shoot his remaining arrows into the ground. After shooting three arrows, Jehoash hesitated, uncertain whether or not to continue.

Elisha was furious.

“Why did you stop?” he shouted at the king.

“Now you will defeat the Syrians in only three battles.

Had you fired five or six arrows,

you would have been able to wipe them out completely.”²²⁶⁵

True to Elisha’s prediction, Jehoash did defeat the Syrians three times in battle, retaking all the territory his father had lost.²²⁶⁶ He was succeeded by his son, Jeroboam II, one of our more successful kings, whose reign lasted forty years.²²⁶⁷

²²⁶³ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:6
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁶⁴ II Kings 13:11

²²⁶⁵ II Kings 13:14-19
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:6
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁶⁶ II Kings 13:22-25
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:7
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁶⁷ II Kings 13:13
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:7
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

I lived to see Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, ascend the throne. ²²⁶⁸ No better than his forebears regarding the worship of idols, after only six months he was assassinated by his friend, Shallum, in a coup d'état. ²²⁶⁹

Thus was fulfilled the prophecy, according to which, Jehu's descendants would rule our kingdom of Israel for only four generations. ²²⁷⁰

²²⁶⁸ II Kings 15:8
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 10:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁶⁹ II Kings 15:9-10
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 11:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²²⁷⁰ II Kings 15:12

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JONAH

When my parents married me to Jonah, the son of Amitai, ²²⁷¹ they thought they were making a good match, for Jonah was expected to succeed his teacher, the holy man, Elisha. ²²⁷² However, although he experienced visions, which he claimed came from Yahweh, he wasn't exactly the kind of man you associate with holiness. You will soon discover what I mean.

It was a time when several of Yahweh's holy men were wandering the land, warning that disaster was on its way. One day we were sitting in our booth, celebrating the Festival of Tabernacles, when Jonah suddenly fell to the ground, foaming at the mouth. ²²⁷³ By now we were used to such occurrences. We knew that Jonah was having one of his 'visions'.

When he recovered, he announced in a dramatic voice,

“Yahweh has ordered me to go to Nineveh.” ²²⁷⁴

“Why Nineveh?” I complained. “Why not somewhere nearer home?”

So, once again, the children and I were left to tend to the house and farm. Fortunately we were wealthy enough to hire help. ²²⁷⁵

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JONAH

²²⁷¹ II Kings 14:25

²²⁷² II Kings 9:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15915/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²⁷³ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סוכה פרק ה דף כב,ב פרק ה הלכה א גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r27.htm>

²²⁷⁴ Jonah 1:1

²²⁷⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 38a

http://www.halakhah.com/nedarim/nedarim_38.html

Now, I am not saying that Jonah was the only one of our holy men to resist carrying out his prophetic duties. If I recall, Moses had been equally reluctant.²²⁷⁶ However, Jonah was the only one to flee to the ends of the earth. For, instead of setting out for Nineveh, he boarded a ship for Tarshish, a country so remote that no-one there had ever heard of Yahweh.²²⁷⁷

With no idea when he would return, we continued our lives as usual. If the truth be told, his absence made little difference. When he finally reappeared, his face was very pale and his clothes were torn and filthy, as though he had endured some terrible ordeal. This is his story.

²²⁷⁶ Exodus 3:11-13

²²⁷⁷ Jonah 1:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Isaiah 66:19

ילקוט שמעוני יונה פרק א סימן תקנ

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=19&perek=1&mefaresh=shimoni

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

After leaving port, his ship had encountered a terrifying storm which threatened to capsize it.²²⁷⁸ First, the crew jettisoned the cargo, but that didn't help.²²⁷⁹ Next, they tried rowing back to shore, but were unable to do so.²²⁸⁰ Then, they prayed to their gods, but to no avail.²²⁸¹ Finally they concluded that someone on board must have done something to annoy his god, for which they were all being punished. After drawing lots, they decided it was Jonah.²²⁸²

²²⁷⁸ Jonah 1:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני יונה פרק א סימן תקנ

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=19&perek=1

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁷⁹ Jonah 1:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸⁰ Jonah 1:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸¹ Jonah 1:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸² Jonah 1:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Jonah admitted that Yahweh must have sent the storm to punish him for not carrying out his mission. When asked what the crew could do to save themselves, he told them to throw him overboard. ²²⁸³ They refused, on the grounds that they didn't want to be an accessory to murder. ²²⁸⁴ After Jonah assured them that it was the only solution, they lowered him into the sea and, lo and behold, the storm abated. ²²⁸⁵

Now we come to the most incredible part of my husband's story. After being thrown overboard, Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish. The fish was so big that Jonah was able to stand upright in its belly. The fish must have found him indigestible, for he remained in one piece. After three days and nights, Jonah was still not prepared to undertake his mission, so Yahweh arranged for him to be spewed out of the male fish into the jaws of a pregnant female fish. It was so crowded in her belly that Jonah decided he had had enough. Realizing it was impossible to evade Yahweh, Jonah promised to mend his ways, whereupon the fish vomited him up onto dry land. ²²⁸⁶

²²⁸³ Jonah 1:9-12

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸⁴ Jonah 1:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16183/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸⁵ ילקוט שמעוני יונה פרק א סימן תקנ

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=19&perek=1

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸⁶ Jonah 2:1-2,11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16184/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ילקוט שמעוני יונה פרק א סימן תקנ

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=19&perek=1

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

Seeing this, the crew of the ship, who had been watching from afar, were so impressed that, there and then, they decided to convert to the worship of Yahweh.²²⁸⁷ Having thrown their idols overboard,²²⁸⁸ they sailed back to the port of Jaffa, travelled to Jerusalem and underwent circumcision. Thus, as a result of Jonah's ordeal, they and their families became Jews.²²⁸⁹

After Jonah finished telling us his story, he sat back with a self-satisfied smile on his face. Hearing such a story, is it any wonder that people accused him of not telling the truth? Couldn't he just admit that he had changed his mind about not going to Nineveh?

Eventually Jonah did set out for Nineveh as ordered. When he arrived, he warned its citizens that, as a punishment for their crimes, in forty days' time their city would be destroyed. Heeding his warning, everyone, from the king to his humblest subject, donned sackcloth, covered themselves with ashes, observed a fast and begged Yahweh's forgiveness. As a result, Yahweh forgave them and they and their city were saved.²²⁹⁰ As for poor Jonah, he lost all creditability as a holy man who was able to predict the future.²²⁹¹

Jonah was sent on no more missions. Nineveh had been his last. Had he learned anything from his ordeal? I leave you to decide.

²²⁸⁷ Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁸⁸ Jonah 2:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16184/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²⁸⁹ ילקוט שמעוני יונה פרק א סימן תקנ

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?mefaresh=shimoni&book=19&perek=1

מדרש תנחומא – ויקרא פרשת ויקרא ח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01990.html

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

²²⁹⁰ Jonah 3:1-10

²²⁹¹ Pirke deRabbi Eliezer 11

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

NARRATOR

From that time forth, instead of being called ‘a dove of truth’ (in Hebrew, Yonah ben Amitai), ²²⁹² Jonah was ridiculed as being “as silly as a dove” (in Hebrew, Yonah Potah). ²²⁹³

NARRATOR

²²⁹² Jonah 1:1

Jerome’s commentary on Jonah P. 67

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.co.uk/&httpsredir=1&article=1114&context=etd>

²²⁹³ Hosea 7:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16161/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Part 15
Monarchs of Judah

CHAPTER 54
THE QUEEN OF JUDAH
The Book of Kings II
The Book of Chronicles II

We come now to the only woman to occupy the throne of Judah in her own right as queen, and also the only monarch to rule Judah not of the House of David. The Bible presents Athaliah as a power-crazed tyrant, who was prepared to kill her own grandchildren to seize the throne. Whether she was as wicked as the texts describe is a matter of conjecture, for it is doubtful whether the patriarchal society that existed at the time Athaliah's story was composed, would have viewed kindly the idea of a woman wielding such power.

Her tale, as it appears in II Kings Chapter 11 and II Chronicles Chapter 21-3, is told by:

Queen Athaliah herself, daughter of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel, the widow of King Jehoram of Judah and mother of King Ahaziah of Judah.

Zibiah from Beersheba whose name is mentioned in II Kings Chapter 12 and II Chronicles Chapter 24. The wife of King Ahaziah, she was the mother of Prince Joash, the king's last surviving son.

Jehosheva, daughter of King Jehoram, half-sister of King Ahaziah and wife of the High Priest, Jehoiada.

Prince Joash's unnamed wet nurse.

Jehoadan, wife of Joash, whose name appears in II Kings Chapter 14 and II Chronicles Chapter 25, while the events of her husband's reign are related in II Chronicles Chapter 24, embellished by material taken from the *Great Commentary on Lamentations*.

Jehoadan and Joash's unnamed daughter who was married to Joash's cousin, Zechariah, the High Priest.

QUEEN ATHALIAH

Born a princess of royal blood, from a very early age I knew that I was born to rule. Like my mother, Queen Jezebel, who had shared power with my father, King Ahab, I had no intention of living in the shadow of any man.²²⁹⁴ Like my mother, I was determined to make our worship of Baal the state religion of the kingdom.²²⁹⁵ Like her, I would brook no opposition. A ruler who is not prepared to secure their throne by eliminating the competition, even if it means the death of their own blood relatives, is not worthy to rule.²²⁹⁶

I and my brothers lived in the lap of luxury. My brothers were especially lucky, since my father gave them palaces of their own.²²⁹⁷ Being a woman, I remained at home until my marriage to Prince Jehoram, heir to the throne of Judah, a union made to strengthen the alliance between our two kingdoms.²²⁹⁸

CHAPTER 54 THE QUEEN OF JUDAH

QUEEN ATHALIAH

²²⁹⁴ מגילת אסתר פרשה ג ב [גם ושתי המלכה עשתה משתה נשים]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/esther-raba/ester-raba.3.htm>

²²⁹⁵ I Kings 21:25

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא, א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r46.htm>

סדר אליהו רבה עמוד 2

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/eliyahurabazuta/eliyahurabazuta15.pdf>

ספרי ספר דברים עמוד 6

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifri/sifri08.pdf>

ספרי ספר במדבר פרשת פנחס עמוד 7

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifri/sifri05.pdf>

²²⁹⁶ מצודת דוד מלכים ב פרק-יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01467.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L2

²²⁹⁷ מדרש שמואל ב עמוד 14

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33213>

Amos 3:14-15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16175/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²²⁹⁸ II Kings 8:18

II Chronicles 21:6

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 15:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

Even before his death, my father-in-law, King Jehoshaphat, had appointed my husband co-regent, a position that Jehoram held for two years before he was anointed king.²²⁹⁹ Realizing that immediate steps had to be taken to secure my husband's position on the throne, I urged him to have his six younger brothers put to death - a common enough practice at the time.²³⁰⁰

With no Yahwists left in positions of power, this was my opportunity to convert the people of my husband's kingdom to my religion. With a little prodding, Jehoram encouraged his subjects to replace the worship of Yahweh with that of Baal. The truth is, they needed little encouragement. I mocked the few Yahwists who dared denounce us openly, saying, "If Yahweh is as powerful as you claim, why doesn't He punish us?"

Unfortunately, I was forced to eat my words when my husband fell ill with some awful disease of the bowel. Despite all attempts to cure him, he died in agony. To add to my sorrow, the Yahwists refused to bury him in the royal mausoleum in the City of David, or to honor his memory with a public funeral.²³⁰¹

Jehoram was succeeded by our son, Ahaziah, whereupon I came into my own as Queen Mother and my son's chief adviser.²³⁰² When my brother, Jehoram of Israel, asked Ahaziah to aid him in his ongoing struggle against the depredations of the Syrians, I was left in charge of the kingdom of Judah.

In a battle fought at Ramot Gilead, my brother's army was defeated and my brother wounded. As if this wasn't bad enough, both he and Ahaziah were then murdered by the treacherous commander of my brother's army, General Jehu. This left vacant the thrones of Israel and Judah.²³⁰³

²²⁹⁹ II Kings 8:16-17
II Chronicles 21:1

²³⁰⁰ II Chronicles 21:2-4
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 5:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁰¹ II Chronicles 21:18-20
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 5:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁰² II Chronicles 21:24
II Chronicles 22:1

²³⁰³ II Kings 9:14-37
II Chronicles 22:1-9

They didn't remain empty for long. The throne of Israel was seized by General Jehu, while I seized that of Judah. To accomplish this, I was forced to have all Ahaziah's sons put to death, leaving myself the sole contender for the throne.²³⁰⁴

Once I had been crowned queen, I worked indefatigably to complete the conversion of my people to the worship of Baal and Asherah. My dead son, who, like me, had worshipped Baal, had begun demolishing Yahweh's Temple²³⁰⁵ by removing all the gold nails used in its construction.²³⁰⁶

I went a step further by banning the use of the traditional greeting, "May Yahweh be with you!", thus stamping out all public mention of His name.²³⁰⁷

²³⁰⁴ II Kings 11:1

II Chronicles 22:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 95b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_95.html

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 7:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁰⁵ II Chronicles 24:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

²³⁰⁶ מדרש רבה לחומש שמות פרשת כי תישא פרשה מ: בצלאל עושה המשכן ג [התקנתיו מראש שיעשה המשכן]
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba2/40.htm>

²³⁰⁷ מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ד ה
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01639.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

ZIBIAH FROM BEERSHEBA

I won't pretend that my marriage to Prince Ahaziah was anything more than a marriage of convenience. His father, King Jehoram, wanted to secure his rule over Southern Judah, while my father was anxious for me to make an advantageous match. What better way to attain both ends than to marry the heir to the throne to the daughter of the most important man in Beer Sheva? ²³⁰⁸

I would describe my family as lapsed Yahwists so, when I married Ahaziah, I was quite prepared to worship his gods. Indeed I was afraid not to, lest I angered my mother-in-law, the formidable and fanatical Queen Athaliah. ²³⁰⁹

The two Israelite kingdoms of Judah and Israel were united not only by family ties, but also by a mutual defense pact. So, when three of Israel's vassal states decided to rebel, we in Judah found ourselves embroiled in a war not of our making. ²³¹⁰

For days I sat in the harem, anxiously awaiting news of my sons who had accompanied their royal father into battle. I was right to be anxious. Word eventually reached me that my husband, Ahaziah, our sons and the entire Omri dynasty of Israel, had been murdered by a usurper. It was a catastrophe. I was beside myself with grief. ²³¹¹

ZIBIAH FROM BEERSHEBA

²³⁰⁸ II Kings 12:2

II Chronicles 24:1

²³⁰⁹ II Kings 8:18

II Chronicles 21:6

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 8 Chapter 15:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-8.htm>

²³¹⁰ II Kings 3:4-7,24

II Kings 8:20

II Chronicles 21:8-10

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 5:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³¹¹ II Kings 9:24

II Chronicles 22:8-9

II Kings 10:13-14

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 6:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

I had barely begun mourning my dead husband and sons, when I was told that pandemonium had broken out in the royal nursery. I ran to see why. The scene that met my eyes was pitiful to behold. Young babies lay lifeless in their cradles, or in their mothers' arms.

Frantic, I searched the nursery for my youngest son, Joash. He was nowhere to be seen. Wild-eyed, my hair disheveled and my heart thudding in my chest, I ran from room to room, desperate to find him. I stopped when I saw my mother-in-law regarding the tragic scene before her, a small smile on her lips. The significance of that smile slowly dawned on me. It was Athaliah, that cruel, merciless and power-crazed woman who was behind it all. ²³¹²

Fearing that we mothers might be next, I dared not remain in the palace. There was only one thing left for me to do, and that was to slip away and return to my parents' house in Beer Sheva.

For six long years I mourned my sons, but most of all, Joash, whose young life had been cut short so cruelly. I would have continued mourning him for the rest of my life, had not something completely unexpected happened. Word reached us that Queen Athaliah was dead ²³¹³ and that a boy king, named Joash, now sat on the throne of Judah. ²³¹⁴ I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Was it possible that my youngest son had survived after all? Determined to find out, without further delay I set out for Jerusalem.

On my arrival, I was admitted to the throne room, where, perched on the royal throne, was a tiny figure. I would have known him anywhere because he looked so much like his father. A figure stood at his side whom I recognized as Jehoiada, the High Priest. Approaching the throne, I prostrated myself, whereupon Jehoiada stepped forward and gently raised me to my feet. Turning to the king, he said,

“Your majesty, this woman is Zibiah, your mother.”

²³¹² II Kings 11:1

II Chronicles 22:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³¹³ II Kings 11:16

II Chronicles 23:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16572/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 7:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³¹⁴ II Kings 11:12

II Chronicles 23:11

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 7:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

Joash looked at me as if I was a stranger, which, to him, I was, since he had only been a young baby when I had last seen him. He beckoned me forward and said graciously,

“Zibiah, you are welcome at court.”

I was granted an apartment in the palace, as befits the Queen Mother, and Joash was always polite to me. However, we never developed the warm relationship usual between a mother and her son.

JEHOSHEVA, WIFE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, JEHOIADA

I was born into the Davidic royal family of Judah, to King Jehoram and one of his wives. I never knew my mother, and was raised in the harem with my father's other children, under the watchful eye of my father's chief wife, Queen Athaliah.

My marriage to the High Priest, Jehoiada, was a dynastic marriage, not one of love. Its purpose was to unite the Davidic royal family with the Aaronic High Priesthood. After our wedding, I moved to the house in the Temple precinct set aside for the High Priest, remaining in contact only with those members of the palace staff whom I trusted not to betray me to my formidable stepmother, Athaliah, who had spies everywhere.

In this way, I learned of a plot to poison the royal princes.²³¹⁵ Instantly, I thought of my nephew, Ahaziah's son, Joash, by his wife, Zibiah. He was only a baby, still nursing at the breast. Surely Athaliah would not kill her own grandson? I looked at Jehoiada. It was clear what we had to do. I ran to the palace, praying I would not be too late.²³¹⁶

When I entered the royal nursery, I stopped in sheer horror at what I saw. My brother's wives were beside themselves with grief, tearing out their hair, beating their breasts and emitting heart-rending screams. In front of them lay the small lifeless forms of their sons.

I searched the room for my nephew. In a corner I saw the cowering figure of my nephew's wet nurse, clutching my nephew in her arms. For a moment I thought that he too was dead, but no, he was still breathing. Without pausing to ask any questions, I whispered to the nurse to follow me. Together, we hastened out of the nursery, left the palace and made for the Temple precinct as quickly as we could.

As we walked, an idea began to form in my mind. Above the Holy of Holies, as we called the Inner Sanctuary, was a small room, the existence of which was only known to Jehoiada and me. I had no idea what its original purpose was, but I did know it would make a good hiding place for my nephew and his nurse.

JEHOSHEVA, WIFE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, JEHOIADA

²³¹⁵ II Kings 11:1-2

II Chronicles 22:10-11

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מלבים למלכים ב פרק א [יא, ב]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=11&mefaresh=malbim

²³¹⁶ קהלת רבה פתיחה דחכימי פרשה ד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

For the next six years Joash and his nurse lived in that room, their existence a complete secret. That unconscionable woman, my stepmother, had no idea that she had failed to wipe out the Davidic line.²³¹⁷

²³¹⁷ II Kings 11:2 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15917/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 22:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מצודת דוד מלכים ב פרק-יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01467.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L2

מלכים ב - רלב"ג מלכים ב פרק-יא {א}

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01535.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L2

PRINCE JOASH'S WET NURSE

People often ask me to tell the story of how I helped to save King Joash, when his own grandmother, Queen Athaliah, tried to poison him. What else could you expect from a daughter of that wicked woman, Queen Jezebel of Israel, and her cursed husband, King Ahab?

I lived in Jerusalem all my life and, I can tell you, I never saw such goings-on as when that power-crazed woman arrived on the scene. I'm sure she was behind the murder of her husband's six brothers, even though no-one could ever prove it.²³¹⁸ However, she showed her true colors after the death of her son, King Ahaziah, when she openly made a bid for power²³¹⁹ by poisoning all the royal princes, poor things.²³²⁰

About myself, there's not much to say really. I'm just a simple woman from an ordinary Jerusalemite family, who did her best to carry out her duties. I married and bore many children, one after the other. That's why Queen Zibiah hired me to feed her young son, Prince Joash, when he was born. I had plenty of milk and was known to be reliable. Of course, as the Queen, she couldn't very well feed the child herself, even if she'd wanted to. It wouldn't have been fitting.

Prince Joash was the youngest of all the royal princes and the only one with a wet nurse to feed him, as all the other princes had already been weaned. It was this that saved him.²³²¹

One awful day I shall never forget, I was in the royal nursery feeding little Joash, when suddenly I heard horrible, gurgling sounds. I looked up to see the other princes writhing and retching on the ground. Their mothers, transfixed with shock and horror, stood helplessly by, as, one by one, the small bodies of their sons stopped moving and lay still.

PRINCE JOASH'S WET NURSE

²³¹⁸ II Chronicles 21:2-4

²³¹⁹ מצודת דוד מלכים ב פרק-יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01467.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L2

²³²⁰ II Kings 11:1

II Chronicles 22:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מלבים למלכים ב פרק א [יא, ב]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=11&mefaresh=malbim

²³²¹ מלבים למלכים ב פרק א [יא, ב]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=11&mefaresh=malbim

I sat there, clasping Prince Joash to my breast, unable to move. I couldn't take my eyes off the scene in front of me. All the king's wives were screaming and sobbing, hysterically tearing at their clothes and pulling out their hair. It was just too awful for words.

How long I might have remained there, I don't know, for just then a woman entered the nursery. I recognized her as Jehosheva, the wife of our High Priest. Indeed, she was difficult to overlook because of her height and her piercing gaze. With determined strides she strode round the room, inspecting all the dead bodies, obviously looking for someone specific. Reaching me she stopped, peered at Joash's face, looked at me and said,

“Don't be afraid. My name is Jehosheva, sister of the king.
I've come to take you and my nephew to a place of safety.
However, we must leave quickly,
before the soldiers come to check whether Joash is dead or not.”

Too dazed to protest, I allowed her to help me to my feet and guide me, still clasping Prince Joash tightly in my arms, out of the palace in the direction of the Temple.

How can I convey to you what the Temple meant to us in those days? You couldn't help but approach it with a feeling of awe. Here was Yahweh's earthly residence. Here, in the Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the world, our High Priest, the holiest person on earth, on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year, uttered the name of Yahweh, the holiest word of all. Was it any wonder that every year, we waited with baited breath for our High Priest to emerge from the Holy of Holies unharmed, to reassure us that Yahweh had forgiven us our sins?

Therefore, when the High Priest stepped out of the shadows and led us across a great courtyard toward the Holy of Holies, I was terrified. To my great relief, we did not enter, but turned aside and climbed some steps leading to a small room above.²³²² There Prince Joash and I were to spend the next six years of our lives.²³²³

During the day, we remained within the safety of our room. When Joash was old enough not to make a noise, at night we would venture outside. Sometimes Jehosheva would allow us into the orchard that King Solomon had planted, to taste the fruit. I loved those times, when I would shut my eyes, feel the light breeze on my cheeks and breathe in the scent of damp vegetation. When the wind blew, the ripe fruit would fall to the ground, whereupon the priests would gather it up and sell it for an exorbitant price. Jehosheva told us of a legend, according to which, if ever a non-Israelite were to enter the Temple precinct, all the fruit on the trees would wither and die.²³²⁴

The only other living person we saw during this period was Jehoiada, the High Priest, who started to accompany Jehosheva on her nightly visits to begin the education of our future king. Ironically, Joash was not the only one to benefit from his teaching. I did too. As an uneducated woman, I knew nothing, nor had I ever been interested in learning. Now, out of sheer boredom, I started listening to Jehoiada. To my surprise, I found that what he had to say was quite interesting. In fact during the six years we lived in that room above the Holy of Holies, I came to be quite an expert on our religion and our laws. Just imagine! These laws had been given to us by Yahweh Himself.

²³²² I Kings 6:8

²³²³ II Kings 11:2-3 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15917/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 22:11-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16571/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Psalms 27:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16248/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14098>

מדרש תהילים מזמור יח עמוד 53

מצודת דוד מלכים ב פרק-יא ב {אותו ואת מניקתו.

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מצודת דוד מלכים ב פרק-יא ג {ויהי אתה.

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מלכים ב - רלב"ג מלכים ב פרק-יא {א}

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01535.html#HtmpReportNum0010_L2

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 7:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³²⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 21b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

Eventually the day arrived when we left the tiny room forever. What a day! Jehoiada had been preparing Joash for months for his coronation. We watched through a latticed window, as Jehoiada led the child down the steps to the porch in front of the Sanctuary, where the coronation was to take place. The sound of clapping and of voices calling, “Long live the king!” told us that the ceremony was over.²³²⁵

Then we heard shouting, this time not in celebration but in anger. It came from the direction of the Palace Gate.

“Treason! Treason!” someone was shouting.

A figure broke free from the milling crowd by the gate and began to stride purposefully towards the Sanctuary. There was only one person it could be - Queen Athaliah herself. A number of guards detached themselves from the group guarding the king and surrounded her. Then they escorted her out of the Temple grounds back to the Palace. That’s the last I or anyone else saw of her.²³²⁶

I was reunited with my family. I barely recognized my children, who were now so much older. After mourning me for six years they, of course, were astonished, then delighted, to find me still alive. I had no further contact with the High Priest and his wife, nor with Joash, the child I had nursed as if he were my own.

And that is the end of my story.

²³²⁵ II Kings 11:12
II Chronicles 23:11
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 7:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³²⁶ II Kings 11:13-16 Rashi Commentary
http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15917/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
II Chronicles 23:12-15 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16572/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

JEHOADAN, KING JOASH'S WIFE

My husband, Joash, ²³²⁷ had ruled Judah since he was seven years old, guided by the High Priest, Jehoiada. ²³²⁸ He ended up ruling for forty. However, over the years he changed from a devout follower of Yahweh to a man who thought he was a god.

It began with the death of Jehoiada, who my husband had loved and revered as much as if the old man had been his father. With Jehoiada dead, Joash had no-one except his sycophantic courtiers to advise him. It was they who told him that, because he had resided in the Holy of Holies and lived to tell the tale, he was divine. ²³²⁹ They repeated this nonsense so often that, in the end, Joash believed it. I genuinely feared for my husband. I knew that nothing good could possibly come from listening to such talk.

Tragedy struck when my husband's first cousin, Zechariah, who, after the death of his father, had succeeded to the high priesthood, dared reprove Joash in public. I don't know what Zechariah was thinking. Did he really believe that, because he was High Priest and a member of the royal family, my husband and his courtiers would listen to him? Joash was so furious at being humiliated in public that he forgot how much he owed to Zechariah's parents. He gave orders for Zechariah to be arrested and stoned to death, in the very forecourt of the Temple where they were standing. With his dying breath, Zechariah said,

“May Yahweh punish you!”

Hearing such words uttered by Yahweh's High Priest, I felt my heart contract with fear. I knew that retribution would not be long in coming. ²³³⁰

JEHOADAN, KING JOASH'S WIFE

²³²⁷ II Kings 14:1-2

II Chronicles 25:1

²³²⁸ II Kings 12:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15918/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 24:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

²³²⁹ מדרש רבה - חומש שמות פרשה ח ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01634_all.html

²³³⁰ II Chronicles 24:15-22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

And come it did. First my husband was sexually assaulted.²³³¹ Then our kingdom was invaded by the Syrians. Only by buying off the Syrian king was Jerusalem saved from destruction.²³³²

Injured in the fighting, Joash lay recovering at Beth Millo in Shechem. In vain did I await his return, for eventually word reached me that he was dead. Naturally I assumed he had died from his wounds, but I was mistaken. To avenge the murder of Zechariah, who, as the son of Jehoiada, had been much respected, two of Joash's own servants had murdered him in his sleep.²³³³

²³³¹ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת קידושין פרק א דף יט,ב, פרק א הלכה ז גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3601.htm>

²³³² II Kings 12:18-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15918/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 24:23-24

²³³³ II Chronicles 24:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

THE UNNAMED WIFE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, ZECHARIAH

It was inevitable that, as a daughter of King Joash, I would be used to cement an alliance between my father and someone necessary to his interests. Therefore, when I was betrothed to the son of the High Priest, Jehoiada, and his wife, Jehosheva, I naturally assumed it was to strengthen the ties between the royal family and the high priesthood.²³³⁴ However, there could have been a less self-interested reason. My father, Joash, might simply have wanted to show his gratitude to the two people who had saved his life.

My husband, Zechariah, was a good man, if somewhat unyielding in his views, who had spent many years learning a High Priest's duties before replacing his father.²³³⁵ Very few, before or after him, wielded so much influence. Not only was he the king's son-in-law and High Priest, but also a judge and a man given to visions from Yahweh.²³³⁶ Unfortunately many people interpreted his aloofness as arrogance, claiming that high office had gone to his head.²³³⁷

It was the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year, the only day on which the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and, whilst begging Yahweh to forgive us our sins, pronounce the Holy Name. Outside, everyone waited tremulously for him to emerge safe and sound, whereupon we would know that Yahweh had accepted our prayers.²³³⁸ This time, however, after emerging from the Holy of Holies, Zechariah stood at the entrance in the grip of a vision and announced that, far from forgiving us, Yahweh had forsaken us, just as we had forsaken Him.

In the ensuing uproar, my father gave orders to have my husband stoned to death, on the same altar on which Zechariah had just offered up a sacrifice to Yahweh.²³³⁹ He was stoned, not by the people, not by the women, but by his own priests, who, in their frenzy, stoned him into a bloody pulp. There was blood everywhere, frothing all over the altar.

THE UNNAMED WIFE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, ZECHARIAH

²³³⁴ II Kings 11:2

II Chronicles 22:11

²³³⁵ II Chronicles 24:20

²³³⁶ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי כג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

²³³⁷ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי כג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

²³³⁸ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי כג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

²³³⁹ II Chronicles 24:20-21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#l=primary

I never forgave those priests who killed my husband with as little regard as they would an animal.²³⁴⁰ As for my father, that ingrate, he had completely forgotten how much he owed my husband's family, who had saved his life all those years before.²³⁴¹

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

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http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r2904.htm>

²³⁴⁰ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי ה

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי כג

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ב ד

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ד טז

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה פתיחתא דחכימי פרשה ג א (טז)

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת תענית פרק ד דף כה, א פרק ד הלכה ה גמרא

²³⁴¹ II Chronicles 24:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16573/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 8:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

CHAPTER 55
FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH
The Book of Kings II
The Book of Isaiah
The Book of Chronicles II

Four generations of Judean kings are the subject of this chapter - Amaziah, his son, Uzziah, his grandson, Jotham, and his great grandson, Ahaz. One was exemplary; the others left much to be desired.

Their stories are told by their wives - Jecoliah, Jerushah, Jotham's unnamed wife and Abijah. Their accounts are based on II Kings Chapters 14-16 and II Chronicles Chapters 25-28. Joining them are the mother and wife of the prophet, Isaiah, who began his prophetic mission during this period. Isaiah Chapters 6-8, 20 and 38, plus II Kings Chapter 20 and II Chronicles Chapter 32 provide the material for their stories

JECOLIAH, KING AMAZIAH'S WIFE

My husband, Amaziah, was an ambitious man, intent on making a name for himself. By a stroke of luck he was able to reconquer the land of Edom,²³⁴² which had rebelled during the reign of his great-grandfather, King Jehoram.²³⁴³ Convinced of his own invincibility, my husband decided to make a bid for the throne of the northern kingdom of Israel, ruled by King Jehoash.²³⁴⁴ When I heard this, I shook my head in disbelief. Did my foolish, arrogant husband really think that he would be successful in reuniting the two kingdoms, when better men than him had tried and failed?

A delegation left Jerusalem, bearing Amaziah's demand that Jehoash and his people acknowledge him as their king. They were soon back with Jehoash's reply.

*"It happened that a thistle demanded of a cedar of Lebanon that the cedar give its daughter to the thistle's son in marriage. Just then an animal passed by and trampled the thistle to death."*²³⁴⁵

Do you think my husband took any notice of this warning? Not at all! He didn't even have the sense to carry the fight to the enemy but engaged Jehoash at Beth Shemesh, where our soldiers scattered in all directions and we sustained a terrible defeat. My husband was taken prisoner and forced to watch as Jehoash tore down the walls of Jerusalem.²³⁴⁶ We wept as we watched Jehoash's men loot the palace treasures. Even worse was the fact that they also carried off the sacred objects from the Temple. Everything of value ended up in Samaria.²³⁴⁷

CHAPTER 55 FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH

JECOLIAH, KING AMAZIAH'S WIFE

²³⁴² II Chronicles 25:11-12

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁴³ II Kings 8:16-22

²³⁴⁴ II Chronicles 25:17

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁴⁵ II Kings 14:9-10

II Chronicles 25:18-19

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁴⁶ II Kings 14:11-13

II Chronicles 25:20-23

²³⁴⁷ II Kings 14:14

II Chronicles 25:24

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 9:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

After this debacle, is it any wonder that the good citizens of Judah were no longer prepared to accept Amaziah as their king, but replaced him with our son, Uzziah? To save his skin, Amaziah was forced to flee to Lachish, a place so isolated, that he hoped no-one would find him there.

And for fifteen years no-one did.²³⁴⁸ Then someone must have betrayed his whereabouts, for he was murdered by assassins from Jerusalem, in revenge for all the needless suffering he had inflicted on our people.²³⁴⁹

²³⁴⁸ I Kings 14:17
II Chronicles 25:25

²³⁴⁹ II Kings 14:19
II Chronicles 25:27
Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 9:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

JERUSHAH, KING UZZIAH'S WIFE

During the first years of my husband's reign, a Yahwist holy man named Zechariah was much at court to advise him. As a result, the kingdom flourished. Not only was Uzziah victorious in battle against the Philistines and the Arabs, but even the Ammonites agreed to pay him tribute. With the proceeds he was able to repair the kingdom's defenses and improve the land, for Uzziah had a passion for agriculture, building irrigation systems and cultivating crops. ²³⁵⁰

And then, at the height of his power, he threw it all away. Uzziah got it into his head that, since he was king, it was only right that he should be the one to offer up incense to Yahweh. ²³⁵¹ The priests of Yahweh took umbrage at this usurpation of their power. Eighty of them, led by the priest, Azariah, promptly rushed to the Temple to stop him. In no uncertain terms, they told him that, king or not, it wasn't his place to burn incense on Yahweh's altar, or anything else for that matter. Ever since the days of the first High Priest, Aaron, this had been, and still was, the prerogative of the priests. They ordered him to leave the Temple precinct right away. ²³⁵²

Overcome by rage, Uzziah lifted the censer, containing hot coals, to strike one of the priests. ²³⁵³ At precisely the same moment, the doorposts of the Temple began to shake and a crack appeared in the ceiling. There was dust everywhere. ²³⁵⁴ A ray of sunlight penetrated the gloom and fell on Uzziah's face, illuminating a lesion that had erupted on his forehead. The priests took one look, recognized it as the first sign of leprosy, and rushed him out of the building, before he could render it unclean. ²³⁵⁵

JERUSHAH, KING UZZIAH'S WIFE

²³⁵⁰ II Chronicles 26:5-10

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 10:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁵¹ II Chronicles 26:16

²³⁵² II Chronicles 26:17-18

²³⁵³ Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 10:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁵⁴ Amos 1:1

Isaiah 6:4

²³⁵⁵ II Chronicles 26:19-20

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 10:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

To prevent the spread of the disease, from that day forth Uzziah was forced to live in isolation. He built himself a house by the cemetery with only the dead for company. I acted as regent of the kingdom until our son, Jotham, was crowned king.
2356

²³⁵⁶ II Kings 14:5
II Chronicles 26:21
Psalms 88:6
Babylonian Talmud: Horayoth 10a
http://www.halakhah.com/horayoth/horayoth_10.html

KING JOTHAM'S WIFE

I wasn't considered important enough to have my name recorded in the annals of our people, unlike my mother-in-law, Queen Jerushah, wife of King Uzziah,²³⁵⁷ or my daughter-in-law, Abijah, wife of my son, Ahaz.²³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, my future mother-in-law obviously thought I was good enough to marry her son, Prince Jotham.

As regent of the kingdom of Judah, Jerushah wielded tremendous power, until the time came to hand over the reins of government to her son. I wonder how she felt, one moment being the most powerful person in the kingdom, the next being of no consequence whatsoever? Of course, she still had her son's ear, at least until such time as I replaced her in his affections.

Indeed, it was probably due to her influence, rather than that of his father, that Jotham proved to be an exemplary king, superior to all those before him. Every one of our kings had been guilty of some mistake or another.²³⁵⁹ The only one to remain blameless was Jotham.²³⁶⁰

The only criticism of him I ever heard came from our holy men, who complained that he had not removed the local shrines to Yahweh. This was easier said than done. To do so would have incurred the censure of the common people, who could not afford the time and money to come to the Temple in Jerusalem, in order to make a sacrifice to Yahweh.

In all other respects Jotham could not be faulted. Not only did he open a new gate to the Temple precinct²³⁶¹ and strengthen the city walls, but he also built new cities in the Judean hills and palaces and forts in the forests surrounding Jerusalem.

KING JOTHAM'S WIFE

²³⁵⁷ II Kings 15:32-33

²³⁵⁸ II Kings 18:1-2

II Chronicles 29:1

²³⁵⁹ II Chronicles 27:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16576/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sukkah 45b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Sukkah.pdf>

²³⁶⁰ II Chronicles 27:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16576/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁶¹ II Kings 15:35

In addition, he defeated the Ammonites, forcing them to pay him an annual tribute of silver, wheat and barley, proving beyond doubt that he who follows in the ways of Yahweh will always prosper.²³⁶²

²³⁶² II Chronicles 27:3-6 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16576/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

ABIJAH, KING AHAZ'S WIFE

I come from a devoutly religious family of Yahwists. When it came to choosing a husband for me, my father, Zechariah, deliberately chose the son of the most pious man he knew - King Jotham. This was how I came to marry the king's son and heir to the throne, Prince Ahaz. ²³⁶³ It wasn't long before my father realized his mistake. After he became king, instead of worshipping Yahweh, Ahaz introduced idol worship and other abominable practices to the kingdom. ²³⁶⁴

Worse was to follow. King Pekah of Israel and King Rezin of Syria sought my husband's aid in an attempt to overthrow Assyrian rule. When he refused them, the two kings invaded our kingdom and laid siege to Jerusalem. ²³⁶⁵ What did my husband do? He attempted to sacrifice our son, Hezekiah, to the Syrian god, Moloch, to whom Ahaz's twisted mind attributed his ill-fortune. Had I not had the foresight to smear our child's body with salamander blood, Hezekiah would have died in the flames. ²³⁶⁶ As everyone knows, salamander blood is fire-proof.

ABIJAH, KING AHAZ'S WIFE

²³⁶³ II Kings 18:1-2

II Chronicles 29:1

²³⁶⁴ II Kings 16:1-2

II Chronicles 28:1

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 12:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁶⁵ II Kings 16:5

Isaiah 7:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15938/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת תולדות פרשה סג: תולדות יעקב ועשו א' [צדיק בן צדיק]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/63.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 12

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁶⁶ II Kings 16:3

II Chronicles 28:3

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 63b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_63.html

After his attempt to placate the idol failed, Ahaz sent a delegation to the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, agreeing to be his vassal if, in return, he would protect us from our enemies. His request was sweetened by a handsome bribe of silver and gold,²³⁶⁷ ensuring the agreement of the Assyrian king who invaded Syria, captured Damascus, killed its king and exiled its inhabitants to Kir.²³⁶⁸

When Ahaz went to pay Tiglath-pileser homage, in one of the temples in Damascus, he saw an altar that took his fancy and had one made just like it, to replace the one in our Temple in Jerusalem.²³⁶⁹

This was just one of the changes he made in deference to the Assyrian king. He also ordered all the Temple gates to be locked, preventing Yahweh's priests from carrying out their duties, and closed down the synagogues and law schools, hoping in this way to eradicate the worship of Yahweh.²³⁷⁰

The ironic thing was that Ahaz's policy of vassalage paid off. Whereas both Syria and Israel were conquered by the Assyrians, our kingdom of Judah was left alone.

²³⁶⁷ II Kings 16:7-8

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 12:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

סדר עולם רבא פרק כב אחז ומלך אשור

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%9B%D7%91

²³⁶⁸ II Kings 16:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15922/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Isaiah 8:4

²³⁶⁹ II Kings 16:10

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 12

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁷⁰ Isaiah 8:18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15939/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

דרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת לך לך פרשה מב: מלחמת ארבעת המלכים בהמישה (ישעיה ז) ויהי בימי אחז.

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/42.htm>

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0041_L2

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא, א פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

As the daughter of a distinguished Jerusalem family, I was considered a suitable match for a man with an impeccable pedigree. His name was Amoz, one of the sons of King Joash and the brother of King Amaziah. It was during the seventeen-year reign of his nephew, King Uzziah, that my story begins.²³⁷¹

Although entitled to the privileges accorded to all members of the royal family, one thing set us apart. This was my husband's gift of prophecy, which he passed on to our son, Isaiah.²³⁷² One day I happened to be passing Isaiah's study, when I heard him cry out,

"Here I am! Send me!"

I peeped inside to see who he was talking to and was surprised to find him alone. Thinking little of it, I continued my duties.

A short while later, I looked in again to see Isaiah still standing there, his face as white as a sheet and his eyes open in a glassy stare. Indeed, all my son's visions were to leave him trembling, suffering from stomach cramps, heart pounding in his chest, confused and not just frightened, but terrified out of his wits.²³⁷³

"Isaiah, my son," I said, "whatever's wrong?"

With a start he turned to me, a strange expression on his face.

"I've just been speaking to Yahweh," he replied.

I gently led him to a chair, sat him down and poured him some wine.

"Here," I said. "Drink this and tell me exactly what you saw."

This was how I became the first person to hear about his vision.²³⁷⁴

Isaiah told me that he had seen Yahweh sitting on His throne in heaven, with His feet in the Temple and six Seraphim hovering over Him, calling out to one another,

*"Holy holy holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."*²³⁷⁵

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

²³⁷¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 10b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

²³⁷² Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 10b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

²³⁷³ Isaiah 21:1-10

²³⁷⁴ Isaiah 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15932/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁷⁵ Isaiah 6:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15937/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Isaiah had thought himself lost, because no man can look upon the Divine Presence and live, let alone a sinner like him, living among a sinful people like ours. Immediately, one of the Seraphim had flown towards him, holding a glowing coal from the altar with a pair of tongs. With this coal he had touched Isaiah's mouth, announcing that his lips were no longer guilty of speaking ill of our people. Miraculously Isaiah's lips were not been harmed.²³⁷⁶ Then Yahweh asked, "Who can I send to warn my people to repent before it is too late?"²³⁷⁷ I sent Micah, but they struck him on the cheek.²³⁷⁸ I sent Amos, but they ridiculed him and called him tongue-tied."²³⁷⁹ Without thinking twice, Isaiah replied, "Here I am! Send me!"

Yahweh's response was to tell Isaiah that, although our people would hear his words, they wouldn't listen, and although they would witness Yahweh's miracles, they wouldn't see. When Isaiah asked how long would it take before they repented, the reply was only when Judah was destroyed, its people exiled and the righteous left to inherit the land.²³⁸⁰ This bleak message would have deterred anyone else, but not my stubborn son.

²³⁷⁶ Isaiah 6:5-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15937/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - שיר השירים רבה פתיחתא דחכימי פרשה א א (1)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html

²³⁷⁷ Isaiah 6:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15937/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת צו פרשה י: קח את אהרן ואת בניו ב [אהבת צדק ותשנא רשע - ישעיהו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/10.htm>

²³⁷⁸ Micah 4:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16190/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²³⁷⁹ Amos 7:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16179/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²³⁸⁰ Isaiah 6:8-13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15937/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

I married a man much older than me. I was more than a little in awe of him, not just because he was so much older, or even because he was a member of the royal family, but mostly because he experienced visions. His name was Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

I soon became pregnant and bore a son, whom my husband named Shear Yashuv, meaning ‘the remnant shall return’. He explained that he had purposely chosen this unusual name, to symbolize how few of our people would be left as worshippers of the one true God after all the rest had turned to idol-worship.²³⁸¹

Four years after King Ahaz ascended the throne of Judah, our country was invaded by the combined forces of King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel. When it looked as though Jerusalem was about to fall to the enemy, Yahweh instructed Isaiah to take our young son on a mission to the king. Isaiah’s mission was to calm the king’s fears by promising him that Jerusalem would be saved.

As a member of the royal family, Isaiah felt he could speak freely to the king. After delivering Yahweh’s message, he expected Ahaz to look relieved. Instead, Ahaz looked skeptical. It was obvious that he had not believed a word. Therefore, Isaiah suggested that Ahaz pray to Yahweh for confirmation of his message, and was taken aback when the king refused.²³⁸²

Racking his brains as to how to convince the king that his message was genuine, my husband eventually came up with an idea that involved me. I didn’t find out what it was, until the birth of our second child, when, in a moment of inspiration, I named my son ‘Immanuel’, meaning ‘Yahweh is with us’. This turned out to be exactly what Isaiah had said I would do, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that his predictions were accurate.²³⁸³

Despite the name I had given him, Isaiah insisted on calling our son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, meaning, ‘Hurry to the spoils of war’. When I asked why, he said that the name symbolized the defeat of the enemy.²³⁸⁴

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

²³⁸¹ Isaiah 10:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15941/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁸² Isaiah 7:1-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15938/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁸³ Isaiah 7:14

²³⁸⁴ Isaiah 8:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15939/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Our last child was a daughter whom Isaiah called 'Hephzi-bah', meaning 'my delight is in her'.²³⁸⁵ It was one of the names we called our beloved city of Jerusalem.²³⁸⁶ It also symbolized the desire of our people to keep Yahweh's laws, for example in the saying: 'My delight is in the Torah which is more priceless than pearls'.²³⁸⁷

As the years passed, I gradually lost my awe of Isaiah. Therefore, when I saw him preparing to leave our house one day, naked and barefoot other than a piece of sackcloth draped around his loins, I cried out,

"Isaiah, my husband! Wherever are you going, dressed like that?"

He answered, "This is how the Egyptians and Ethiopians will be dressed, after they are conquered by the Assyrians.

I want our people to realize that there is no point in placing their trust in two nations whose fate is destined to be the same as our own."

Can you believe it? My husband continued to wear a loincloth for three whole years! Isaiah, a member of the Jerusalem aristocracy and the adviser of kings! I felt so embarrassed that I didn't know where to put myself.²³⁸⁸

²³⁸⁵ Isaiah 62:2-4

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38247>

²³⁸⁶ מסכת אבות דרבי נתן נוסחא ב רק לט ד"ה עמוד 140-141

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/eliyahurabazuta/eliyahurabazuta17.pdf>

²³⁸⁷ סדר אליהו רבה פ"יה עמוד 7

²³⁸⁸ Isaiah 20:1-6

Part 16
The Fall of Israel

CHAPTER 56
THE FALL OF ISRAEL

Book of Kings II
The Book of Hosea
The Book of Amos
The Book of Chronicles I
The Book of Chronicles II

The northern kingdom of Israel attained its greatest power and prosperity under Jeroboam II. Therefore, it must have been a shock when the prophet, Amos, appeared on the scene to denounce the sins of its people and their leaders. Amos was the first of the 'literary prophets', those who authored the books that bear their names.

He was followed by Hosea, the last of Yahweh's holy men to preach to the people of Israel, before the kingdom fell to the Assyrians under Sargon II.

The tragic end of the kingdom is related by the following women:
The wife of Jeroboam II, whose narrative is taken from II Kings Chapter 14.

The wife of the prophet, Amos, based on Amos Chapters 7-9. Amos's gruesome end comes from a description in a Jewish chronology relating stories from Jewish history, entitled *Shoshelet Hakabala*.

A prostitute named Gomer describes her life as the wife of the prophet, Hosea, based on the book that bears his name.

An unnamed woman captive from Judah tells us how she and 200,000 Judeans were miraculously rescued from slavery in Samaria. The story can be found in II Chronicles Chapter 28.

Another unnamed woman captive, this time from Israel, describes the three Assyrian invasions of the northern kingdom and the resulting deportations of its inhabitants, as narrated in II Kings Chapters 15 and 17 and I Chronicles Chapter 5.

THE WIFE OF KING JEROBOAM II

We had always dreamed of living in a greater Israel, the borders of which reached from Hamath in the north to the Red Sea in the south.²³⁸⁹ Ever since our great lawgiver, Moses, had promised us such a territory, his promise had been passed on from generation to generation.²³⁹⁰

Then my husband, Jeroboam II, came along, an extraordinary man who accomplished extraordinary things. A Yahwist holy man named Jonah, from the town of Gath-hepher, had foretold that he would re-conquer much of the land that had been lost to the Syrians. This came about when my husband retook Hamath and the area as far as the Salt Sea.²³⁹¹

Jonah was not the only Yahwist holy man purporting to have a message from Yahweh, but he was the only one who had anything good to say. The others wandered the countryside preaching doom and gloom, and accusing us of leading a debauched way of life.²³⁹² Instead of praising my husband for his military accomplishments, they accused him of ill-treating the poor.²³⁹³

CHAPTER 56 THE FALL OF ISRAEL

THE WIFE OF KING JEROBOAM II

²³⁸⁹ Amos 6:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16178/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁹⁰ Numbers 34:1-12

²³⁹¹ II Kings 14:25

Antiquities of the Jews Book IX Chapter 10:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²³⁹² Amos 6:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16178/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 62b

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_62.html

²³⁹³ Amos 6:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16178/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

There was one holy man in particular who made a real nuisance of himself. Named Amos, he was a nobody - a mere herdsman from Tekoa in Judah.²³⁹⁴ The first we knew of his existence was when Amaziah, the priest at Beth-el, complained that a Judean was stirring up trouble by claiming that Jeroboam would be killed and our people exiled. Why he chose to come all the way to Beth-el to preach such a message is beyond me. Naturally Amaziah told him to clear off and take his prophecies back to Judah, where worshippers of Yahweh might reward him with a few crumbs.²³⁹⁵

Amos had the effrontery to reply that since Amaziah had forbidden him to preach, he would be deprived of the priesthood, his wife would become a prostitute, his children would be murdered and his land given away. The whole thing was so ludicrous, that we just laughed.²³⁹⁶

²³⁹⁴ Amos 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16173/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁹⁵ Amos 7:10-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16179/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁹⁶ Amos 7:16-17

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, AMOS

It wasn't easy being the wife of a holy man, I can tell you, especially the wife of Amos. As a child he had been ridiculed for his stutter - you know how cruel children can be. Even as an adult he was called 'the stutterer' behind his back. People didn't even have the courtesy to avoid using this nickname to my face. Someone even said,

"Can't Yahweh find someone better than this stutterer

to convey to us His holy word?"²³⁹⁷

We lived in Tekoa in Judah, about five miles south of Bethlehem, where Amos earned a living from herding cattle²³⁹⁸ and tending sycamore fig trees, slashing them to make the figs ripen more quickly.²³⁹⁹ As a result, we were quite well-to-do and certainly in no need of anyone's charity, as some people claimed.²⁴⁰⁰

One day Amos came home with the strangest look on his face. Saying nothing, he ate his evening meal in silence. When I asked him if he was feeling unwell, he merely shook his head. Soon after, he retired, still without giving any explanation for his strange looks.

The next morning Amos gathered us together to tell us that, the previous day, while out in the fields tending the cattle, he had heard a voice inside his head. The voice had told him to give up everything he was doing and warn the people of Israel that their kingdom was about to fall.²⁴⁰¹

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, AMOS

²³⁹⁷ Amos 7:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16179/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא - פרשת צו פרשה י: קח את אהרן ואת בניו ב [אהבת צדק ותשנא רשע - ישעיהו]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba3/10.htm>

מדרש רבה - קהלת רבה פתיחה דחכימי פרשה א ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01641.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

²³⁹⁸ Amos 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16173/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²³⁹⁹ Amos 7:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16179/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²⁴⁰⁰ Amos 7:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16179/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²⁴⁰¹ Amos 1:1

Amos 7:15

We looked at him in consternation. A voice in his head? Was Amos losing his mind?

Amos explained that the people of the northern kingdom were about to be punished by Yahweh for abandoning His worship. Although their destruction was imminent, if he could only persuade them to accept Yahweh back into their lives, there was still a chance to save them. In the circumstances, how could he stay at home without trying to convince them to repent before it was too late?

Now, I knew that my husband was a devout worshipper of Yahweh, but it had never entered my head that Yahweh would call on him to be His messenger.²⁴⁰² Even I, uneducated as I was, knew that a true holy man had no choice but to do whatever Yahweh asked him to, like it or not. However, I couldn't help grumbling under my breath,

“Why did Yahweh have to choose my husband?
Did He ever pause to consider how the families of holy men,
who took to the roads preaching His word,
would survive while they were away?”

I watched my husband set off along the road towards the border with Israel. He took very little with him, not much more than the clothes on his back and a day's supply of food and water. He told me that Yahweh would provide along the way.

And that was the last I saw of him for a very long time. My children and I were left to tend the cattle. Fortunately Amos had trained our eldest son how to slash the sycamore fig trees. Without the extra source of income from the sycamore plantations, I don't know how we would have survived.

Time passed. ²⁴⁰³ One evening, while sitting outside our house, enjoying the cool breeze and watching the sun sinking in the west, something made me turn my head towards the north. In the distance, I saw a figure walking slowly up the road to Tekoa. In the gathering dusk it was difficult to make out who it was. However, as the figure drew closer, my heart began to beat more quickly. Was it possible that my husband had returned?

It was indeed Amos, who had obviously been on the road for many days. With barely the strength to eat and drink, he threw himself down on the bed, where he fell asleep until well into the next day.

Naturally we were thankful to see him safe and sound. But we were also agog to hear his news. Amos who, in spite of his stutter, had wandered the kingdom of Israel preaching to the people with such eloquence, was actually quite taciturn at home. It took some time before we were able to piece together his story.

²⁴⁰² Amos 5:1-27

²⁴⁰³ Amos the Prophet
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_\(prophet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_(prophet))

Amos had eventually stopped his wandering and taken up preaching at the shrine at Beth-el. He had chosen the shrine at Beth-el on purpose, because it was the shrine attended by all the country's leaders.²⁴⁰⁴ Where better to preach a message of social and religious reform? At least, that was my husband's thinking, until he was thrown out of the Sanctuary by its priest and told never to show his face there again.
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After his return, Amos decided he was too old to go back to cattle-herding and tending sycamore fig trees. Besides, our eldest son was already married with children of his own and needed to support his family. Moreover, since Yahweh had told Amos to preach in the northern kingdom and not in our southern kingdom of Judah, it looked as though his preaching days were over. Therefore, left with time on his hands, he decided to write his memoirs. I asked him,

“Why go to so much trouble?”

He answered that it was the only way left to him to spread Yahweh's word.

I left him in peace and went about my chores. We women don't have the luxury of being able to retire. There are always things to do in the house, in addition to looking after our grandchildren. It's what keeps us young.

From time to time, I would look in on Amos to see how his writing was progressing. He used to read parts of it out loud, explaining that it helped him get the cadence right. I wasn't sure what he meant, but I listened dutifully all the same.

The truth is, I couldn't see what locusts, fire, plumb lines, figs and grain had to do with Yahweh's message. Amos sighed, shook his head and tried to explain. The locusts and the fire represented disasters that would befall our people, the plumb line represented Yahweh's justice,²⁴⁰⁶ the late figs those of our people who repented too late, while the grain represented that withheld from sale, in order to drive up the price.

Actually his book was quite depressing, with its description of floods, earthquakes, solar eclipses, famine and drought.²⁴⁰⁷ The worst part was the description of the punishment that awaited us if we did not repent and obey Yahweh's laws.²⁴⁰⁸

²⁴⁰⁴ Amos 4:1 Rashi Commentary

²⁴⁰⁵ Amos 7:11-13

²⁴⁰⁶ Amos 7:1-9

²⁴⁰⁷ Amos 8:1-14

²⁴⁰⁸ Amos 9:8-10

When I asked Amos how he expected any of us to keep 613 laws, he responded that, while it was true that Moses had given us so many,²⁴⁰⁹ King David had reduced them to eleven,²⁴¹⁰ Isaiah to six,²⁴¹¹ Micah to three,²⁴¹² Isaiah to two,²⁴¹³ and now he was reducing them to one. Didn't it make all our lives easier, if all we had to remember was, "*Follow Yahweh and you will be saved?*"²⁴¹⁴

No-one was more surprised than me when my husband's depressing book was widely read and earned him quite a reputation.²⁴¹⁵

You would have thought that a man as harmless as Amos would have been left to live out his days in peace, but this was not to be. His preaching, both oral and written, annoyed King Uzziah so much that he struck my husband on the forehead with a glowing iron, killing him outright.²⁴¹⁶

²⁴⁰⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 23b-24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹⁰ Psalms 15:1-5
Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹¹ Isaiah 33:15
Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹² Micah 6:8
Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹³ Isaiah 56:1
Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Makkoth 24a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Makkoth.pdf>

²⁴¹⁵ Micah 5:4

פרקי רבינו הקדוש, ד' פרק השמונה
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Otzar_Midrashim%2C_Pirkei_Rabbeinu_HaKadosh.4?lang=he
Babylonian Talmud: Sukkah 52b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Sukkah.pdf>

²⁴¹⁶ שלשלת הקבלה גדליה בן יוסף אבן יחיא הקורות בימי ברוך עמוד 243-244
<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/6618>

GOMER, THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HOSEA

I know what you must be thinking. What's a prostitute doing in a story about a holy man of Israel? Well, why not? There were plenty of us in the country, earning our living by following the oldest profession in the world. Some of us had become quite respectable. Take for example, Rahab, the reformed prostitute from Jericho who had married Joshua, the man who had led our people in the conquest of Canaan.

One day a man came to my house and introduced himself as Hosea, from the tribe of Reuben.²⁴¹⁷ I took him for just another customer, until it became clear that he hadn't come to avail himself of my services, but to ask for my hand in marriage.²⁴¹⁸ At first, I thought he was joking and that he wanted to make fun of me, but the amazing thing was that he was perfectly serious. He was intent on marrying a prostitute, if not me, then someone else.²⁴¹⁹ Hosea's offer of marriage was too good an opportunity to pass up, so I agreed.

After our marriage, I bore a son²⁴²⁰ whom Hosea insisted on calling Jezreel. Why Jezreel? Jezreel was the name of a valley. Hosea explained that the name symbolized the many deaths that before very long would take place there. How morbid, I thought.²⁴²¹

Our next child was a girl, whom Hosea called Lo-ruhamah, symbolizing the lack of compassion with which our people would be punished. Again I shook my head at my husband's strange sense of humor.²⁴²²

GOMER, THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HOSEA

²⁴¹⁷ I Chronicles 5:3-6

מדרש אגדה אחרי מות עמוד 39

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

²⁴¹⁸ Hosea 1:2

²⁴¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

²⁴²⁰ Hosea 1:3

²⁴²¹ Hosea 1:4-5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16155/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

²⁴²² Hosea 1:6

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

After Lo-ruhamah had finished breastfeeding, we had another son, whom Hosea called Lo-ami, claiming that the child wasn't his.²⁴²³ In vain did I try to convince him otherwise. He refused to listen, accusing me of having returned to my former occupation behind his back. Threatening me with divorce,²⁴²⁴ he started ranting and raving about how he would punish me. He said some terrible things, things I am too ashamed to repeat.²⁴²⁵

A short time afterwards, he completely changed his tune, telling me that he had forgiven me. In spite of all I had done, he still loved me and was prepared to take me back, as long as I gave up working as a prostitute.²⁴²⁶

From that day forth, my husband did all in his power to reform me. His methods were harsh. At first I resented such treatment and swore never to change my ways. Then, gradually, my feelings changed.²⁴²⁷ Eventually the day came when I stayed with Hosea, not out of fear but out of love.²⁴²⁸

²⁴²³ Hosea 1:8-9 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16155/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

²⁴²⁴ סדר אליהו זוטא ט

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95_%D7%96%D7%95%D7%98%D7%90_%D7%98

מדרש אגדה אחרי מות עמוד 39

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

²⁴²⁵ Hosea 2:4-19

²⁴²⁶ Hosea 3:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16157/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#lt=primary&showrashi=true

²⁴²⁷ Hosea 2:14-17

מדרש רבה - רות רבה פרשה ה' ו

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Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 49b

פסיקתא דרב כהנא ד

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_D'Rav_Kahanna.4.10?lang=he

²⁴²⁸ Hosea 2:18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16156/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Pesachim 87a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 71b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kethuboth.pdf>

I knew that I and the children would be treated fairly ²⁴²⁹ and that we would always have a roof over our heads. ²⁴³⁰

I ceased to worship Baal ²⁴³¹ and Yahweh became my God. ²⁴³²

NARRATOR

Some claim that Gomer's story was an allegory, in which Gomer represented the betrayal of Yahweh by the people of Israel, and Hosea His forgiveness.

Tradition has it that Hosea was exiled to Babylon, where he died of extreme old age. ²⁴³³ Before his death, he requested that he be buried in the land of Israel. Because this involved a long and dangerous journey, unwilling to endanger anyone's life, he asked for the coffin containing his corpse to be lashed to the back of a camel. The camel was to be allowed to make its own way and, wherever it ended up, there he should be buried. A letter, recording his wishes, was to be placed in his coffin.

The camel made its way as far as the city of Safed in the Upper Galilee. When the Jews of the city opened the coffin and read the letter, they buried him with every honor, just as he had requested. ²⁴³⁴

²⁴²⁹ Hosea 2:20-21

²⁴³⁰ Hosea 2:25

²⁴³¹ Hosea 2:19

²⁴³² Hosea 2:22

NARRATOR

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

²⁴³³ מדרש אגדה אחרי מות עמוד 39

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/6618>

²⁴³⁴ שלשלת הקבלה עמוד 48-49

A WOMAN CAPTIVE FROM JUDAH

All my life I lived with my family in a small village in the Judean hills, not far from Jerusalem, where we eked out a living from the thin soil. Like all our neighbors we were devout followers of Yahweh, following his 613 laws as best as we could and making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. Even though, after paying King Ahaz's heavy taxes, we could barely afford it, we were happy to spend our hard-earned coins on birds and animals without blemish, fit for sacrifice on Yahweh's altar.

Ah, the Temple! Every time I made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, my heart would swell with emotion at the sight of the city walls and, towering above them, the Temple with its white stone reflecting the sunlight. It was the most awe-inspiring building in the world, built on the highest point on Mount Moriah, where our forefather, Abraham, had been ready to sacrifice his son to prove his devotion to Yahweh. If Abraham had been prepared to sacrifice his son, who were we to complain of spending a few coins on an unblemished animal?

Then, one day, tragedy struck. Two armies invaded our land, one headed by Rezin, king of Syria and the other by Pekah, king of Israel. All the men in the kingdom were mobilized to fight. As I watched my menfolk march off to war, I prayed to Yahweh to watch over them and bring them safely home.

My worst fears were realized when news reached us that our army had been defeated and thousands slain or captured. 200,000 women and children were taken prisoner, us among them, and marched off to slavery in the northern kingdom of Israel.

It took us several days to reach the outskirts of Samaria, where we were met by some of the local dignitaries. Just when we thought all was lost and that we would never see our homes again, a miracle happened. A tall, gaunt man stepped out onto the road in front of us, raising his staff to block our advance. The Israelite officers guarding us were just about to push him aside, when he began to speak in a voice that carried loud and clear. He cried,

“Stop! I bring a message from Yahweh.”

Hearing this, the Israelite officers stopped in their tracks.

He continued, “It is Yahweh who has given you victory in battle, Yahweh and Him alone. You are merely his instrument.”

All around me, I could hear murmurs of astonishment at his words.

He added, “Now that you have executed his purpose, your role is over.

Do not incur His wrath by making slaves of His people.”

The Israelites began to look alarmed.

His last words were, “Free your prisoners and avert Yahweh's anger, before it is too late.”

Then he disappeared, as suddenly as he had come.

Hearing this, the Samaritan leaders conferred briefly among themselves. Finally they turned to the Israelite officers and called out,

“Don’t come any further. We have no wish to anger Yahweh.”

After some hesitation, the soldiers guarding us stepped aside, formed a column and marched back to re-join their army, leaving us standing on the road.

The Samaritan dignitaries approached us. We didn’t know what to expect. However, instead of treating us as prisoners, they treated us like honored guests. First, they fed and clothed us from the spoils their army had captured, and then they mounted the weak on donkeys and led us down to the Jordan Valley. Never was I more relieved to see the famous palm trees of Jericho in the distance. They left us at the city gates.²⁴³⁵

My children and I returned to our village and resumed our lives. Now, more than ever, we had reason to thank Yahweh for His mercy. On our first pilgrimage to the Temple after our ordeal, I spent twice the usual amount on an animal for the sacrifice and was happy to do so.

A WOMAN CAPTIVE FROM JUDAH

²⁴³⁵ II Chronicles 28:8-15

A WOMAN CAPTIVE FROM ISRAEL

Born to a very poor family in Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel, I was put to work at a very early age. At first I performed the most menial tasks, those that no one else was prepared to do. Since I was little more than a slave, I had no choice. Over the years, I worked myself up to a position of trust in the royal palace, where I was privy to all the gossip in the king's harem. Alas, it has fallen to me to tell you of the final days of our kingdom.

Three times the Assyrians descended on us like wolves on a fold of helpless sheep.²⁴³⁶ Each time a different section of our population was captured and marched off to captivity in Assyria.²⁴³⁷ The first deportation took place during the reign of King Pekah, when the north of the country fell into Assyrian hands.²⁴³⁸ Eight years later, it was the turn of our people on the east bank of the River Jordan.²⁴³⁹ Three years after that, Samaria itself was captured, the last of us exiled and our kingdom of Israel wiped off the map forever.²⁴⁴⁰

I shall never forget the day we left Samaria. Although we had survived the siege, we were on the verge of starvation. Emaciated, half-naked, filthy dirty, we began the long march north, men, women and children, young and old, healthy and sick, carrying what we could. With bowed heads, we walked in a straggling line that stretched ahead as far as the eye could see, with scarcely the strength to take a last look at the land in which we had been born and where we had buried so many of our dead.

Many more of us would die on the way to Assyria. Only the strongest would survive.²⁴⁴¹

A WOMAN CAPTIVE FROM ISRAEL

²⁴³⁶ The Destruction of Sennacherib

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43827/the-destruction-of-sennacherib>

²⁴³⁷ Isaiah 8:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15923/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴³⁸ II Kings 15:29

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 11:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

²⁴³⁹ I Chronicles 5:26

²⁴⁴⁰ II Kings 17:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15923/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁴¹ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי כד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

NARRATOR

The ten tribes of Israel were never seen again. It is thought that they assimilated into the surrounding population of Assyria. By the time of the conquest, most of the population of Israel had adopted idol-worship.

Without a religion based on strict compliance to 613 laws, they had nothing to help them preserve a sense of national and religious identity, unlike the two tribes of Judah which were later exiled to Babylon.

As for what once had been the kingdom of Israel, travelers brought back tales of a land empty of human habitation, deserted villages, untended fields, fruit rotting on the trees and starving dogs roaming the countryside.

Part 17
The Kingdom of Judah

CHAPTER 57 KINGS AND PROPHETS OF JUDAH

The Book of Kings II
The Book of Isaiah
The Book of Micah
The Book of Nahum
The Book of Chronicles II

In this chapter we turn our attention to the fortunes of the doomed kingdom of Judah, which enjoyed a 135-year respite before suffering the same fate as its northern neighbor. Many of the kings of this period, 'did wrong in the sight of Yahweh.' According to the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 103b), among the worst were Manasseh and his son, Amon.²⁴⁴² Yet there was always one of Yahweh's messengers to guide them on the right path. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the messengers were either murdered, imprisoned or ignored.

So let us now listen to the voices of six women, the wives of three kings and of three prophets, as the tragedy unfolds. They are:

The wife of the prophet, Isaiah, who we last met in Chapter 55 (Four Kings of Judah). Her story is based on Isaiah Chapters 7-8, 20 and 38, plus II Kings Chapter 20 and II Chronicles Chapter 32.

Hephzibah, the wife of King Hezekiah, and the mother of King Manasseh, whose tale is taken from II Kings Chapters 18 and 20, II Chronicles Chapters 29 and 32, plus Isaiah Chapter 39. The tradition that she was Isaiah's daughter derives from Tractate Berakoth, Folio 10a of the *Babylonian Talmud*, while Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 94b, provides the source for the contention that even girls and women were conversant with the law.²⁴⁴³

Meshullemeth, the wife of King Manasseh and the mother of King Amon, is mentioned in II Kings Chapter 21 and I Chronicles Chapter 33. Her account utilizes material from the apocryphal text, *The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Son of Neriah*.

Jedidah, the wife of King Amon. Her name appears in II Kings Chapter 21 and I Chronicles Chapter 33.

The wife of the prophet, Micah, based on the book that bears his name.

The wife of the prophet, Nahum, also from the book that bears his name.

CHAPTER 57 KINGS AND PROPHETS OF JUDAH

INTRODUCTION

²⁴⁴² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁴⁴³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 94b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_94.html

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

As time went on, Isaiah found himself more and more involved in politics. From the beginning he opposed foreign alliances of any sort. He believed that, instead of relying on untrustworthy allies, we should trust in Yahweh to save us from our enemies. Nor did he fear to express his views, however unpopular. Just as he had warned King Ahaz not to ally himself with Assyria against Syria and Israel, now he warned King Hezekiah not to ally himself with Egypt against Assyria, whose king, Sennacherib, was besieging our city of Jerusalem.²⁴⁴⁴

Both Isaiah and Hezekiah were proud men, unwilling to make the first move, lest doing so would be interpreted as acknowledging that the other was more important - you know, the usual games of ego that men indulge in, unlike us women, who just get the job done without making a fuss. Fortunately fate stepped in and caused Hezekiah to fall ill, so that Isaiah had no choice but to visit him.²⁴⁴⁵

Before he left, Isaiah and I had an argument how best to cure the king, who had broken out in boils all over his body. I recommended a fig poultice²⁴⁴⁶ while Isaiah recommended marriage! According to Isaiah, Hezekiah's illness was due to the fact that he had not married nor produced sons.²⁴⁴⁷ I said,

“If that's the case, why don't you offer him Hephzibah?

Instead of burying herself in books all day, it's high time she was married.”

²⁴⁴⁸

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ISAIAH

²⁴⁴⁴ Isaiah 30:1-5

²⁴⁴⁵ II Kings 20:1

Isaiah 38:1

II Chronicles 32:24

Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10a

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

²⁴⁴⁶ II Kings 20:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15926/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁴⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10a

http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים ב פרק כ סימן רמב

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=20&mefaresh=shimoni

²⁴⁴⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 94b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_94.html

I don't know what passed between them. I do know that, on his return, Isaiah summoned our daughter, Hephzibah, and announced that the king had asked for her hand in marriage.²⁴⁴⁹

²⁴⁴⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth 10a
http://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_10.html

HEPHZIBAH, WIFE OF KING HEZEKIAH

When my parents announced that I was to marry King Hezekiah I could hardly believe my ears.²⁴⁵⁰ He was thirty-nine years old - much older than me.²⁴⁵¹ Besides, I was a student of the law, not some idle princess. This may sound surprising, but you have to take into account the situation that existed when Hezekiah ascended to the throne. During his father's reign, with the exception of my fearless father, all God-fearing Yahwists had gone into hiding. Only after Ahaz's death did we dare show our faces again.²⁴⁵² To make up for all those lost years, during which we had been unable to worship Yahweh, we studied the law to the detriment of everything else. Even the farmers were so busy at their studies that their fields fell into neglect.

Not everyone did this out of love for the law or for Yahweh, for Hezekiah had threatened anyone unfamiliar with the laws of purity with the death penalty. As a result, despite searching the kingdom from Dan to Beer Sheva, his soldiers could find no-one who did not know them by heart.²⁴⁵³

I jumped at the chance to study the law. Unlike my two brothers, Shear Yashuv and Immanuel, whom my father had taught at home, being a girl I had not been allowed to study the law. As my mother constantly reminded me, women didn't need educating. Our job was to marry and provide our husbands with as many children as possible, preferably sons. Determined to prove that we women were no less capable of scholarship than men, to everyone's surprise I soon knew as much as my brothers.²⁴⁵⁴

Hezekiah and I were married after he recovered from the mysterious illness that had laid him low. Although he had done nothing but place his faith in Yahweh, my husband was credited with having successfully resisted the invincible Assyrians, who, after a series of misfortunes, had lifted the siege of Jerusalem and returned to Assyria.

HEPHZIBAH, WIFE OF KING HEZEKIAH

²⁴⁵⁰ II Kings 21:1

²⁴⁵¹ II Kings 18:2,13

II Chronicles 29:1

Isaiah 36:1

²⁴⁵² II Chronicles 29:34 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16578/jewish/Chapter-29.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁵³ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 94b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_94.html

²⁴⁵⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 20a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_20.html

Gifts for Hezekiah poured in from all the rulers in the region who wanted to ingratiate themselves with a king who had such a powerful God on his side.²⁴⁵⁵ I am sorry to say that all this attention went to my husband's head.²⁴⁵⁶

One day, a delegation arrived at court, bearing letters and a costly gift from Berodach-baladan, the king of Babylon.²⁴⁵⁷ Flattered at the attentions of such a powerful king, Hezekiah received the members of the delegation with open arms. Desiring to show them that he, too, was a king of some importance, and not just the ruler of some backward province, he took them on a tour of the palace and the royal treasury. He even took them to the Temple, where he opened the door to the Holy of Holies, explaining that our victories were due to the sacred chest which stood inside.²⁴⁵⁸

Our wealth and splendor were not all Hezekiah boasted of. He also wanted to show the delegation what a beautiful wife he had. This he did by ordering me to serve them. Although I considered this beneath me, I couldn't very well say no in front of our visitors.²⁴⁵⁹

The next thing I knew, my father burst in, demanding to see Hezekiah. Reluctantly, my husband tore himself away from our guests, leaving me to entertain them.

²⁴⁵⁵ II Chronicles 32:23

²⁴⁵⁶ II Chronicles 32:25 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16581/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁵⁷ II Kings 20:12 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15926/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Isaiah 39:1

²⁴⁵⁸ II Kings 20:13 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15926/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Isaiah 39:2

²⁴⁵⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 104a
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_104.html

On Hezekiah's return, I couldn't help noticing he had lost some of his ebullience. Later he explained why. Waiving aside court etiquette, my father had demanded to know the identity of our visitors. After telling him who they were, Hezekiah had assured my father that, to prove that we were not to be trifled with, he had shown them everything we owned. To my husband's shocked surprise, instead of offering congratulations, my father had castigated him. He told Hezekiah that, one day, everything he had shown our visitors would end up in Babylon.²⁴⁶⁰ Hearing this, it dawned on Hezekiah that perhaps it had been a mistake to let the members of the Babylonian delegation see all that we possessed.

I did my wifely duty and bore Hezekiah three children, two sons and a daughter. The oldest was Manasseh, who eventually became king, and the second Rabashka. Determined to give them a good Yahwist education, from the moment they were old enough, my husband would carry both on his shoulders to the house of study, to learn our laws.

One day, Hezekiah came home so white-faced that I thought he was going to faint.

"What's happened?" I asked.

He threw himself down on the bed and covered his face with his hands. As I stood there, gazing at his heaving shoulders, a feeling of dread crept over me. Eventually he recovered enough to answer. On the way to the house of study our two sons had started joking about his bald head. Manasseh had commented,

"Father's head would make a good tava on which to roast fish,"

while Rabashka had responded,

"Father's head would make a good altar on which to sacrifice to idols."

Hezekiah was so furious that he flung both violently to the ground. Manasseh lived but Rabashka died.²⁴⁶¹

²⁴⁶⁰ II Kings 20:14-17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15926/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁶¹ הגהות הכ"ח מסכת ברכות עמוד 3

<http://hebrewbooks.org/45779>

<http://www.yesmalot.co.il/shiurhtml/malotsh1794.asp>

Isaiah 38:2

Babylonian Talmud: Berachoth 10b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/zeraim/Berachoth.pdf>

Reincarnation of Souls

[http://the-](http://the-eye.eu/public/Books/Occult_Library/Qabalah/Rabbi%20Menachem%20Azarya%20of%20Panu%20-%20Reincarnation%20of%20Souls.pdf)

[eye.eu/public/Books/Occult_Library/Qabalah/Rabbi%20Menachem%20Azarya%20of%20Panu%20-%20Reincarnation%20of%20Souls.pdf](http://the-eye.eu/public/Books/Occult_Library/Qabalah/Rabbi%20Menachem%20Azarya%20of%20Panu%20-%20Reincarnation%20of%20Souls.pdf)

Aghast, I was unable to say a word. Rabashka dead? Surely there was some mistake? That my two sons were spoilt and unruly, I already knew. But that they could talk of their father in such a manner? And that Hezekiah, the man who never lost his temper, had lost control to the point of committing such an act of violence? It was too much to bear.

MESHULLEMETH, KING MANASSEH'S WIFE

I never understood why my husband was so unpopular as a king. All he did was introduce some religious reforms. As far as I was concerned, he was perfectly within his rights to do so, and they came none too soon. ²⁴⁶²

First, he re-established the local shrines that his father had torn down throughout the country. This meant that no longer did our people have to make the long journey to Jerusalem, to worship at the Temple of Yahweh. Then he introduced the worship of other gods like Baal and Asherah. ²⁴⁶³ By passing our first-born son through fire, he also led the way in worshipping Moloch. I won't deny that, as the child's mother, I suffered greatly, but who was I to go against the word of my husband and king? ²⁴⁶⁴ However, what infuriated the Yahwists most of all was the idol Manasseh erected in the Temple. ²⁴⁶⁵

The result was a power struggle over which gods our people would serve, Baal and Asherah or Yahweh, a struggle which my husband was determined to win. ²⁴⁶⁶

MESHULLEMETH, KING MANASSEH'S WIFE

²⁴⁶² II Kings 21:2

I Chronicles 33:2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 3:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁴⁶³ II Kings 21:3-5

I Chronicles 33:3-5

²⁴⁶⁴ II Kings 21:6

I Chronicles 33:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16582/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁶⁵ II Kings 21:7

I Chronicles 33:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16582/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁴⁶⁶ II Kings 21:8

I Chronicles 33:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16582/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

The Yahwists had the effrontery to accuse my husband of impiety - my husband, who was such a devout follower of his gods! ²⁴⁶⁷ When the Yahwists denounced Manasseh in public, my husband had no choice but to silence them. People said that the streets ran red with the blood of all the holy men he killed. This was a gross exaggeration. ²⁴⁶⁸ Manasseh was scrupulous about upholding the law. Hadn't he executed his own grandfather, Isaiah, for having the impudence to criticize his behavior, by having him sawn in two whilst hiding in the hollow bole of a cedar tree? ²⁴⁶⁹

Then came the awful day on which some Assyrian generals came to arrest my husband on a charge of treason. Placing him in chains, they threw him onto a wagon and drove off, leaving me standing at the palace window, frozen to the spot. ²⁴⁷⁰

The months went by with no news. Then one day, just when I had given up all hope of ever seeing him again, Manasseh reappeared out of the blue. I hardly recognized him. He was a different man. I remember thinking that Manasseh must really have suffered agonies to have changed so much. ²⁴⁷¹

²⁴⁶⁷ The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah 64:5-7

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/2Baruch.html>

The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah 65:1-2

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/2Baruch.html>

²⁴⁶⁸ II Kings 21:16

Jeremiah 2:30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15999/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 3:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁴⁶⁹ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁴⁷⁰ I Chronicles 33:11

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא,ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 3:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah 64:4

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/2Baruch.html>

²⁴⁷¹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101a and b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html

He spent the rest of his days looking after the affairs of the kingdom and cancelling his previous religious reforms. ²⁴⁷² I couldn't understand it. What had caused him to change his mind so completely?

NARRATOR

The answer to Meshullemeth's question was that, whilst undergoing torture at the hands of the Assyrians, ²⁴⁷³ Manasseh pleaded to his gods to save him. When this failed, he remembered some verses from the Book of Deuteronomy that his father, Hezekiah, had been accustomed to read out in the synagogue:

"When you are distressed and all these things happen upon you in the end of days then you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not let you loose or destroy you; neither will He forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them." ²⁴⁷⁴

In desperation Manasseh recited them ²⁴⁷⁵ and, to his amazement, the torture stopped.

²⁴⁷² I Chronicles 33:14-16 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16582/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 3:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

NARRATOR

²⁴⁷³ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא, ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא
<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>
The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah 64:8-10
<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/2Baruch.html>

²⁴⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 4:30-31

²⁴⁷⁵ תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק י דף נא, ב פרק י הלכה ב גמרא
<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r4610.htm>
I Chronicles 33:12
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 101b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_101.html
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 3:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

JEDIDAH, KING AMON'S WIFE

²⁴⁷⁶ After the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, some of us Yahwists feared that Judah would be next. Fortunately, even a country as powerful as Assyria doesn't last forever. Already there were rumors of a new power rising in the northeast - that of Babylon. For a while we were safe from our greedy neighbors, but who knew for how long?

My husband, Amon, was twenty-two when he ascended the throne. ²⁴⁷⁷ As a believer in Yahweh, I had been very reluctant to marry the son of a king who had persecuted so many of our holy men, his own grandfather, Isaiah, included. ²⁴⁷⁸

I was right to be reluctant. My husband turned out to be worse than his father and his great grandfather combined. ²⁴⁷⁹ All three worshipped idols. King Ahaz set up an altar to one on the roof of the palace, ²⁴⁸⁰ King Manasseh placed an idol in the Temple, ²⁴⁸¹ while Amon had the gall to place one in the Holy of Holies. ²⁴⁸²

JEDIDAH, KING AMON'S WIFE

²⁴⁷⁶ II Kings 22:1

²⁴⁷⁷ II Kings 21:18-19
I Chronicles 33:21

²⁴⁷⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁴⁷⁹ II Kings 21:20-22
I Chronicles 33:22
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁴⁸⁰ II Kings 23:12

²⁴⁸¹ II Kings 21:7

²⁴⁸² Isaiah 28:20 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15959/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

While Ahaz had closed the Temple, preventing our people from offering up sacrifices to Yahweh and had forbidden the study of the law,²⁴⁸³ Manasseh went one step further, destroying the altar altogether and ordering Yahweh's name to be deleted from all the law books. Amon took the final step to perdition when he ordered the burning of all our law books, so that we were left in total ignorance of the law.²⁴⁸⁴

Not only were all three guilty of idol-worship but also of immorality. Ahaz permitted close relatives to marry each other, while Manasseh raped his own sister. As for my husband, it was rumored that he had relations with his own mother.²⁴⁸⁵

Is it any wonder that my criminal husband was eventually assassinated and replaced by our son, Josiah?²⁴⁸⁶

²⁴⁸³ Isaiah 8:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15939/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁴⁸⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

סדר עולם רבא פרק כד

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%9B%D7%93

²⁴⁸⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁴⁸⁶ II Kings 21:23

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, MICAH

Micah and I came from the town of Moreshet-Gath, about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.²⁴⁸⁷

As a young man, my husband had travelled to Jerusalem to study the law under a famous holy man, named Isaiah, by whom he was much influenced.²⁴⁸⁸ On the surface they had nothing in common. Whereas Isaiah was city-bred, a son of one of Jerusalem's most aristocratic families, Micah was a village boy whose lineage was nothing to speak of. Isaiah was a man of the world,²⁴⁸⁹ whereas the only world my husband knew was that of our immediate vicinity.²⁴⁹⁰ Yet even though they came from completely different backgrounds, they shared a common fear for the future of our people.²⁴⁹¹

When my husband started preaching the word of Yahweh, three others were already doing the same. Besides Micah's teacher, Isaiah, there were two Judeans sent by Yahweh to preach in the northern kingdom of Israel, one named Amos²⁴⁹² and another called Hosea.²⁴⁹³

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, MICAH

²⁴⁸⁷ Micah 1:1

Jeremiah 26:18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16023/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#t=primary&showrashi=true

²⁴⁸⁸ Isaiah 2:2-4

Micah 4:1-3

²⁴⁸⁹ Isaiah 18:1

²⁴⁹⁰ Micah 1:10-15

²⁴⁹¹ Isaiah 3:13-15

Micah 6:2-3

²⁴⁹² Amos 7:14

²⁴⁹³ Hosea 1:1

Micha was a modest man who, even when he became well-known, never turned his back on his own class, like some I could name. Nor did he interfere in politics like his teacher, Isaiah, but became the champion of humble folk like us. Although the youngest and least experienced of all four, it was my husband who foresaw the fall of our kingdom of Judah and the destruction of Yahweh's Temple.²⁴⁹⁴ This became his most famous prediction and was quoted long after his death.²⁴⁹⁵

Micah's message was aimed at the rich and powerful.²⁴⁹⁶ He accused wealthy folks of robbing the poor,²⁴⁹⁷ our rulers and judges of bribery,²⁴⁹⁸ and our priests of refusing to perform their priestly duties, unless paid to do so.²⁴⁹⁹ However, his harshest words were reserved for the astrologers, who gave the profession of prophecy such a bad name. He accused them of making favorable predictions if you paid them and unfavorable ones if you didn't,²⁵⁰⁰ and of lying through their teeth by assuring us that all was well when it wasn't.²⁵⁰¹

He always ended his sermons the same way, promising that, if we treated our fellow men with honesty and compassion and served Yahweh with humility, then we would avoid the fate of the northern kingdom.²⁵⁰²

For all his efforts, the only thanks that my husband received was to be told to keep his mouth shut and cease being an embarrassment to all those who heard him.²⁵⁰³

²⁴⁹⁴ Micah 3:12

²⁴⁹⁵ Jeremiah 26:18

²⁴⁹⁶ Micah 2:1-2

²⁴⁹⁷ Micah 2:8

²⁴⁹⁸ Micah 7:3

²⁴⁹⁹ Micah 3:11

²⁵⁰⁰ Micah 3:5-6

²⁵⁰¹ Micah 3:11

²⁵⁰² Micah 7:7-20

²⁵⁰³ Micah 2:6

NARRATOR

Micah died during the reign of King Hezekiah and was buried in Chesil,²⁵⁰⁴ a town in southern Judah,²⁵⁰⁵ though some claim he was buried in Cabul, an insignificant village in what was once the northern kingdom of Israel.²⁵⁰⁶

NARRATOR

²⁵⁰⁴ סדר הדורות - חלק א הלפרין, יחיאל בן שלמה, -1747 אלף הרביעי עמוד 141
<http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?sites=1&req=46817&st=%D7%9B%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9C&rnd=0.9658414441035548>

²⁵⁰⁵ Joshua 15:30

²⁵⁰⁶ Joshua 19:24-27

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, NAHUM

I lived with my husband in the village of Elkosh in the Galilee. ²⁵⁰⁷ We were one of the few families left in the village after the majority of its inhabitants were taken off to exile in Assyria. The only reason we had been spared was because we were so poor that we were considered incapable of offering any resistance to our cruel masters, the Assyrians.

Then, one day, Nahum "found God". He had a vision of the future, in which he witnessed the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The vision left him in a terrible state. ²⁵⁰⁸ Eventually he recovered enough to tell us what he had seen. He didn't just tell us. He acted it out.

First, Nahum turned to the north and called,
"Nineveh! What do you think? That Yahweh will forgive you twice?" ²⁵⁰⁹
Apparently, he was referring to the time that a messenger of Yahweh, named Jonah, had persuaded the citizens of Nineveh to repent of their crimes. However, since then, they had returned to their evil ways.

Then he turned to the south and announced,
"Judah! Yahweh will punish you no more.
He will release you from Assyrian tyranny." ²⁵¹⁰

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, NAHUM

²⁵⁰⁷ Nahum 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16194/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

Jerome-Prefaces to the Commentaries on the Minor Prophets: Nahum

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/206/2060222.htm>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090919110322/http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.vii.iv.xii.html>

²⁵⁰⁸ Nahum 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16194/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁵⁰⁹ Nahum 1:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16194/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁵¹⁰ Nahum 1:12-13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16194/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

Turning back to the north, he declared,
“Nineveh, city of blood, lies, plunder and cruelty!”²⁵¹¹
I am against you, declares Yahweh.²⁵¹²
Collect water, prepare bricks, strengthen your defenses,²⁵¹³
watch the road, gather all your strength.²⁵¹⁴
Your warriors hurry to the city wall.²⁵¹⁵
Your defenders are as weak as women.²⁵¹⁶
The besieger is now the besieged.²⁵¹⁷
The gates are wide open. The palace is destroyed.
The queen has been taken into captivity. Her maidens bemoan their fate.
Your citizens are fleeing.
‘Stop! Stop!’ comes the order, but no one pays attention.”²⁵¹⁸

Cupping his ear, Nahum continued,
“The enemy is upon you. Listen!
You can hear the cracking of whips, the clatter of wheels,
the galloping horses, the jolting chariots.”

²⁵¹¹ Nahum 3:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16196/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹² Nahum 3:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16196/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹³ Nahum 3:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16196/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹⁴ Nahum 2:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹⁵ Nahum 2:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹⁶ Nahum 3:13

²⁵¹⁷ Nahum 2:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵¹⁸ Nahum 2:7-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Pointing with his finger, he said,
“Look! You can see the horseman standing in his stirrups,
the blade of his sword, his burnished spear
and the piles of corpses that hinder his passage.”²⁵¹⁹
Red are the shields of the officers. Crimson are the uniforms of the troops.
Metal chariots flash like fire, dart like lightning, storm through the streets,
clatter through the city squares.²⁵²⁰
Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!
There is no end to the treasure. Take it all.”²⁵²¹

In ringing tones, he announced,
“King of Assyria, your wound is fatal.
Your shepherds slumber, your nobles rest,
your people are scattered over the mountains.
There is no one to lead them.
All who hear the news of your downfall clap their hands.”²⁵²²

Then he turned and pointed to the south,
“Look! There on the mountains - a messenger bringing word of peace.
Judah! Celebrate your festivals. Fulfil your vows.
No more will the wicked Assyrians invade you, for they are no more.”²⁵²³

With these words Nahum fell silent, his chest heaving and his hands hanging loosely at his sides. His face pale, he was trembling all over. After giving him something to eat and drink, I told him to rest.

²⁵¹⁹ Nahum 3:2-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16196/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵²⁰ Nahum 2:4-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵²¹ Nahum 2:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵²² Nahum 3:18-19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16196/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵²³ Nahum 2:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16195/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 9 Chapter 11:2-3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-9.htm>

Next morning Nahum told us he was going away. When we asked where, he explained that it was far too dangerous to preach about the downfall of Nineveh in what used to be the northern kingdom of Israel, now ruled with an iron fist by the cruel Assyrians. Therefore, he had decided to bring his message of hope to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, where it would do more good.

He set off on the long journey south, a lone figure on the road, becoming smaller with every step until he disappeared from sight. There was no knowing how long he would be gone. Would the Judeans believe him? I hoped so, even though I knew that most of Yahweh's messengers were ignored.

Time passed. Just when I had despaired of seeing him again, Nahum returned to Elkosh, saying that he could do no more. We resumed our lives as though nothing had happened. The only difference was that Nahum now spent hours scribbling away in a scroll. When I asked him what he was writing, he told me that he had decided to write down his vision so that, after the fall of Nineveh, people would say, "See! This is what Nahum said would happen."

CHAPTER 58
THE RESTORATION OF THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH

The Book of Kings II
The Book of Zephaniah
The Book of Chronicles II

After three idol-worshipping kings (Ahaz, Manasseh and Amon), Josiah must have seemed heaven-sent to the sorely oppressed adherents of Yahweh. According to the Biblical text, in the course of his renovations to the Temple in Jerusalem, a scroll was discovered, thought to be the Book of Deuteronomy. The newly-discovered sacred text acted as the basis of Josiah's religious reforms, the chief of which was the centralization of worship in the Temple. The words that shocked Josiah into action are taken from Deuteronomy Chapter 28 verse 36.

Josiah's reign proved to be the high point in the worship of Yahweh, before the people of Judah and its kings relapsed into idol-worship and chose to place their faith in earthly powers, rather than in Yahweh.

Describing the restoration are:

The wife of the prophet, Zephaniah, one of the three messengers of Yahweh preaching at the time, whose story is based on the book that bears his name.

The wife of Hilkiah the High Priest, who, according to II Kings Chapters 22-3 and II Chronicles Chapter 34, found the scroll.

The prophetess, Huldah, to whom Josiah turned for advice, as described in II Kings Chapter 22 and II Chronicles Chapter 34. As has already been mentioned in Chapter 26 (Judge Deborah), Huldah was punished for showing the king disrespect by being assigned the Hebrew name for a rat.

Josiah's two wives: Hamutal, whose name is mentioned in II Kings Chapters 22-3 and II Chronicles Chapters 34-5 and Zebudah, whose name can be found in II Kings Chapter 23 and II Chronicles Chapter 36.

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ZEPHANIAH

My husband, Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, came from a very distinguished family, descended from King Hezekiah himself. As you can probably guess from his father's name, Cushi, he had Ethiopian blood in his veins.²⁵²⁴

At the time of my story the towns and villages of Judah were subject to repeated raids by a fierce people called the Scythians. We, who lived in Jerusalem, were less affected by their predations. Instead, we had other problems to worry about, namely the continuing culture of immorality and idol-worship fostered by three former kings - Ahaz, Manasseh and Amon.

Prince Josiah had just been crowned king. We Yahwists placed great hopes in this young son of King Amon, who had been reared by his mother, Queen Jedidah, to worship Yahweh. However, it would take time before he was able to carry out the much-needed reforms to restore Yahweh's worship.

Zephaniah was one of three messengers of Yahweh trying to counteract the pernicious influence of our former kings. He taught in the synagogues and academies of learning,²⁵²⁵ while the famous Jeremiah preached in public and the holy woman, Huldah, taught us women in her schoolhouse.²⁵²⁶ On the rare occasions I had time on my hands, I would attend her lectures. Her favorite topic was those laws mentioned twice, or those hardly mentioned at all.²⁵²⁷

My husband was already a respected scholar when he experienced the first of eight visions, which served as the basis for eight lectures delivered in the synagogues and law academies where he taught. Zephaniah believed in plain speaking and made no attempt to tone down the vision's harsh message.

CHAPTER 58 THE RESTORATION OF THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH **THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, ZEPHANIAH**

²⁵²⁴ Zephaniah 1:1

²⁵²⁵ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

ילקוט שמעוני צפניה פרק א סימן תקסו

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=23&perek=1&mefaresh=shimoni

רד"ק מלכים ב [כב, יד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=22&mefaresh=radak

²⁵²⁶ II Chronicles 34:22

²⁵²⁷ II Kings 22:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15928/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

He began his first lecture by announcing dramatically,
“I bring you a message from Yahweh –
I will totally destroy everything from off the face of the earth!”
Then he added, “The Day of Judgment is near!”
You can imagine what impact this had on his listeners.²⁵²⁸

In his second lecture, Zephaniah told his audience how Yahweh intended to punish the royal family, who set such a bad example to the rest of us, by worshipping idols and committing acts of violence and deceit. Their punishment, and ours, would be death and destruction at the hands of our enemies. It would be the most awful day we had ever seen.²⁵²⁹

In the next three lectures Zephaniah offered us a ray of hope by announcing that, if we genuinely repented and changed our ways, Yahweh’s punishment would fall, not on us but on our enemies, the Philistines, the Moabites and the Ammonites.²⁵³⁰ Their end would be the same as that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To the list of those nations that would experience Yahweh’s vengeance, he added the Ethiopians and Assyrians, describing how the city of Nineveh would be brought down low. He concluded by saying that eventually all nations would fear Yahweh and worship Him.²⁵³¹

His sixth lecture was devoted to a scathing attack on the city of Jerusalem. Zephaniah described how the royal family spent all their time intriguing against each other, how our judges behaved like ravenous wolves, stealing whatever they could lay their hands on, and how our so-called ‘holy men’ told lies, constantly changing their predictions to suit the situation. As for Yahweh’s priests, he added, they no longer bothered to teach the law because they no longer followed it. You might have expected them to show some embarrassment, but you would be wrong. They were convinced that their sacred status would protect them.²⁵³²

²⁵²⁸ Zephaniah 1:21-6

²⁵²⁹ Zephaniah 1:8-16

²⁵³⁰ Zephaniah 1:17-18
Zephaniah 2:1-7

²⁵³¹ Zephaniah 2:8-11
Zephaniah 2:12-15
Zephaniah 3:1-5

²⁵³² Zephaniah 3:6-17

The last two lectures were devoted to end times, when everyone would worship Yahweh. Just as he had begun his series of lectures with a dramatic announcement, so Zephania concluded it with an uncharacteristic burst of emotion, as he envisaged the joy we would experience after Yahweh vanquished our enemies, restored us from exile and forgave us for our sins.²⁵³³

For all my husband's efforts, and those of his fellow preachers, Jeremiah and Huldah, none of our citizens were prepared to listen. Instead, convinced that they would be spared the fate of other nations, they ignored all such warnings, with the well-known tragic result.

²⁵³³ Zephaniah 3:18-20

THE WIFE OF HILKIAH THE HIGH PRIEST

I was just a young girl when my parents informed me that I was to be married to the High Priest. My reaction was what you would expect of any young girl - a mixture of awe and fear.

My parents tried to overcome my hesitation, by pointing out all the advantages of such a match. My father told me what an honor it was, explaining that Yahwist priests could not marry just anyone. For example, they were forbidden to marry prostitutes, slaves, prisoners, women who cheated in business or who kept an inn, or any woman living apart from her husband.²⁵³⁴ Although ordinary priests were allowed to marry widows, a High Priest, like my future husband, could marry only a virgin.²⁵³⁵

My mother tried to encourage me, by telling me that only a man with no physical defects could be elected to the office of High Priest. When I met my husband, I realized that this did not mean that he was necessarily handsome.²⁵³⁶

After my marriage to Hilkiah, King Josiah decided to repair the Temple. Naturally, by virtue of his position, the task fell on my husband.²⁵³⁷ During the renovations, Hilkiah entered the Holy of Holies to remove the silver with which to pay the workers, where, to his surprise, he found an old scroll hidden in a corner. Intrigued, he started reading. Realizing its importance, he straight away sent it to the king.²⁵³⁸

THE WIFE OF HILKIAH THE HIGH PRIEST

²⁵³⁴ Leviticus 21:7-8

²⁵³⁵ Leviticus 21:13-14

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 12:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

²⁵³⁶ Leviticus 21:16-24

Antiquities of the Jews Book 3 Chapter 12:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-3.htm>

²⁵³⁷ II Kings 22:3-7

II Chronicles 34:7-9

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵³⁸ II Kings 22:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15928/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 34:14-15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=22&mefaresh=radak

רד"ק למלכים ב פרק כב

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

As Josiah's queen, I assumed I would wield some influence at court, but in this I was mistaken. The consort of the king possesses very little real power compared with that of the Queen Mother. Moreover, Jedidah had made it quite clear that her daughters-in-law were good for one thing only - producing heirs to the throne. I consoled myself with the thought that it was in our interest to do so, for when one of my sons became king, I would wield the same power as her.

Josiah had been king since he was eight, ruling under the guidance of his mother,²⁵³⁹ who had surrounded her son with hand-picked advisers, all of them worshippers of Yahweh.²⁵⁴⁰ Under their influence, Josiah decided to repair the Temple, which had fallen into disuse during the reigns of his father and grandfather.²⁵⁴¹

During the repairs the High Priest, Hilkiah, found a dusty old scroll which caused a great deal of excitement. When my husband's scribe read it out, I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.²⁵⁴² All it talked of were the dos and don'ts, and all the awful things that would happen to us if we didn't keep Yahweh's laws.²⁵⁴³

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

²⁵³⁹ II Kings 22:1

II Chronicles 34:1

²⁵⁴⁰ Jeremiah 1:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15998/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁵⁴¹ II Kings 22:2

II Chronicles 34:2-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵⁴² II Kings 22:3-10

II Chronicles 34:8-18

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵⁴³ Deuteronomy 28:15-69

After a while I stopped listening, until he came to the following words:

"The Lord will lead you and your king whom you will have established over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers; and there you will serve other deities [made] of wood and stone." ²⁵⁴⁴

To me they were meaningless. However, their effect on Josiah had to be seen to be believed. His face turned white with shock and his whole body started to tremble. ²⁵⁴⁵ Utterly distraught, he turned to his advisers and asked what he should do.

After a hasty discussion, they decided to consult one of Yahweh's holy men. Their first choice was Jeremiah, but he was away from the city. Their second was Zephaniah, but he couldn't be found. So they had no choice but to seek the advice of a cantankerous old woman named Huldah. ²⁵⁴⁶

²⁵⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 28:36

²⁵⁴⁵ Kings 22:11
II Chronicles 34:19

²⁵⁴⁶ II Kings 22:12-20
II Chronicles 34:20-28
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

HULDAH, THE HOLY WOMAN

From an early age I experienced visions of the future.²⁵⁴⁷ In the beginning no-one took them seriously. However, when they turned out to be accurate, people began to take more notice. Even King Josiah came to consult me from time to time, usually when my fellow preachers, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, were absent from the city.²⁵⁴⁸

My schoolhouse was located between the two walls that surrounded the city, near the High Court where our seventy-one elders dispensed justice. This proved to be very convenient when they needed to consult me on a point of law, a regular occurrence ever since King Amon had burnt all the law books, and the only people left who knew the law by heart, were Jeremiah, Zephaniah and me.²⁵⁴⁹

Because of a vision I had the previous night, I was unsurprised when a delegation of the king's courtiers entered the classroom where I was teaching, to consult me about the scroll they had found. I confess to being slightly irritated at being interrupted in the middle of my lecture, and might have been less polite than I should have been.²⁵⁵⁰

HULDAH, THE HOLY WOMAN

²⁵⁴⁷ סדר עולם רבא · פרק כא

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%9B%D7%90

²⁵⁴⁸ רד"ק מלכים ב [כב, יד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=22&mefaresh=radak

רד"ק מלכים ב [כב, יד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=22&mefaresh=radak

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14a and b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

²⁵⁴⁹ תרגום יונתן מלכים ב פרק כב עמוד 238

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 88b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_88.html

²⁵⁵⁰ II Kings 22:14

II Chronicles 34:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

If they thought that, by consulting a woman, they would receive a milder explanation of what was written in the scroll, they were in for a surprise.²⁵⁵¹ I said, “Tell the man who sent you that Yahweh does indeed mean to punish us according to what is written in the scroll. Because our people have turned to idol-worship, Yahweh is so angry, that nothing we can do will pacify him. However, you can also tell the king that, since he has shown true remorse, Yahweh will only punish us after his death, to spare him the sight of our suffering and the destruction of the Temple.”²⁵⁵²

With these words I turned back to my students and resumed delivering my lecture. I didn’t even notice them leave.

NARRATOR

When Huldah died, she was buried in Jerusalem, where she had spent her entire life. Even when all the graves in the old city were exhumed and the bones buried elsewhere, her grave remained intact, together with those of the royal House of David. For in spite of her sharp tongue, resulting in her being called a rat, her vision had turned out to be only too accurate.²⁵⁵³

²⁵⁵¹ ד"ק מלכים ב [כב, יד]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=11&perek=22&mefaresh=radak
 Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 14b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

²⁵⁵² II Kings 22:15-20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15928/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 34:23-28 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15928/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

NARRATOR

²⁵⁵³ תלמוד ירושלמי תוספתא - מסכת בבא בתרא א,ז

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f43.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת נזיר פרק ט דף מה,ב, פרק ט הלכה ג גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r3409.htm>

תוספתא - מסכת נגעים מסכת נגעים פרק ו

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f63.htm>

THE WIFE OF HILKIAH THE HIGH PRIEST

Hilkiah had been one of the five-man delegation sent to ask the holy woman, Huldah, for advice regarding what was written in the scroll. According to my husband, her reply brought King Josiah little consolation.

Nevertheless, determined to do his best to ward off disaster, he issued a proclamation summoning everyone in the kingdom to present themselves at the Temple. When we were all assembled in the outer courtyard, the king read out what was written in the scroll. It took hours before he came to the end, whereupon we were made to swear to obey all its rules and regulations. ²⁵⁵⁴

Then Josiah set about eradicating all vestiges of idol worship from the kingdom. I barely saw my husband, on whose shoulders had fallen the burden of ridding the Temple of everything not connected with the worship of Yahweh. Whatever he found was taken out of the city to the Kidron Valley and burned to ashes. Then came the task of purifying the Temple and re-consecrating it to Yahweh. The whole process took weeks to complete. ²⁵⁵⁵

Following this, the king turned his attention to the rest of the country, enforcing the worship of Yahweh by all the means at his disposal. ²⁵⁵⁶ Those priests who officiated at the local shrines and who were prepared to convert to Yahwism were brought to Jerusalem. ²⁵⁵⁷ All the others were killed and their shrines destroyed. ²⁵⁵⁸

Only then was Hilkiah ordered to make arrangements to celebrate the coming Passover, according to what was written in the scroll.

THE WIFE OF HILKIAH THE HIGH PRIEST

²⁵⁵⁴ II Kings 23:1-3

II Chronicles 34:29-32

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵⁵⁵ II Kings 23:4-7

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵⁵⁶ II Kings 23:10-14

II Kings 23:24

²⁵⁵⁷ II Kings 23:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Deuteronomy 18:6-8

Ezekiel 44:10-16

²⁵⁵⁸ II Kings 23:19-20

II Chronicles 34:33

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

Although Josiah spent his entire reign enforcing the worship of Yahweh and His laws, his efforts were doomed to failure. After all, we were only human and preferred gods we could see, instead of one who was invisible.

My husband met his death when Pharaoh Necho of Egypt appeared at the head of a great army, requesting permission to cross our territory. For some inexplicable reason, Josiah decided to prevent him from doing so.²⁵⁵⁹ In the ensuing battle, Josiah was mortally wounded and our army was put to flight.²⁵⁶⁰ Josiah was brought back to Jerusalem, but died soon after from his wounds. He was only thirty-nine.²⁵⁶¹

The whole country turned out for his funeral.²⁵⁶² None was more affected by Josiah's death than his friend, Jeremiah, who composed a series of dirges in his memory.²⁵⁶³

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

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BabylonianTalmud: Ta'anith 22a and b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Taanith.pdf>

²⁵⁶⁰ II Kings 23:26-30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Chronicles 35:20-24

BabylonianTalmud: Ta'anith 22a and b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Taanith.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁵⁶¹ II Chronicles 35:24

²⁵⁶² Zechariah 12:11

²⁵⁶³ II Chronicles 35:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16584/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ד א

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תרגום יונתן לכתובים דברי הימים ב פרק ל כה.

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/ktuvim.pdf>

Part 18
The Last Kings of Judah

CHAPTER 59
THE NEMESIS OF JUDAH'S LAST KINGS
The Book of Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah relates the prophet's life and trials in more detail than the book of any other prophet. He is known as 'the weeping prophet', to whom the authorship of the Scroll of Lamentations is attributed.

Jeremiah's mother describes Jeremiah's youth. Her story is based on Jeremiah Chapter 16 plus an extract from *Pesikta Rabbati*, a collection of homilies or sermons dating from around 845 CE.

A woman of Jerusalem tells us what happened after Jeremiah left his birthplace of Anathoth for Jerusalem, to preach his message of doom to its citizens (Jeremiah Chapters 3-6, 8 and 14).

Hamutal, the mother of Jehoahaz and Zedekiah, describes how Jeremiah's message was received.

The wife of Jeremiah's pupil, Baruch, mention of whom appears in Jeremiah Chapters 32, 36 and 45, complains about how Jeremiah exploited her husband.

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, JEREMIAH

Our family comes from Anathoth, a small town situated about three miles northeast of Jerusalem, known as a city of priests.²⁵⁶⁴ My husband, Hilkiyah, and I had the ill fortune of marrying during King Manasseh's reign of terror. After only one opportunity to consummate our marriage, Hilkiyah was forced to go into hiding to avoid execution. It was enough. I conceived and, nine months later, bore a son whom we named Jeremiah.²⁵⁶⁵

A precocious child, from an early age he said the most unexpected things.²⁵⁶⁶ Once he came to me complaining of a terrible stomachache. His heart was beating so hard I was afraid it would burst. When he cried out, "I can't bear it!" naturally I thought he was talking about the stomach ache, until he explained,

"I have to warn everyone before it is too late."

"What do you have to warn them about?" I asked.

"I have to warn them that war is coming," was his reply.

Attributing his behavior to childish fears, I paid no further attention.²⁵⁶⁷

The next time he came out with something unexpected was when he accused me of being unfaithful to his father. I was so shocked that, at first, I didn't react. Then I replied,

"How can you say such a dreadful thing?"

Jeremiah explained, "Mother, I don't mean you.

I'm talking about Zion and Jerusalem.

I can see the citizens dressing their daughters in fine clothes and adorning them with jewelry.

Don't they realize that soon thieves will come and steal them all away?"

This time I put down his behavior to a vivid imagination.²⁵⁶⁸

CHAPTER 59 THE NEMESIS OF JUDAH'S LAST KINGS

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, JEREMIAH

²⁵⁶⁴ Joshua 21:17-18

²⁵⁶⁵ Jeremiah 20:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16017/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-20.htm#t=primary

[ויהי כי ארכו לו שם הימים] מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית - פרשת תולדות פרשה סד: יצחק בגרר ה

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/64.htm>

²⁵⁶⁶ Jeremiah 1:1-5

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁶⁷ Jeremiah 4:19

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁶⁸ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

The third time he burst out with something strange, I took it more seriously and suggested he talk to his father. Hilkiyah told him that he had been blessed by Yahweh with the gift of prophecy, a great honor but also a great burden. I could tell that my darling boy was deeply troubled. I encouraged him to tell me how he felt about being one of Yahweh's holy men. He replied that he felt far too young to be given such responsibility; he wasn't used to speaking in public and didn't know how he would manage.²⁵⁶⁹ Hilkiyah explained that, perhaps, it was precisely because of his youth that Jeremiah had been chosen to spread Yahweh's word.²⁵⁷⁰

You can't imagine a less suitable person to be Yahweh's spokesman than Jeremiah. He was a sensitive soul who took things far too personally, which sometimes brought out the vindictive side of his nature. With a tendency to depression, he was easily discouraged, and was given to complaining a lot of the time.²⁵⁷¹

He was told to begin his mission by warning our people of the fate that awaited them.²⁵⁷² He started by preaching locally, first to family and friends, and then to the other citizens of Anathoth.²⁵⁷³ Later, he went further afield, preaching throughout the kingdom.²⁵⁷⁴

At first I was proud to be the mother of a holy man of Yahweh, regarding it as a great blessing. However, I soon learned that it was more of a curse. One day my son announced that he had decided never to marry or have children. I was appalled, for this meant that I would never have grandchildren. Jeremiah's excuse was that there was no point bringing children into the world, since most of our people would shortly die from starvation, the plague or the sword, while those who survived would be taken off into exile.

²⁵⁶⁹ Jeremiah 1:6 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15998/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁷⁰ Jeremiah 2:2
Hosea 11:1

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁷¹ Jeremiah 10:19-20

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א ²⁵⁷²

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁷³ Jeremiah 2:20,23

²⁵⁷⁴ Jeremiah 2:4

Just as bad was his decision not to attend any more funerals, or visit houses of mourning. This displayed a complete lack of respect for the families of those that had died and was considered quite scandalous. Jeremiah justified his behavior by saying, “What’s the point of honoring the dead when, shortly, there will be so many corpses that there won’t be enough people to bury them?”

Finally, he refused to take part in any of our feasts, which earned him the reputation of being very snobbish and anti-social. Jeremiah explained that, because of the tragedy that was about to befall us, he no longer had any desire to celebrate anything.²⁵⁷⁵

With such a defeatist attitude, is it any wonder that he became so unpopular? Even our friends and neighbors in Anathoth turned against him. This upset Jeremiah so much that he wished he had never been born.²⁵⁷⁶

Worse was to follow when he discovered a plot to kill him. Up till then, he had innocently assumed that at least the people of his home town supported him. He had no idea that they were planning to have him poisoned. This time he was so angry that he prayed to Yahweh for revenge. Whether it was the result of his prayers, or for some other reason, the fact is that all the conspirators met a bad end.²⁵⁷⁷

Eventually even our relatives disowned him, plotting behind his back to have him imprisoned for adultery.²⁵⁷⁸ Jeremiah prayed to be avenged on them too.

No-one gave a thought to how my son’s unpopularity affected me. I stopped going out because I couldn’t bear the way people turned their backs on me, as if I was to blame for the whole situation.

A WOMAN OF JERUSALEM

I was born in Jerusalem, the most beautiful city in the world and home to Yahweh’s great Temple, which never failed to arouse my emotions whenever I saw it, shining white and gold in the sunlight. My husband had died in one of King Jehoiakim’s many purges, during which the streets of Jerusalem literally ran with blood,²⁵⁷⁹

²⁵⁷⁵ Jeremiah 16:1-13

²⁵⁷⁶ Jeremiah 15:10 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16012/jewish/Chapter-15.htm/showrashi/true#l=primary
פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁵⁷⁷ Jeremiah 11:18-23 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16008/jewish/Chapter-11.htm/showrashi/true#l=primary

²⁵⁷⁸ Jeremiah 12:6

A WOMAN OF JERUSALEM

leaving me to fend for myself. This is how I came to keep house for the most extraordinary man one could wish to meet.

After the northern tribes of Israel, that had long ago deserted the worship of Yahweh for that of idols, were taken off to exile in Assyria, you would have expected us Judeans to learn from their mistakes. Far from it! We followed their example and turned to idol-worship too. ²⁵⁸⁰ It was at this time that a holy man appeared in Jerusalem, warning of the punishment that awaited us if we did not repent of our ways and return to the worship of Yahweh. ²⁵⁸¹ A pupil of the holy man, Isaiah, of blessed memory, ²⁵⁸² he too was a great preacher. This was the man who became my employer.

When he first arrived in Jerusalem, Jeremiah, for that was his name, spent months wandering the streets in a fruitless search for people who would listen to his message, ²⁵⁸³ but all he found were fools. ²⁵⁸⁴ The priests were ignorant of Yahweh's laws, the authorities weren't interested in upholding them, while astrologers encouraged our people to worship idols. ²⁵⁸⁵ Everyone, it seemed, was happy with this situation, apart from Yahweh's messengers. ²⁵⁸⁶

²⁵⁷⁹ II Kings 24:4

²⁵⁸⁰ Jeremiah 3:6-10

²⁵⁸¹ Jeremiah 1:3

²⁵⁸² מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי נג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L2

²⁵⁸³ Jeremiah 5:1-2

²⁵⁸⁴ Jeremiah 5:4

²⁵⁸⁵ Jeremiah 4:8

²⁵⁸⁶ Jeremiah 5:31

My employer was prepared to do almost anything to convince us to take his warnings seriously. Can you believe it? For fifteen years he walked around with a wooden yoke round his neck, saying that this was the fate that awaited us when the Babylonians finally conquered our land. ²⁵⁸⁷

This was not the only way in which Jeremiah differed from all those who predicted the future for a living, for he demanded no payment. Moreover, as opposed to the astrologers who said there would be peace, he predicted there would be war. ²⁵⁸⁸

It isn't hard to guess which message we preferred. Who wanted to hear that such powerful enemies ²⁵⁸⁹ as the Scythians ²⁵⁹⁰ and the Babylonians were preparing to invade our country, ²⁵⁹¹ and that our city of Jerusalem would find soon itself under siege and its citizens exiled? ²⁵⁹²

²⁵⁸⁷ Jeremiah 27:1-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16024/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary

²⁵⁸⁸ Jeremiah 5:13-14
Jeremiah 6:1-4

²⁵⁸⁹ Jeremiah 4:5-6

²⁵⁹⁰ Jeremiah 6:22-25

²⁵⁹¹ Jeremiah 4:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16001/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Jeremiah 4:15-16
Jeremiah 5:15-17

²⁵⁹² Jeremiah 6:5-9

Reassured by the optimistic predictions of the astrologers, we continued life as usual, ²⁵⁹³ counting on King Josiah's reforms to save us. ²⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, we neither heeded Jeremiah's warnings ²⁵⁹⁵ nor obeyed his instructions. ²⁵⁹⁶

When Jeremiah saw that it was a waste of time trying to persuade us simple folk to mend our ways, ²⁵⁹⁷ he turned to the authorities. ²⁵⁹⁸ They proved to be just as obdurate, equally unwilling to listen to his message of doom and gloom. ²⁵⁹⁹

Only time would prove how wrong we were to believe the astrologers and reveal the truly awful punishment that awaited us. ²⁶⁰⁰

²⁵⁹³ Jeremiah 6:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16003/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵⁹⁴ Jeremiah 4:8-10,28 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16001/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
II Kings 23:25-26

²⁵⁹⁵ Jeremiah 6:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16003/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵⁹⁶ Jeremiah 6:16

²⁵⁹⁷ Jeremiah 6:10-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16003/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵⁹⁸ Jeremiah 5:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16002/jewish/Chapter-5.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁵⁹⁹ Jeremiah 5:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16002/jewish/Chapter-5.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁶⁰⁰ Jeremiah 6:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16003/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

For a long time now our kingdom of Judah had been suffering from a severe drought, something not unusual in our part of the world. The wild deer had abandoned their young in an effort to find forage, while the wild donkeys stood by the empty water courses, blind from starvation and gasping from thirst.²⁶⁰¹ All those sent to find water returned empty-handed, hanging their heads in shame. Unable to work the parched soil, our farmers did the same.²⁶⁰² When sacrifices to our idols proved fruitless, we turned to Jeremiah, who announced that the drought was a warning from Yahweh,²⁶⁰³ and that only He was capable of saving us.²⁶⁰⁴

Recalling King Solomon's supplication to Yahweh on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple, that whoever prayed to Yahweh, his prayer would be answered, we prayed to Him to end the drought.²⁶⁰⁵ Even Jeremiah intervened on our behalf, reminding Yahweh that we, the common folk, were not to blame, but had been misled by deceitful astrologers.²⁶⁰⁶ It was too late. Just as we had been deaf to Jeremiah's pleas, so Yahweh was deaf to ours.²⁶⁰⁷

Jeremiah painted a horrific picture of what was about to happen. The corpses of the slain would lie unburied in the fields, while the bodies of those who died of starvation would lie unburied in the streets. No one would be left to bury them, after all our priests and holy men were taken into captivity.²⁶⁰⁸

²⁶⁰¹ Jeremiah 3:3-6

²⁶⁰² Jeremiah 14:3-4

²⁶⁰³ Jeremiah 14:1-2

²⁶⁰⁴ Jeremiah 14:22

²⁶⁰⁵ I Kings 8:35-37

²⁶⁰⁶ Jeremiah 14:11,13-14

²⁶⁰⁷ Jeremiah 14:12

²⁶⁰⁸ Jeremiah 14:15-18

Poor Jeremiah! His visions brought him no relief, only acute anxiety for the future.²⁶⁰⁹ Once I heard him mumble,

“I wish I was anywhere but here,
with these ingrates who call themselves my people,
who have turned their backs on Yahweh and who, with good reason,
trust no-one, not even members of their own family.
If they can’t trust each other, how can they trust Yahweh?
How can I blame Yahweh for wanting to punish them?”²⁶¹⁰

Nothing could prevent what was about to happen, not money, force or ingenuity. The only thing that could possibly help was for everyone to observe Yahweh’s laws.²⁶¹¹ Since we were incapable of changing our behavior,²⁶¹² Jeremiah’s only consolation was that not all of us would die.²⁶¹³ Some would be exiled to serve as witnesses to our people’s tragic end.²⁶¹⁴

²⁶⁰⁹ Jeremiah 4:19-21

²⁶¹⁰ Jeremiah 9:1-8

²⁶¹¹ Jeremiah 9:22-25

²⁶¹² Jeremiah 4:22
Jeremiah 6:28

²⁶¹³ Jeremiah 4:27
Jeremiah 5:18

²⁶¹⁴ Jeremiah 5:19--30

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

Despite all Josiah's efforts to promote the worship of Yahweh, our people had gradually returned to the gods they knew best. We began to see more and more of Jeremiah of Anathoth who regularly came to preach in the streets of Jerusalem. Claiming we were in imminent danger of attack and warning us to prepare for war, according to Jeremiah the only thing that would save us was to return to the worship of Yahweh. ²⁶¹⁵

Meeting with no success on the streets, Jeremiah started annoying those in positions of authority. ²⁶¹⁶ No-one was spared his tongue-lashing, neither our astrologers nor our priests. ²⁶¹⁷ At first we found his angry tirades entertaining, but after hearing the same thing over and over again, we soon lost interest.

HAMUTAL, KING JOSIAH'S WIFE

²⁶¹⁵ Jeremiah 2:1-9

²⁶¹⁶ Jeremiah 5:5

²⁶¹⁷ Jeremiah 5:31

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

You have possibly heard of my husband, Baruch, the son of Neriah, not so much because of his achievements, but because he was the pupil of one of the most reviled men of the time. I refer, of course, to that prophet of doom, Jeremiah.

My husband came from a highly respected family in Jerusalem. ²⁶¹⁸ His grandfather, Maaseiah, was governor of the city during the reign of good King Josiah. ²⁶¹⁹ His brother, Seraiah, held high office at King Zedekiah's court. Naturally my husband was keen to do as well as his brother, and would no doubt have done so, had he not become involved with Jeremiah. ²⁶²⁰

One day my husband came home, excitement written all over his face.

"You'll never guess what's happened!" he said.

"I've finally found a teacher." ²⁶²¹

Now I knew that, for a long time, my husband had been searching for someone to teach him the law, so naturally I was pleased. Had I known whom he had found and what would happen, I wouldn't have been nearly so encouraging.

It soon turned out that his 'teacher' wasn't interested in teaching at all, but was searching for someone to write down his visions and run errands for him. ²⁶²² Baruch would complain,

"Why can't I have visions like the pupils of other holy men?"

Joshua, the pupil of Moses, had them.

Elisha, the pupil of Elijah, had them.

So why not me?"

When he voiced the same complaints to Jeremiah, his teacher dismissed them out of hand, saying,

"Is this the time to worry about your own importance?"

Much greater matters are at stake!" ²⁶²³

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

²⁶¹⁸ Jeremiah 32:12

²⁶¹⁹ II Chronicles 34:8

²⁶²⁰ Jeremiah 51:59-64

²⁶²¹ Jeremiah 36:1-4

²⁶²² Jeremiah 36:1-4

²⁶²³ Jeremiah 45:1-5

If recording Jeremiah's visions had been all my husband was asked to do, it wouldn't have been so bad. Unfortunately it wasn't. After Jeremiah was thrown into prison for treason, he asked Baruch to take his book of visions and read them out in the Temple. The effect that Jeremiah's visions had on those who heard them was nothing less than astonishing. Baruch was immediately taken to meet the king's advisors, who confiscated the book and advised him and Jeremiah to go into hiding.²⁶²⁴

This is how Baruch and I were forced to lie low for a while. Jeremiah, of course, could do no such thing, for he was still in the prison yard. In his absence Baruch had to arrange for someone else to take him food.

Whilst in hiding, we heard that Jeremiah's book, in which my husband had invested so much time and effort, had been destroyed by King Jehoiakim, page by page. You would have thought that this was the end of Jeremiah's visions, but oh no! He merely had my husband write them down all over again.²⁶²⁵

Baruch's next task was to act as Jeremiah's lawyer, in the matter of the purchase of a field in Anathoth, from Jeremiah's cousin, Hanamel.²⁶²⁶ The transaction took place in the prison yard, in full view of the public. Baruch explained that this was Jeremiah's way of displaying his faith in the future of our country. Why else would he invest in property, if he thought he wouldn't be around to enjoy it?²⁶²⁷

²⁶²⁴ Jeremiah 36:11-19

²⁶²⁵ Jeremiah 36:26-28

²⁶²⁶ Jeremiah 32:6-7

²⁶²⁷ Jeremiah 32:12-15

CHAPTER 60
THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING JEHOAHAZ
The Book of Kings II
The Book of Chronicles 11

Despite the warnings of Yahweh's messengers, Jeremiah, Uriah and Habakkuk, as the kingdom tottered to its doom, it was business as usual for the last of Judah's kings. For Josiah's sons and grandson this involved ignoring the warnings of the prophets, idol-worship, immoral behavior and the folly of rebelling against an invincible enemy, all of which could only have one end.

The last four kings of Judah – Josiah's three sons, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and his grandson, Jehoiachin – appear in the following chapters. While Jehoahaz was elected by popular vote, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah and Jehoiachin owed their place on the throne to a foreign master. Three women tell the story of the three-month reign of King Jehoahaz, as described in II Kings Chapter 23 and II Chronicles Chapter 36. They are his mother, Hamutal, the mother of his half-brother, Jehoiakim, Zebudah, and his unnamed wife.

HAMUTAL, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAHAZ

With the death of Josiah, the succession fell to Johanan, the oldest male heir. Because he was too sickly to rule, the next in line was Zebudah's son, Jehoiakim. ²⁶²⁸

However, I had been preparing for this moment for years, schooling my handsome son, Jehoahaz, to curry favor with the people by showing his face regularly in the poorest parts of the city and dispensing largesse.

Meanwhile, I had worked on the members of the court, assuring their support by a mixture of bribes and threats. ²⁶²⁹ A lioness guarding her cub could not have fought more fiercely than me. ²⁶³⁰

As a result of my maneuverings, Zebudah, who was rather naïve, and her son, Jehoiakim, were helpless to prevent my son being proclaimed king.

CHAPTER 60 THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING JEHOAHAZ **HAMUTAL, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAHAZ**

²⁶²⁸ I Chronicles 3:15

Babylonian Talmud: Horayoth 11b

http://www.halakhah.com/horayoth/horayoth_11.html

²⁶²⁹ II Chronicles 36:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Kings 23:31

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶³⁰ Ezekiel 19:2-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16117/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#lt=primary

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOIAKIM

I can't say that Hamutal and I were the best of friends, since we spent most of the time vying with each other over whose son would inherit the throne after Josiah's death. However, we found common ground in our resentment of the high-handedness of Jedidah, the Queen Mother, and impatience with our husband's obsessive piety. ²⁶³¹

My son, Jehoiakim, ²⁶³² was next in line for the throne after the sickly Johanan, so, when Josiah was killed in battle, I fully expected him to be crowned king. Therefore, you can imagine my shock and incredulity when Hamutal's son, Jehoahaz, was proclaimed king instead. Only then did I learn that, for years, his mother had been plotting to overthrow the order of succession. ²⁶³³

I never forgave that wretched woman and secretly gloated when, three months later, ²⁶³⁴ Pharaoh Necho deposed Jehoahaz and crowned my son in his place. ²⁶³⁵ Now I was the one with the king's ear.

Both Hamutal and Jedidah had good reason to fear me, for I took full advantage of my position to make their lives a misery. Even so, had we known the fate that awaited them, we would not have been so eager to see our sons crowned king.

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOIAKIM

²⁶³¹ II Chronicles 34:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶³² II Kings 23:36

²⁶³³ II Chronicles 36:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶³⁴ II Kings 23:31

II Chronicles 36:2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶³⁵ II Kings 23:33-34

II Chronicles 36:3-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

THE WIFE OF KING JEHOAHAZ

Ever since my husband, King Jehoahaz, was deposed from the throne of Judah by Pharaoh Necho and exiled to Hamath, I wore mourning. With no proof of his death, I have been unable to remarry or have children.

After the death of his father, Jehoahaz had been crowned king of Judah by popular acclaim.²⁶³⁶ Although some accused him of violence and robbery,²⁶³⁷ there was no knowing what kind of king he might have been, or what he might have accomplished, because he was deposed after only three short months on the throne. Fearing that a king as popular as my husband might pose a threat to his rule, Pharaoh Necho replaced him with my husband's elder half-brother, Jehoiakim.²⁶³⁸

As for poor Jehoahaz, he was taken off in chains to the city of Riblah.²⁶³⁹ I watched him as he was marched off into captivity, treated as little more than an animal.²⁶⁴⁰ That was the last I saw of him, for he never returned. I spent the rest of my life mourning my missing husband, not knowing if he was alive or dead.²⁶⁴¹

THE WIFE OF KING JEHOAHAZ

²⁶³⁶ II Kings 23:31

II Chronicles 36:1-2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶³⁷ Ezekiel 19:3-4

²⁶³⁸ II Kings 23:33

II Chronicles 36:3

²⁶³⁹ II Kings 23:33

II Chronicles 36:4

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶⁴⁰ Ezekiel 19:4

²⁶⁴¹ Jeremiah 22:10-12

CHAPTER 61
THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING JEHOIAKIM

The Book of Kings II
The Book of Jeremiah
The Book of Habakkuk
The Book of Chronicles II

Unlike the king who preceded him (Jehoahaz) and the king that followed him (Jehoiachin), both of whom retained their throne for only three months, Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah's wife, Zebudah, lasted far longer. His reign, as narrated in II Kings Chapter 23-24 and II Chronicles Chapter 36, is described by four women - two queens and the unnamed wives of two prophets.

Josiah's wife, Zebudah, the mother of Jehoahaz and Zedekiah, describes how the prophet, Jeremiah, annoyed the authorities so much that they demanded his death.

While Jeremiah survived, another Yahwist prophet, named Uriah, did not. His wife tells the story of his shocking end (Jeremiah Chapter 26).

Zebudah returns to tell us how the Babylonians replaced the Assyrians and the Egyptians as rulers of Judah (Jeremiah Chapter 46).

Jehoiakim's wife, Nehushtah, relates how her husband foolishly tried to overthrow his new masters and was killed as a result (II Chronicles Chapter 36).

The chapter ends with a legend found in Rashi's Commentary on Habakkuk (Chapter 2 verse 1). The story is told by Habakkuk's wife.

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAKIM

From the very first days of his rule, Jehoiakim ²⁶⁴² was subjected to the constant criticism of the holy man, Jeremiah, who accused him of impiety, corruption, exploitation and the misuse of public funds. ²⁶⁴³ As if that wasn't bad enough, he also accused my son of greed, murder and oppression. ²⁶⁴⁴ I don't know what he hoped to achieve. After all, he wasn't exactly in a position to do anything about it, merely threaten Jehoiakim with Yahweh's wrath.

Jehoiakim was not the only one to be subjected to Jeremiah's tirades. Every day, the bad-tempered man would appear in the Temple Court, to admonish all who came to worship, warning them that if they did not keep Yahweh's laws, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed.

Silly fool! Did he really think he could say such things and go unpunished? Eventually he angered the priests and astrologers so much that they had him arrested and demanded his death. ²⁶⁴⁵

CHAPTER 61 THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING JEHOIAKIM

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAKIM

²⁶⁴² II Kings 23:34

II Chronicles 36:4

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶⁴³ Jeremiah 22:13-14

²⁶⁴⁴ Jeremiah 22:17

²⁶⁴⁵ Jeremiah 26:2-9

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, URIAH

My husband, Uriah, had the misfortune to be called upon by Yahweh to spread His word during the tyrannical reign of King Jehoiakim. The message my husband was ordered to preach to the people was simple - if they didn't return to the worship of Yahweh, then they would suffer a terrible punishment, exile or death.²⁶⁴⁶ His audiences responded as they did to all of Yahweh's messengers. At best, they laughed or jeered. At worst, they physically abused them. Few went as far as King Jehoiakim, who gave orders for my husband to be put to death.

Thanks to a noble soul who came to warn us, Uriah was able to leave Jerusalem under cover of night and disappear into the desert. Only I knew that he had decided to seek refuge in Egypt. How King Jehoiakim found out where he was, I don't know. All I do know is that Elnathan, the son of Achbor, set out with some soldiers to capture him and bring him back to Judah for punishment.

When Uriah was dragged before the king, it was Jehoiakim himself who dealt the death blow with his sword. The authorities wouldn't even let me take my husband's body back to our town for burial. Instead they threw his corpse into a hastily dug grave in the pauper's cemetery in Jerusalem.²⁶⁴⁷

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, URIAH

²⁶⁴⁶ Jeremiah 26:20

Sifrei Bamidbar Paragraph 88

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Sifrei_Bamidbar.88?lang=en

²⁶⁴⁷ Jeremiah 26:21-23

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAKIM

Jehoiakim had been on the throne for four years when, in a great battle at Carchemish on the River Euphrates, the Assyrians and their allies, the Egyptians, were defeated by the Babylonians.²⁶⁴⁸

At first we were overjoyed to hear that our two former taskmasters had been brought so low, and even mocked the Egyptians as they marched back to Egypt with their tails between their legs. Then we realized that we would still have to pay the same crippling tribute, but to a different master, one who was reputed to be even more rapacious.²⁶⁴⁹

ZEBUDAH, THE MOTHER OF KING JEHOAKIM

²⁶⁴⁸ Jeremiah 46:2

²⁶⁴⁹ II Kings 24:7

NEHUSHTAH, KING JEHOIAKIM'S WIFE

Mine was a marriage of convenience, not one of love. ²⁶⁵⁰ I knew all about my husband's affairs with other women. My spies reported that he sometimes arranged to have men killed, in order to sleep with their wives. ²⁶⁵¹ I even knew about his incestuous relationship with his mother, Zebudah. ²⁶⁵² I ignored it all. What interested me was not having a faithful husband, or even a moral one, but remaining at the center of power.

Unfortunately, my husband's power derived from the ruler who kept him on the throne. At first this was the Egyptian Pharaoh, ²⁶⁵³ then, after the Battle of Carcamish, the king of Babylon. For as long as Jehoiakim paid them tribute, he could be sure of their favor. ²⁶⁵⁴ However, this meant raising the already burdensome taxes, a step that was bound to make my husband unpopular. ²⁶⁵⁵

My fears were soon realized when a number of attempts were made on his life. He was forced to have all his enemies killed, not just those found guilty by the courts, but also those he merely suspected of plotting against him. As a result, Jehoiakim earned an undeserved reputation for cruelty. ²⁶⁵⁶

NEHUSHTAH, KING JEHOIAKIM'S WIFE

²⁶⁵⁰ II Kings 24:8

²⁶⁵¹ Ezekiel 19:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16117/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#lt=primary

²⁶⁵² II Chronicles 36:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁵³ II Kings 23:35

²⁶⁵⁴ Jeremiah 46:2

II Kings 24:7

²⁶⁵⁵ Jeremiah 22:17

²⁶⁵⁶ II Kings 24:4

When he told me he intended to appropriate the tribute money to build yet another palace, I had my doubts.²⁶⁵⁷ However, I knew my husband well enough to realize that he would not be gainsaid. Therefore, I suggested that, before he did so, he take the precaution of signing a mutual defense pact with Pharaoh Necho.²⁶⁵⁸

Inevitably the Babylonian king, who had spies everywhere, sent an army to punish us and take by force that which had not been freely given. Immediately we dispatched a messenger to Pharaoh, activating our pact. We waited and waited, hoping that the Egyptians would come and save us. Eventually we realized that they had no intention of honoring the pact and that it was worthless.²⁶⁵⁹

Jehoiakim was captured, placed in chains and taken to King Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah.²⁶⁶⁰ A rumor reached us that, just as that pernicious man, Jeremiah, had predicted,²⁶⁶¹ Jehoiakim died on the way, his corpse left at the side of the road to be eaten by dogs.²⁶⁶²

²⁶⁵⁷ Jeremiah 22:13-14

²⁶⁵⁸ II Kings 24:1
Daniel 1:1

סדר עולם רבא פרק כד

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%9B%D7%93

²⁶⁵⁹ Jeremiah 8:20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16005/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#lt=primary

²⁶⁶⁰ Ezekiel 19:9

²⁶⁶¹ Jeremiah 22:19

²⁶⁶² II Chronicles 36:6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HABAKKUK

My husband, Habakkuk, and I lived in the town of Shunem at the western end of the Jezreel Valley. ²⁶⁶³ His mother, who lived with us after her husband's death, never tired of telling me he was special, having been conceived by a miracle after she had long since passed child-bearing age. Moreover, after falling into a coma from sunstroke, he had been revived by a miracle worker named Elisha. ²⁶⁶⁴ I must admit I didn't pay much attention to her stories, until the day Habakkuk had a vision.

In his vision he saw our beautiful city of Jerusalem utterly destroyed. Convinced that he had been granted a glimpse of the future, from then on he was a changed man. ²⁶⁶⁵ He would spend hours pondering on the meaning of his vision. He concluded that Yahweh intended to use the Babylonians, a cruel and merciless people who lived in the north, to punish us for deserting His worship. ²⁶⁶⁶

One morning, Habakkuk went out into our yard and started digging a hole. When I asked him what he was doing, he answered,

“Can't you see? I'm digging a hole.”

“Yes, I can see that. But what for? Do we need a new well?”

“No, we don't need a new well,” was his reply.

“Then why?”

“You'll soon understand.”

That was the end of the conversation, for he refused to say more.

After a couple of hours, I went out to see how he was getting on. By now the hole was almost deep enough to stand in. Yet still he went on digging. Seeing the sweat pouring off him, I brought him water to drink. I also asked him if he wanted to take a break and have something to eat. The water gourd he took, thirstily gulping down its contents. As to my offer of food, he shook his head before resuming his digging.

Shrugging, I returned to the house. It's all very well for our menfolk to spend their time on mysterious projects, but we women have to get on with our household chores, otherwise there would soon be complaints!

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HABAKKUK

²⁶⁶³ הזוהר הקדוש - הקדמת הזוהר רבי חזקיה דף ז ע"ב

http://ha-zohar.com/ZOHAR_BRESHITH_1.htm

אברבנאל על חבקוק

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Abarbanel_on_Habakkuk.1.1.10?lang=en

²⁶⁶⁴ II Kings 4

²⁶⁶⁵ Lives of the Prophets - Habakkuk

https://archive.org/stream/SBLMS1/SBLMS1_djvu.txt

²⁶⁶⁶ Habakkuk 1:1-17

It was late in the afternoon when I went out again to see if Habakkuk had finished. It appeared that he had, because the shovel lay on the ground by the side of the deepest hole you've ever seen. Inside was my husband, praying.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"It'll be dark soon. How do you plan to get out of such a deep hole?"

To my consternation, my husband announced,

"I don't intend to budge from here until Yahweh explains to me why the wicked prosper."

I was speechless and more than a little afraid for my husband, who had addressed Yahweh so peremptorily. I only hoped that he knew what he was doing.

When I awoke the next morning, it was to find my husband busy scribbling away in a scroll. ²⁶⁶⁷ Naturally I concluded that he had received his answer. But how he managed to extricate himself from that hole, I had no idea.

²⁶⁶⁷ Habakkuk 2:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16198/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

CHAPTER 62
THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH – KING JEHOIACHIN

The Book of Kings II
The Book of Jeremiah
The Book of Obadiah
The Book of Chronicles II

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin, also called Coniah. Like his Uncle Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin retained his place on the throne of Judah for only three short months, before being deposed in favor of his uncle, Zedekiah (II Kings Chapter 24, II Chronicles Chapter 36 and Jeremiah Chapter 29). Jehoiachin's story is related by his mother, Nehushtah, and his wife, whose name is not known.

Based on the book that bears the prophet's name, the wife of Obadiah describes how, when Jehoiachin led his people into Babylonian captivity, the Edomites, who had taken part in the sack of Jerusalem, celebrated their downfall. Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 39b, of the *Babylonian Talmud* links the Obadiah who appears here, with the Ovdia who lived at the time of Jezebel and saved the lives of many of Yahweh's prophets.²⁶⁶⁸

CHAPTER 62 THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH – KING JEHOIACHIN
INTRODUCTION

²⁶⁶⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

NEHUSHTAH, MOTHER OF KING JEHOIACHIN

Following Jehoiakim's death, as a dutiful wife, outwardly I observed all the signs of mourning. Inwardly I rejoiced, for Nebuchadnezzar had replaced my deposed husband with my son, Jehoiachin, as ruler of Judah. Since my son had no leadership experience, this was my chance to take over the reins of government until I judged him ready to rule. ²⁶⁶⁹

Before I could do so, however, King Nebuchadnezzar changed his mind about the wisdom of placing the son of a disloyal man like Jehoiakim on the throne. ²⁶⁷⁰ He returned to the region and, from his headquarters at Daphne near Antioch, sent his army to besiege Jerusalem. ²⁶⁷¹

It was I who gave orders to the members of the Great Sanhedrin to negotiate the raising of the siege. To my horror they returned with the news that only if we handed over Jehoiachin, was Nebuchadnezzar prepared to spare the city and the Temple. ²⁶⁷²

For the first time in his life, Jehoiachin told me that it was his decision to make, not mine. When he informed me that he had decided to surrender himself to save Jerusalem and its inhabitants, I was completely taken aback. ²⁶⁷³ His father would never have made such a decision. No scruples about the lives of others would have troubled Jehoiakim.

NEHUSHTAH, MOTHER OF KING JEHOIACHIN

²⁶⁶⁹ II Kings 24:8

II Chronicles 36:9

Jeremiah 37:1

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 6:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.25.1-2?lang=en

²⁶⁷¹ II Kings 24:10-11

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

²⁶⁷³ II Kings 24:12

Jeremiah 29:2

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 7:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

ויקרא רבה ²⁶⁷⁰ 19

סדר עולם רבה פרק כה

ויקרא רבה ²⁶⁷² 19

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

No-one expected that the Babylonian king would depose my father-in-law, Jehoiakim, and install my husband on the throne instead. ²⁶⁷⁴ Poor Coniah! He was only eighteen years old and totally lacking in experience. His domineering mother, Nehushtah, immediately stepped in and took over the reins of government. ²⁶⁷⁵

When the holy man, Jeremiah, presented himself at the palace and proceeded to harangue us about our high and mighty ways, telling us that we would soon be punished by being exiled for life, I admit to experiencing a tremor of dread. ²⁶⁷⁶ My fears were realized when, after only three short months on the throne, Coniah was deposed ²⁶⁷⁷ by the Babylonian king in favor of his Uncle Zedekiah. I couldn't understand it. Whatever had my husband done to deserve such treatment?

Hearing that only his surrender would save the city, ²⁶⁷⁸ Coniah ordered the Temple gates opened and marched out to meet the Babylonians. ²⁶⁷⁹ Never was I prouder of my husband. Never was I more downcast.

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

²⁶⁷⁴ II Kings 24:6

²⁶⁷⁵ II Kings 24:8-9

II Chronicles 36:9

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 6:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶⁷⁶ Jeremiah 13:18-27

Jeremiah 22:24-30

²⁶⁷⁷ II Kings 24:10-11

²⁶⁷⁸ ייקרא רבה 19

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 7:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁶⁷⁹ Kings 24:12

Jeremiah 29:2

Babylonian Talmud: Middoth Chapter 2

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Middoth.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 7:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

He did not march alone. We all accompanied him - all the members of the royal family, the court and the administration. As we walked towards the city gates, we were joined by the Jerusalem aristocracy and other leading citizens. Once outside the city, others joined the march, including the leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. 10,000 of us were exiled, leaving only the poorest of the poor behind. ²⁶⁸⁰

Nebuchadnezzar was true to his word. He did not destroy the Temple or Jerusalem, but he did denude them of their wealth. ²⁶⁸¹

²⁶⁸⁰ II Kings 24:14-16

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.25.1-2?lang=en

סדר עולם רבה פרק כה

²⁶⁸¹ II Chronicles 36:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Kings 24:13

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, OBADIAH

My husband, Obadiah, was an Edomite who had converted to the worship of Yahweh.²⁶⁸² Although a pious man, no-one expected an Edomite convert to experience a vision from Yahweh. His vision concerned his people, the Edomites, and consisted of a warning that the surrounding nations were preparing to attack them.²⁶⁸³ This was Yahweh's way of teaching them a lesson in humility.²⁶⁸⁴

What were their crimes you ask? Need I remind you how they joined the Babylonians, encouraging them to destroy Jerusalem?²⁶⁸⁵ How they prevented us from escaping and turned us over to the enemy?²⁶⁸⁶ How they not only watched as we were taken captive, but boasted of their part in our downfall?²⁶⁸⁷ How they stood idly by as strangers looted our property, drawing lots to decide who would have the choicest share?²⁶⁸⁸ How, taking advantage of our helpless plight, they broke into our houses and robbed us of all our belongings?²⁶⁸⁹ How they stood lining the road as we left Jerusalem, clapping and cheering to see us go?²⁶⁹⁰

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, OBADIAH

²⁶⁸² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

²⁶⁸³ Obadiah 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

Jeremiah 49:14

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 39b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_39.html

²⁶⁸⁴ Obadiah 1:4

Jeremiah 49:22

²⁶⁸⁵ Psalms 137:7

²⁶⁸⁶ Obadiah 1:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁸⁷ Obadiah 1:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁸⁸ Obadiah 1:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁸⁹ Obadiah 1:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁹⁰ Lamentations 2:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

What made it worse that we weren't strangers but, through our forefathers, Jacob and Esau, distant cousins. ²⁶⁹¹

According to my husband's vision, one day the Edomites would be treated the same way they had treated us. ²⁶⁹² Just as they had pretended to be our allies, deserting us in our hour of need, they too would find themselves alone to face their destruction. ²⁶⁹³ Just as they had revealed our whereabouts to the Babylonians, so would their fugitives be betrayed. ²⁶⁹⁴ Just as they had celebrated the destruction of Jerusalem, so would other nations celebrate their downfall. ²⁶⁹⁵ Just as everything had been taken from us, so would everything be taken from them. ²⁶⁹⁶

Nor would they succeed in wiping us out. A remnant of our people would remain to punish them for what they had done. Whereas the Edomites would disappear as completely as stubble consumed by fire after the harvest, we would survive. ²⁶⁹⁷

Normally Yahweh's messengers are very unpopular, since no-one likes being constantly reminded how bad he is. Fortunately, Obadiah reserved his criticism for the Edomites. Every so often he would travel to Edom, castigate his people and only return home when the situation became too dangerous.

²⁶⁹¹ Obadiah 1:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁹² Obadiah 1:15

²⁶⁹³ Obadiah 1:7-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁹⁴ Obadiah 1:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

Jeremiah 49:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16046/jewish/Chapter-49.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁶⁹⁵ Obadiah 1:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁶⁹⁶ Obadiah 1:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

Jeremiah 49:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16046/jewish/Chapter-49.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁶⁹⁷ Obadiah 1:17-18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16182#showrashi=true<=primary

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 37

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

CHAPTER 63
THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING ZEDEKIAH
The Book of Kings II
The Book of Jeremiah

Zedekiah's mother and wife (Jeremiah Chapters 39 and 52), and his daughters (Jeremiah Chapter 43), tell us of the events leading up to the Babylonian conquest of Judah.

The wife of Baruch, the son of Neriah, informs us that her husband's wish to experience visions from Yahweh was finally granted. Unfortunately his visions, placing the coming catastrophe in an eschatological context, turn out to be somewhat misleading. *2 Baruch*, from which her narrative is taken, is a Jewish pseudepigraphic text dating from the late 1st century or early 2nd century CE.

The chapter concludes with an account of the syncretic religion practiced in Judah prior to its fall, related by one of the women chosen to weave the cloth used to surround the shrines of the goddess, Asherah. Her account is based on II Kings Chapter 23, plus references to the goddess found elsewhere.

HAMUTAL, THE MOTHER OF KING ZEDEKIAH

For over eleven years, during the reigns of her son, Jehoiakim, and her grandson, Jehoiachin, I had to suffer Zebudah's vindictiveness. When the Babylonian king deposed Jehoiachin ²⁶⁹⁸ and replaced him with my younger son, Zedekiah, it was my turn to embitter her life, just as she had embittered mine.

During Zedekiah's eleven-year reign ²⁶⁹⁹ I fought tooth and nail to protect him from his enemies, both those at court and those further afield. ²⁷⁰⁰ Unfortunately my son was a bit of a ditherer, refusing to take a firm stand on any issue.

Take the case of all the Israelite slaves living in Jerusalem. According to our laws, our people could only be indentured for a maximum of six years. ²⁷⁰¹ Hoping to increase their motivation to fight, Zedekiah persuaded the citizens of Jerusalem to free their slaves earlier. The whole episode turned into a farce when, after their release, the former slaves were immediately enslaved again. ²⁷⁰²

Time and again I thought, if only it was me sitting on the throne, I would soon show everyone what was what! Since I was only a woman, I had to make do with ruling behind the scenes.

CHAPTER 63 THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH - KING ZEDEKIAH

HAMUTAL, THE MOTHER OF KING ZEDEKIAH

²⁶⁹⁸ II Kings 24:10-16

²⁶⁹⁹ II Kings 24:18
II Chronicles 36:11
Jeremiah 52:1

²⁷⁰⁰ Ezekiel 19:1-2 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16117/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-19.htm#lt=primary

²⁷⁰¹ Exodus 21:1-6

²⁷⁰² Jeremiah 34:8-11 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16031/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

KING ZEDEKIAH'S WIFE

I had the good fortune of being married to a king but the misfortune of being married to a man who could not make up his mind.

After Zedekiah was crowned king of Judah by the Babylonians,²⁷⁰³ one of his first steps was to free from prison a holy man of Yahweh named Jeremiah.²⁷⁰⁴ This man had been a thorn in the side of all three of Zedekiah's predecessors - Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. Jeremiah thought nothing of rebuking them in public.²⁷⁰⁵ His words "Repent before it's too late" were accompanied by the most awful threats of what would happen if we didn't.²⁷⁰⁶ In contrast to his predecessors, who had ignored Jeremiah's warnings, or, in the case of Jehoiakim, had thrown him into prison, Zedekiah treated Jeremiah with the respect due to a true spokesman of Yahweh.²⁷⁰⁷ The problem was that he was afraid to follow Jeremiah's advice, which he knew would make him very unpopular.²⁷⁰⁸

KING ZEDEKIAH'S WIFE

²⁷⁰³ Jeremiah 37:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁰⁴ Jeremiah 37:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁰⁵ Jeremiah 13:18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16010/jewish/Chapter-13.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁷⁰⁶ Jeremiah 21:7

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

²⁷⁰⁷ Jeremiah 37:17

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

²⁷⁰⁸ Jeremiah 38:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16035/jewish/Chapter-38.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

Three years after my husband ascended the throne, the neighboring tribes tried to enlist our support for an uprising against Babylonian rule.²⁷⁰⁹ When Zedekiah turned to Jeremiah for advice, the holy man told him in no uncertain terms that we could either fight and die, or surrender to the Babylonians and live.²⁷¹⁰ This just gives you an idea of the way Jeremiah spoke to king and commoner alike. Everything was black and white.

Eventually Zedekiah was persuaded to cease paying tribute to our Babylonian masters. Five years later, the king of Babylon arrived to punish us.²⁷¹¹ From his headquarters at Riblah, he captured our cities one by one,²⁷¹² until the only cities not yet in Babylonian hands were Jerusalem, Lachish and Azekah.²⁷¹³

For two years Jerusalem was under siege.²⁷¹⁴ It was a miracle that we held out for so long.²⁷¹⁵ Whenever one of our women met a friend in the marketplace, she would ask,

“What are you doing here? You never usually come to market.”

Her friend would answer, “I admit I’ve been avoiding you.

It’s just that I can’t stand the sight of you starving.”

With that they would embrace and continue their vain search for food. When they could continue no longer, they would lean against the pillars for support - until they collapsed and died.

²⁷⁰⁹ Jeremiah 27:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16024/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary

²⁷¹⁰ Jeremiah 21:1-9

²⁷¹¹ II Kings 25:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15931/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷¹² Jeremiah 34:1

²⁷¹³ Jeremiah 34:7

²⁷¹⁴ Jeremiah 52:4-5

²⁷¹⁵ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

As for the infants who had not yet been weaned from the breast, they would crawl frantically after their mothers, until the mothers had no choice but to place their empty nipples in their mouths. The infants would scream from hunger, until they had no strength left, dying in their mother's arms. ²⁷¹⁶

We still hoped that our allies, the Egyptians, would come to our rescue but, having set sail for Judah, for some inexplicable reason they turned back. ²⁷¹⁷ Now, nothing could save us. ²⁷¹⁸

²⁷¹⁶ Jeremiah 52:6

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

²⁷¹⁷ [Jeremiah 37:5 Rashi Commentary](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary)

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

[Jeremiah 37:6-7 Rashi Commentary](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary)

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16034/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

²⁷¹⁸ Jeremiah 37:8-10

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZEDEKIAH

²⁷¹⁹ As royal princesses, we lived a privileged life in the palace, surrounded by servants, with nothing to do but pamper ourselves and await the day of our marriage. Being girls, we were kept in the close confines of the royal harem, with little or no idea of what was taking place in the world outside. It was different for our brothers who, from an early age, received military training and were free to wander the city. How we envied them their freedom!

Eventually news of a powerful king named Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled a far-off country called Babylon, percolated through the thick walls of the harem. We heard that he was on the way to punish our father for ceasing to pay him tribute. ²⁷²⁰ Now, I don't pretend to understand much about politics, but even I understood that defying such a powerful king was taking a huge risk.

We only realized that something was radically wrong when the food we were served became plainer and plainer, and the portions smaller and smaller. In addition, we were forbidden to take baths, on the grounds that all available water was needed for drinking. When we asked why, we were told that the city was under siege. ²⁷²¹

From leading a privileged life, we were soon reduced to sharing the fate of the lowliest commoner. I shed pounds in weight, ending up looking like a skeleton. As I miserably regarded myself in the mirror, I wondered who would now want me as a wife.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZEDEKIAH

²⁷¹⁹ Jeremiah 41:10

Jeremiah 43:6

²⁷²⁰ Jeremiah 27:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16024/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary

²⁷²¹ II Kings 25:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15931/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Jeremiah 52:4-5

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

I shall never forget the morning Baruch awoke with an astonished look on his face and announced that Yahweh had come to him in his sleep. His wish to receive visions, like the disciples of other holy men, had finally come true.

In his dream he had been ordered to tell all those who worshipped Yahweh, to leave Jerusalem before it fell to the Babylonians. I don't know which of us was the more shocked - my husband because he finally had a vision, or me, because I had never expected him to. ²⁷²² After summoning all the Yahwists to the Kidron Valley, my husband told them of his dream. ²⁷²³ Those who followed Baruch's advice, survived. Those who didn't, died.

The vision turned out to be the first in a series of eight. The second showed Baruch the burning of the city, ²⁷²⁴ while the third ordered him to remain in Jerusalem to await an important message. ²⁷²⁵ What was the message? In his fourth vision Baruch learned that, in forty days, he would be transported up to heaven to await the end of time - for Yahweh had chosen him to bear witness to the fall of Judah and the destruction of the Temple. ²⁷²⁶ What would you do if you heard that your husband was about to disappear? Naturally I did everything to dissuade him from doing so!

In his fifth vision, Baruch was told not to worry so much, for everything would happen when the time was right. ²⁷²⁷ This more comforting message Baruch conveyed to our elders. ²⁷²⁸

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

²⁷²² 2 Baruch 1~5:2-2.1

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²³ 2 Baruch 1~5:5-6

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²⁴ 2 Baruch 6~9:1-4

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²⁵ 2 Baruch 10~12:1-3

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²⁶ 2 Baruch 13~15:1-3

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

2 Baruch 69~76:1-5

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²⁷ 2 Baruch 22~30:2-6

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷²⁸ 2 Baruch 31~34:1-2

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

His last three visions concerned end times, concluding with the Day of Judgment. ²⁷²⁹ Even though Baruch assured me that someone had explained their meaning, I'm not sure that even he understood them. ²⁷³⁰

Meanwhile, my husband was told to use his remaining hours on earth persuading our people to repent. He spent the next forty days writing two letters, one to our people recently exiled to Babylon, and another to those exiled long ago to Assyria. The letter to Babylon he was able to send with some exiles. The letter to Assyria he sent by pigeon post. ²⁷³¹

²⁷²⁹ 2 Baruch 36:1-6

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

2 Baruch 53-74:1-6

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷³⁰ 2 Baruch 49:6

2 Baruch 52:20

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

²⁷³¹ 2 Baruch 77:17-19

<http://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/baruch2.pdf>

ONE OF ASHERAH'S WEAVERS

I never dreamt that a poor girl like me could amount to anyone of importance, but here I am to tell you of my life as a weaver of the cloth used in the shrines of our goddess, Asherah. Apart from those born into wealthy families, from a very early age, every girl child was taught to weave the striped brown and white cloth from which our everyday clothes were made. A laborious task, it was made easier by the fact that it allowed us to exchange all the local gossip. In addition, we could always stop in the middle and hurry off to a more urgent chore.

Our weaving traditions were inherited from our ancestors who, before settling in Canaan, had wandered the desert, spinning camel and goat hair for their tents and wool for their clothes.²⁷³² Expert at weaving linen out of flax, they had woven cloth for the vestments of the High Priest²⁷³³ and for the enclosure that surrounded the Sanctuary.²⁷³⁴ Now, centuries later, we did the same, weaving cloth for the hangings that surrounded the shrines of our goddess.²⁷³⁵

There are two famous legends connected with our profession. In one, a Canaanite prostitute hid two Israelite spies under the flax laid out to dry on the roof of her house.²⁷³⁶ In the other, a loom, using rollers to tighten the warp threads, was used by a Philistine woman to capture her Israelite lover.²⁷³⁷

Perhaps, to you, our life sounds uneventful, but I can assure you that this was far from the case. On the contrary, not only our livelihood but our very lives were dependent on the religious beliefs of our kings.

ONE OF ASHERAH'S WEAVERS

²⁷³² Jewish Encyclopedia: Weaving

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14809-weaving>

²⁷³³ Exodus 39:1-3

²⁷³⁴ Exodus 26:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9887/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#lt=primary

²⁷³⁵ II Kings 23:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷³⁶ Joshua 2:6

²⁷³⁷ Judges 16:13-14 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15824/jewish/Chapter-16.htm#showrashi=true

King Hezekiah, a devout Yahwist, had destroyed all the statues of our goddess, leaving us unable to earn a living. Fortunately, when his son, King Manasseh, ascended the throne, the first thing he did was to restore them, and our services were once again in demand.²⁷³⁸ Manasseh's son, King Amon, not only continued his father's tradition²⁷³⁹ but went one step further, by erecting a statue of Asherah in the Holy of Holies.²⁷⁴⁰

And then came the terrible day that, in an effort to eradicate the worship of our goddess, Amon's son, King Josiah, took it upon himself to undo all the good work of his father and grandfather before him.²⁷⁴¹ Asherah's statue was removed from its place of honor in the Temple and, together with everything else connected with her worship, burned to ashes which were then scattered in the city's cemeteries.²⁷⁴²

²⁷³⁸ II Kings 21:3
I Chronicles 33:3
II Kings 21:5
I Chronicles 33:5
II Kings 21:7
I Chronicles 33:7

²⁷³⁹ II Kings 21:20-21
I Chronicles 33:22
II Kings 21:7

²⁷⁴⁰ Isaiah 28:20 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15959/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 103b
http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_103.html

²⁷⁴¹ II Kings 22:2
II Chronicles 34:2

²⁷⁴² II Kings 23:4, 6-7 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Besides purging the Temple, Josiah did the same throughout Judah ²⁷⁴³ and even in the former kingdom of Israel, ²⁷⁴⁴ demolishing all her shrines and outlawing all her priests. ²⁷⁴⁵ This left us close to destitution.

Our fortunes took a turn for the better under Josiah's sons, who were much more liberal in their approach to religion than their fanatical father. Unfortunately, Jehoahaz had barely begun to reverse the damage before he was deposed and exiled by Pharaoh Necho. ²⁷⁴⁶ Under his brother, King Jehoiakim, the situation improved dramatically ²⁷⁴⁷ when a statue of our goddess reappeared in the Temple. ²⁷⁴⁸ No longer afraid to worship her openly, ²⁷⁴⁹ we women flocked back to her in droves. ²⁷⁵⁰

²⁷⁴³ II Chronicles 34:3-4 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁴⁴ II Kings 23:15
II Chronicles 34:6-7 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16583/jewish/Chapter-34.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 4:1
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁷⁴⁵ II Kings 23:5 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15929/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁴⁶ II Kings 23:33
II Chronicles 36:2-4
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁷⁴⁷ II Kings 23:36-37
II Chronicles 36:5
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 5:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁷⁴⁸ Jeremiah 7:30

²⁷⁴⁹ Jeremiah 7:17-18

²⁷⁵⁰ Jeremiah 17:2 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16014/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-17.htm#lt=primary

It seemed as though King Jehoiakim's son, Prince Jehoiachin, would continue his father's pluralist traditions, but, alas, he only lasted three months on the throne before he, too, was deposed and exiled to Babylon.²⁷⁵¹

Finally there was King Zedekiah, the last of our kings. He was a ditherer who could not make up his mind what position to adopt on any matter, whether it was religion or politics.²⁷⁵² As a result, the priesthood did as they pleased²⁷⁵³ and we were left undisturbed to carry out our religious rites.

Then King Zedekiah made the fatal mistake of joining the other rulers in the region in a rebellion against the Babylonian king.²⁷⁵⁴ He should have listened to the Yahwist holy man, Jeremiah, who advised against it.²⁷⁵⁵ The result was that King Nebuchadnezzar came to take his revenge.

After the fall of Jerusalem, those of us who did not die from the plague or starvation, and those of us who were not killed,²⁷⁵⁶ were exiled to Babylon.²⁷⁵⁷ Now it made no difference whether we worshipped Asherah, Yahweh or any other god for that matter, for all were treated as slaves.

²⁷⁵¹ II Kings 24:8-15
II Chronicles 36:9

²⁷⁵² II Kings 24:18-19
II Chronicles 36:11-12 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁵³ II Chronicles 36:14

²⁷⁵⁴ Jeremiah 27:3 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16024/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-27.htm#lt=primary

²⁷⁵⁵ Jeremiah 27:6-12

²⁷⁵⁶ II Kings 25:1-7

²⁷⁵⁷ II Kings 25:11

Part 19
The Fall of Judah

CHAPTER 64
THE FALL OF JUDAH
The Book of Jeremiah

We have finally reached one of the greatest series of tragedies to befall the Jewish people: the destruction of Jerusalem; the burning of the Temple; the exile of the chief inhabitants of Judah and the devastation of the entire kingdom. The destruction of the Temple is, until today, memorialized by the fast of the ninth of Av.

Here the wife of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah Chapters 39 and 52) and their daughters (Jeremiah Chapter 43) describe the capture of Jerusalem.

Then, one of the Temple weavers, mentioned in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Kethuboth, Folio 106), provides us with an eye-witness account of the destruction of the Temple, as described in the *Pesikta Rabbati* collection of homilies.

KING ZEDEKIAH'S WIFE

I shall never forget the day that Jerusalem finally fell to the enemy. After demolishing the city gates, ²⁷⁵⁸ General Nebuzaradan and his men cut a swath through the city's defenders until they reached the Temple. ²⁷⁵⁹ They removed everything of value before setting it alight. ²⁷⁶⁰

Then the General set about slaughtering the city's inhabitants. He started with the members of the Great Sanhedrin, seventy in number, followed by the Small Sanhedrin, the young priests and even the schoolchildren. The number of dead must have reached the hundreds of thousands. ²⁷⁶¹ I couldn't understand how a man could kill so many people and not suffer any remorse. ²⁷⁶²

It was decided that my husband, our sons and all the members of the court would make a dash for freedom, while we women would remain in the city, hoping that Nebuchadnezzar's troops would show us mercy. Our menfolk left under cover of night through a little-known tunnel, hoping to reach safety in the south of the country. ²⁷⁶³

CHAPTER 64 THE FALL OF JUDAH

KING ZEDEKIAH'S WIFE

²⁷⁵⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

²⁷⁵⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

²⁷⁶⁰ Jeremiah 52:17-23

²⁷⁶¹ מגילת איכה פרשה ד טז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha4.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 57b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_57.html

²⁷⁶² מגילת איכה פרשה ד טז

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha4.htm>

Babylonian Talmud: Gittin 57b

http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_57.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

²⁷⁶³ Jeremiah 39:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16036/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

That was the last I and my daughters saw of them. Word finally reached us that Zedekiah had been captured and taken to Riblah, ²⁷⁶⁴ where his eyes had been gouged out. The last thing he had seen had been the death of our sons. ²⁷⁶⁵

Zedekiah was taken to Babylon with the other exiles. They say that, when he arrived, he called out, “Come and see! Jeremiah predicted that I would be exiled to Babylon and never see again. I ignored his warnings and here I am in Babylon, unable to see!” ²⁷⁶⁶

²⁷⁶⁴ II Kings 25:6
Jeremiah 39:5
Jeremiah 52:9, 26

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

²⁷⁶⁵ II Kings 25:7
Jeremiah 39:6
Jeremiah 52:10

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו ²⁷⁶⁶

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZEDEKIAH

Our mother continued to keep us locked up in the palace, but the day the enemy broke through the city's defenses, even she could not prevent us from hearing the screams outside. No-one had to tell us what it meant. It was clear that many people were being horribly slaughtered.

Then came the moment when the gates of the harem were flung wide open and a fierce-looking soldier strode in, an axe dripping blood at his side.²⁷⁶⁷ Certain that our last hour had come, we cowered behind our mother for protection. I don't know where she found the strength to step forward, her head held high, and confront him.

She told him that she was the queen, the wife of Zedekiah, and that we were his daughters. I don't know whether or not the soldier understood her but, after looking us over and barking some order to his men, he turned and left as abruptly as he had arrived. We learned later that this was Nebuchadnezzar's formidable general, Nebuzaradan.

It seemed that we were not to be executed after all. Instead, we were taken under armed guard to a place called Mizpah, where an interim government had been set up under a commoner named Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam.²⁷⁶⁸

In the beginning it was hard for us to accept the authority of a commoner, but what choice did we have? At least we were still alive, which was more than could be said for our brothers, who had been slaughtered before our father's eyes, before they were plucked out of their sockets.²⁷⁶⁹ I shuddered when I learned of their fate and suddenly realized how lucky I was to have been born a girl.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZEDEKIAH

²⁷⁶⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

²⁷⁶⁸ Jeremiah 41:10

Jeremiah 43:6

²⁷⁶⁹ II Kings 25:7

Jeremiah 39:6

Jeremiah 52:10

A TEMPLE WEAVER

I had the honor of being selected as a weaver for the Temple. Candidates were required to be unmarried, modest in behavior, pure in thought and dexterous in the art of weaving, for it was our task to weave the holiest cloth of all - the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Sanctuary.²⁷⁷⁰ The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the Temple. Indeed, it was the most sacred place in the entire world, for it contained the sacred chest holding the two stone tablets of the law that Yahweh had given to our great leader, Moses.²⁷⁷¹

For two years the Babylonians had laid siege to Jerusalem. Many of our people had already died of starvation and the plague. During this time, we members of the Temple staff did our best to go about our duties as usual, although with mounting fear as to our fate. Then came the awful day that General Nebuzaradan breached the gates of the city, and led his men in a charge towards the Temple, killing all who stood in their way.²⁷⁷²

When word reached us of this catastrophe, we sought refuge on the roof. We watched in horror as the Babylonian soldiers and Tadmorian archers²⁷⁷³ dragged everything out of the storerooms into the Inner Court. When the pile was as high as the roof, they set it alight.²⁷⁷⁴ Terrified, we looked at each other. What could we do? Where could we go? Who would save us?

Below us the High Priest emerged from the Sanctuary, holding the keys of the Temple in his hand. Throwing them up as high as he could, he screamed,
“Here are the keys of Your house. Forgive me! I was a dishonest caretaker.”

A TEMPLE WEAVER

²⁷⁷⁰ Babylonian Talmud: Kethuboth 106a

http://www.halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_106.html

²⁷⁷¹ Exodus 25:29-30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9886/jewish/Chapter-25.htm/showrashi/true#l1=primary

²⁷⁷² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 96b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_96.html

²⁷⁷³ מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית וירא פרשה נו יא

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0055_L2

Great Commentary on Genesis 55:11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

²⁷⁷⁴ Jeremiah 52:17-23

Just as he was turning to go, some soldiers seized him, dragged him to the altar on which he performed the daily sacrifice and butchered him on the spot.

As if that wasn't bad enough, a small figure came running up to the altar, shrieking "Father, father!" It wasn't hard to recognize her, for we had seen her often enough in the vicinity of the High Priest's quarters. It was his young daughter. The soldiers showed no pity but butchered her too, so that her blood mingled with that of her father.

Like us, the priests and Levites had sought safety on the Temple roof. They stood hugging their harps and trumpets to their chests, unwilling to be parted from them even now. We saw them conferring among themselves. Then, suddenly, they started throwing themselves off the roof into the fire below. As the sound of their screams reached our ears, we looked at each other. It was clear we were all thinking the same - better to die now than be raped and tortured by the soldiers. Even as we hesitated, Babylonian troops were climbing the steps to the roof where we stood. It was now or never. We linked our hands and, at a given signal from the eldest, jumped into the flames. ²⁷⁷⁵

You are probably wondering how it is that I survived to tell our story. At the last minute, consumed by fear I held back. Just as I was about to jump, rough hands pulled me back from the edge and manhandled me, kicking and screaming down from the roof.

I will spare you the gruesome details of what happened next. Suffice to say that I survived that terrible day on which so many of my people died, our beautiful city of Jerusalem was razed to the ground and the Temple burned beyond repair. Such was the ignominious end of our kingdom of Judah, and the last time we would call ourselves Judeans, for, from that day forth, our land became the Babylonian province of Yehud and we became known as Jews.

²⁷⁷⁵ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

CHAPTER 65
THE GREAT LAMENT
The Book of Jeremiah
The Book of Ezekiel
The Scroll of Lamentations

The tragedy that had befallen the Jews brought with it an outpouring of grief such as never before had been seen or heard. Here it is described by the woman mourners of Jerusalem and four figures of allegory - Mother Zion, representing the Jews, an adulteress representing Jerusalem and two adulterous sisters, named Oholah and Oholibah, representing the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The professional woman mourners are mentioned in Jeremiah Chapter 9 while the allegorical figure of Mother Zion is drawn from three sources - the Scroll of Lamentations, the *Great Commentary on Lamentations*, and the collection of homilies named *Pesikta Rabbati*.

Ezekiel Chapter 16 provides the material for the adulterous woman representing Jerusalem, while Ezekiel Chapter 23 provides that for the two sisters, Oholah (meaning Samaria or Israel) and Oholibah (Jerusalem or Judah).

The chapter ends with *Samaria calls forth*, a poem by the 11th-century Andalusian poet and Jewish philosopher, Solomon Ibn Gvirol, who wrote a series of dirges mourning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the plight of Israel. The poem is part of the liturgy of the Ninth of Av, a day of fasting commemorating, not only the destruction of the first Temple, but also that of the Second.

THE WOMEN MOURNERS OF JERUSALEM

We were professional mourners, hired to wail at funerals in order to encourage the family of the departed to demonstrate their grief. According to custom, mourners were required to tear their clothes and shed copious amounts of tears. A person's wealth was often judged by how many professional mourners were hired for his funeral.

Ours was a highly respected profession, demanding the greatest degree of expertise. Whoever wished to practice it was required to undergo a course in the art of mourning.²⁷⁷⁶ Most professional mourners were women, because we cried more easily. However, there were also men who showed some aptitude for the profession and helped deliver eulogies. The man who showed the most aptitude of all was the holy man, Jeremiah, who was very quick to shed tears.²⁷⁷⁷

Those of us who were particularly good at our jobs could be assured of employment the whole year round. Sometimes, if we knew the departed, we performed the service free of charge.²⁷⁷⁸

However, when the Babylonians invaded Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, burned the Temple and took almost everyone still alive off to exile, there were simply not enough of us to meet the demand. Even those who had been fully trained were barely equal to the task. For, in addition to our own personal grief at the death and exile of our loved ones, there existed no precedent as to how to mourn the greatest tragedy that had ever befallen our people. All we could do was ask the oldest and wisest among us if there was anything in their repertoire that came anywhere near meeting the situation.

CHAPTER 65 THE GREAT LAMENT

THE WOMEN MOURNERS OF JERUSALEM

²⁷⁷⁶ Amos 5:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16177/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁷⁷ II Chronicles 35:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16584/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁷⁸ Judges 11:40 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15819/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/parshanut/yonatan/neviim1.pdf>

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum Pseudo-Philo Chapter 11:8

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/publics/pseudepig/LAB.html>

תרגום יונתן בן עוזיאל לנביאים ראשונים שופטים פרק יא

Then we remembered that Jeremiah, in one of his public harangues to which no-one had listened, had foreseen it all. We racked our brains trying to remember what he had said. In graphic detail he had described the land of Judah as it would look after we were exiled - the bare mountains, the ruined houses, the empty roads, the pastures without cattle, the sky devoid of birds, no creature to be seen anywhere.²⁷⁷⁹

He had also described the pile of rubble that was now Jerusalem, home only to scavengers, as were all the other cities of Judah, the inhabitants of which were long gone. Jeremiah had asked, “Who would ever be able to understand why all this had happened? Who would ever be able to explain why a whole country had been reduced to a wilderness?”

He had even mentioned us professional mourners in his sermon. As far as he was concerned, even then we should have been readying ourselves for what was about to happen, together with those women whose job it was to prepare corpses for burial. I actually remember him saying that we should lose no time in arousing everyone’s grief so that, when the moment arrived, they would be ready to start weeping for their loved ones - for, soon, we would hear the sound of wailing throughout the land, as we left our ancestral home forever.

He had advised us to train our daughters and neighbors how to mourn, because the services of all would soon be needed. Death would visit every house, rich and poor. No children would be left to play in the city’s streets, nor any youngsters to congregate in the market square. Our fields would be strewn with their corpses, like yet-to-be-gathered sheaves of wheat.²⁷⁸⁰

Inspired by his words, we did the best we could. For those of us who took part in the great lament that followed, it was an experience that we never forgot.

²⁷⁷⁹ Jeremiah 9:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16006/jewish/Chapter-9.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 54a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

²⁷⁸⁰ Jeremiah 9:16-21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16006/jewish/Chapter-9.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

NARRATOR

The name 'Zion' was first given to the mount on which the City of David stood. After the erection of the Temple on neighboring Mount Moriah, it was used to designate the entire city of Jerusalem. Later, it came to represent the whole Land of Israel and even the world to come.²⁷⁸¹

The allegorical figure of Mother Zion, presented here, is the mother of the people of the two Israelite kingdoms - Israel that fell to the Assyrians and Judah that fell to the Babylonians.

In the collection of homilies named the *Pesikta Rabbati*, it is written that, when Jeremiah returned from Babylon, where he had left the Judean exiles weeping on the banks of the River Euphrates, he encountered a woman sitting on the mountaintop, her clothes black and her hair unkempt. This woman was Mother Zion, mourning her husband, Yahweh, who had forsaken her and her seven children, the seven dynasties of the northern kingdom of Israel (those of Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea), whose people had disappeared into exile in Assyria. Just as Jeremiah was seeking solace for the tragedy that had befallen the people of Judah, so was Mother Zion seeking solace for the lost people of Israel.

What follows is the conversation that took place between them, among the ruins of Jerusalem.

NARRATOR

²⁷⁸¹ Jewish Encyclopaedia: Jerusalem (Zion)

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15265-zion>

MOTHER ZION

I was the most unfortunate of women, for not only had I lost my husband and children, but also my entire people. ²⁷⁸² Now there was no one to comfort me in my loneliness. ²⁷⁸³

It was the time of the siege of Jerusalem. I wept for my people as the siege continued, food ran short and they began to starve, until they were prepared to sell their most precious possessions just for a loaf of bread. ²⁷⁸⁴ Those for whom money was no object and had previously been able to procure the choicest dainties lay prone in the streets. Those who wore the finest garments lay on heaps of dung. ²⁷⁸⁵ I wept for those who took to eating grass for, when they smelt the enemy's roasted meat, their bloated stomachs burst and the half-digested contents came oozing out. ²⁷⁸⁶

MOTHER ZION

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו ²⁷⁸²

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

Pesikta Rabbati 26

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=en

²⁷⁸³ Jeremiah 30:17

Babylonian Talmud: Sukkah 41a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Sukkah.pdf>

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה א א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L2

Great Commentary on Lamentations 1

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.1?lang=en

²⁷⁸⁴ Lamentations 1:11-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁷⁸⁵ Lamentations 4:5

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁷⁸⁶ Lamentations 4:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

I wept for the mothers who, in vain, prayed to Yahweh to save their children.
²⁷⁸⁷ I wept for the families who died, one after the other. One woman sent her husband to buy food in the market with what remained of her jewelry. Finding nothing, he had a fit and died. When he did not return, she sent her son to look for him. When he saw his father lying dead in the market he, too, had a fit and died. The same woman also had a baby who nursed at her breast. When the baby could find no milk he, too, had a fit and died.²⁷⁸⁸

I wept to see how starvation caused my daughters to cast aside all motherly instincts. Wild animals did not deprive their young of sustenance as my daughters deprived theirs of food. In vain did little children gasp for water and older children beg for bread, while their mothers hoarded everything for themselves.²⁷⁸⁹ Even worse were those who ate the flesh of their own children whom, not long before, they had hugged to their breasts.²⁷⁹⁰ Some did not even wait for their babies to die, but killed them for food.²⁷⁹¹ Women who, once, showed the utmost compassion for their children, now thought nothing of boiling them for soup!²⁷⁹²

²⁷⁸⁷ Lamentations 2:11-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Lamentations 2:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁸⁸ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ב טז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Great Commentary on Lamentations 2:16

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.2?lang=en

²⁷⁸⁹ Lamentations 4:3-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁷⁹⁰ Lamentations 2:20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁷⁹¹ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ב כג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

Great Commentary on Lamentations 2:23

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.2?lang=en

²⁷⁹² Lamentations 4:10

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ד יג

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

Great Commentary on Lamentations 4:13

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.4?lang=en

I wept to see my daughters trampled down in the street like grapes in a press, their blood flowing like wine. ²⁷⁹³ I wept for those who were violated, young and old, single or married - it made no difference to their rapists. ²⁷⁹⁴ I wept for my once proud daughters who walked with heads held high, eyes painted black and necks adorned, before their Babylonian lovers used them, abused them, cast them aside and crushed them under their chariot wheels. ²⁷⁹⁵

I wept for the blind who staggered through the streets, slipping and sliding on the bloody ground, with no hand outstretched to guide them. ²⁷⁹⁶ I wept to see the once handsome novices of Yahweh with their long hair and pink cheeks, their skin now blackened from starvation. ²⁷⁹⁷ I wept for the profanation of the Holy of Holies, the scrolls of the law tossed into the flames and the sacred vessels taken as booty. ²⁷⁹⁸

²⁷⁹³ Lamentations 1:15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary
Lamentations 2:21

מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ב כד

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.2?lang=en

Great Commentary on Lamentations 2:24

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.2?lang=en

²⁷⁹⁴ Lamentations 5:11

²⁷⁹⁵ מדרש רבה - איכה רבתי פרשה ד יח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

Great Commentary on Lamentations 4:18

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.4?lang=en

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 9b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

Great Commentary on Lamentations 4

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.4?lang=en

²⁷⁹⁶ Lamentations 4:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁷⁹⁷ Lamentations 4:7-8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁷⁹⁸ Lamentations 1:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

I wept to see how our enemies came to gloat, at their callousness and lack of compassion. ²⁷⁹⁹ I wept to see my children, once my greatest treasure, treated as worthless as empty jars. ²⁸⁰⁰

The roads leading to Jerusalem are deserted now.
Its gates, once so high and mighty, lie ruined now.
None come to offer sacrifices at the Temple now. ²⁸⁰¹
None, save hungry foxes, roam my mountain now. ²⁸⁰²

No longer do my elders hold court at the city gates. ²⁸⁰³ The few survivors sit in silence, sackcloth on their bodies, dust on their heads and prayers of repentance on their lips. ²⁸⁰⁴ No longer do young men dance or play their instruments. ²⁸⁰⁵ Instead, their sweethearts sit in mourning with bowed heads. ²⁸⁰⁶ All grieve for their loved ones, for their fathers, husbands and brothers, for their mothers, wives and sisters, but most of all for their children, ²⁸⁰⁷ weeping until their eyelashes fall out.

²⁷⁹⁹ Lamentations 2:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁸⁰⁰ Lamentations 4:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16460/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁸⁰¹ Lamentations 1:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁸⁰² Lamentations 5:18

²⁸⁰³ Lamentations 5:14

²⁸⁰⁴ Lamentations 2:9-10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Great Commentary on Lamentations 2:13

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.2?lang=en

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 9a

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_9.html

²⁸⁰⁵ Lamentations 5:14-15

²⁸⁰⁶ Lamentations 2:10

²⁸⁰⁷ Lamentations 5:3

Yahweh, too, has been deserted for His consort, the Matronit, has accompanied my people into exile. Her place at His side has been taken by one who was once her servant, the wicked Lilith, Queen of the Night.²⁸⁰⁸ Now I sit among the ruins of Jerusalem, shedding copious tears and bemoaning her fate. In vain do I stretch out my hands pleading for help, for there is no-one to comfort me.²⁸⁰⁹

Suddenly a voice cried out,
“Who will comfort me?”

Standing before me was Jeremiah, covered in dust, his clothes in rags, his sandals worn, his face gaunt with suffering, his eyes piercing bright. He addressed me, saying,
“If you are a woman, speak. If you are a spirit, depart.”

I answered him, saying, “Don’t you recognize me, Jeremiah?”

I am the woman who had seven children.

Their father went away to a land across the sea.

As I was going up to the Temple to mourn, our house collapsed, killing our children.

I no longer know for whom I cry and for whom I mourn.”²⁸¹⁰

He responded, “You are no better than Mother Zion who has become a pasture for the beasts of the field.”

I laughed bitterly. “I am indeed Mother Zion.

I am she - the mother of seven dynasties of kings whose people were exiled to Assyria.”²⁸¹¹

Jeremiah replied, “You remind me of Job.

“Just as Job’s sons and daughters were taken from him, so were yours.

²⁸⁰⁸ Proverbs 30:23

זהר פרשת בראשית א חלק ג עבודה זרה שפיכת דמים גילוי עריות 268

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/103142?heb/content/view/full/103142&main>

ספר תולדות אדם עולם שער גדול (א)

<http://mobile.tora.ws/html/15190-17.html>

Jewish Christian Literature Zohar 3.69a

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/consort.html#ZOHAR3_69

²⁸⁰⁹ [Jeremiah 4:31 Rashi Commentary](#)

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16001/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Lamentations 1:17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁸¹⁰ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

Pesikta Rabbati 26

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=en

²⁸¹¹ [Jeremiah 15:9 Rashi Commentary](#)

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16012/jewish/Chapter-15.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

Pesikta Rabbati 26

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=en

“Just as Job was robbed of his silver and gold, so were you.
 “Just as Job was thrown onto a pile of dirt, so were you.
 “And just as Yahweh came to console Job, so will He console you.
 “Just as He doubled the number of Job’s sons and daughters,
 so will He double yours.
 “Just as He doubled Job’s gold and silver, so will He double yours.
 “Just as He shook the dirt from Job, so will He do for you.
 “And you will rise again, even greater than before.”²⁸¹²
 I asked, “How can that be? Yahweh has forgotten me.”
 He answered, “Just as it is impossible for a woman to forget her nursing child,
 so Yahweh is unable to forget you.”²⁸¹³
 I asked, “How can He forgive me? My crimes are too great.”
 He said, “Just as Yahweh can never forget your crimes,
 He can never forget He is your God.”²⁸¹⁴
 Cease your weeping, for just as Yahweh has caused your grief,
 so he will bring you consolation.
 Your people will one day repent.
 On that day He will end their exile, re-establish your city
 and rebuild His Temple.
 Once again, your people will multiply and become numerous.
 Once again, they will rejoice and, once again, they will be His people
 and He will be their God.”²⁸¹⁵

NARRATOR

The next allegorical figure is that of Jerusalem who, in Ezekiel Chapter 15, is portrayed as the adulterous bride of Yahweh.

She begins life as an outcast baby, helpless and unwanted who, having grown into a beautiful maiden, marries the one who saved her but who, after her marriage, commits adultery and murders her children.

²⁸¹² פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he
 Pesikta Rabbati 26
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=en

²⁸¹³ Isaiah 49:14-15
 Pesikta Rabbati 31
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.31.1?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

²⁸¹⁴ Exodus 20:1-2
 Pesikta Rabbati 31
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.31.1?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

²⁸¹⁵ Jeremiah 30:15-22

This represents the history of the Israelites who started life as slaves in Egypt, were rescued by Yahweh – who ‘married’ them by covenant – rose to glory under King Solomon and, after the division of his kingdom, turned their backs on their ‘husband’, by ‘committing adultery’ (forging alliances with foreign kings, worshipping foreign gods and murdering their children by passing them through fire).

JERUSALEM, YAHWEH'S UNFAITHFUL WIFE

Born in Canaan to an Amorite father and a Hittite mother, at my birth there was none to cut the umbilical cord, wash my limbs, salt my skin or swaddle me - no one to show me pity or compassion. Instead, I was left to die in an open field, despised by all. Then Yahweh passed by and saw me kicking in my blood. He told me to live, so I lived and grew. By the time I had reached puberty, I was very beautiful, with fully formed breasts and long hair, but still naked and alone.

The next time Yahweh passed by, He saw that I was ready for His love. Covering my nakedness with His garment, He drew up a marriage contract, sealed it with His oath and made me His queen. Washing the blood from my body, He bathed my limbs with water and rubbed my skin with oil. After clothing me in sumptuous garments, placing on my feet sandals of the finest leather, adorning me with gold and silver, he fed me with the finest flour, oil and honey.

Enhanced by the splendor with which Yahweh had surrounded me, I became famous for my beauty. Such fame and beauty turned my head.²⁸¹⁶ Forgetting all that Yahweh had done for me in my youth, when I was naked and bare, kicking in my blood, I committed adultery.²⁸¹⁷

The sumptuous garments in which Yahweh had clothed me, I spread on the bed on which I lay with my lovers. The gold and silver with which Yahweh had adorned me, I made into idols with which I prostituted myself. The flour, oil and honey with which Yahweh had fed me, I offered up to my idols. The sons and daughters that Yahweh had given me, I passed through fire.²⁸¹⁸

In every place and square, at every street corner, I built altars to my idols, spreading my legs to every passing stranger like any common whore.²⁸¹⁹ Instead of asking for payment, I paid them.²⁸²⁰ Unsatisfied by the Egyptians, I turned to the Assyrians. Unsatisfied by the Assyrians, I turned to the Babylonians.²⁸²¹

JERUSALEM, YAHWEH'S UNFAITHFUL WIFE

²⁸¹⁶ Ezekiel 16:3-15

²⁸¹⁷ Ezekiel 16:22

²⁸¹⁸ Ezekiel 16:16-21

²⁸¹⁹ Ezekiel 16:31 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16114/jewish/Chapter-16.htm/showrashi/true#l=primary

²⁸²⁰ Ezekiel 16:33-34

²⁸²¹ Ezekiel 16:26, 28-29

People said, “Like mother, like daughter. What can be expected from a union between a Hittite mother and an Amorite father?”

I was considered far worse than my two sisters - my big sister, Samaria, who lived in the north, and my little sister, Sodom, who lived in the south. Had I merely done as them, following their hateful practices, my crimes would not have been so great. Instead, I behaved far worse. My Husband swore by His life that Sodom had never behaved as badly as me. Yet, because she was arrogant, greedy and cared nothing for the poor and needy, she had been destroyed. Nor had Samaria behaved half as badly as I had. Yet she, too, had been punished. Both seem innocent in comparison to me. ²⁸²²

To punish me for my adulterous and murderous behavior, my Husband threatened to deliver me into the hands of all those who had pleased me, ²⁸²³ telling me they would destroy my lofty shrines, strip me of my sumptuous garments, denude me of my gold and silver, leaving me as naked and bare as when I had been born. A mob would stone and hack me, as an example to other women. Only then would my Husband’s anger and fury subside. ²⁸²⁴ Only then would He renew our marriage vows. ²⁸²⁵

²⁸²² Ezekiel 16:44-50

²⁸²³ Ezekiel 16:37

²⁸²⁴ Ezekiel 16:39-42

²⁸²⁵ Ezekiel 16:60-63

NARRATOR

We now come to the allegory of Oholah and Oholibah, two adulterous sisters who, married to the same husband –Yahweh – represent the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah and their two capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem. The story starts in Egypt, where the Hebrews were enslaved and encouraged to worship Egyptian gods. In the words of the allegory, in their youth the two sisters worked as prostitutes in Egypt, where their breasts were squeezed and their bosoms pressed.

After the division of Solomon’s kingdom into two, the northern kingdom of Israel was the first to place its faith in alliances with foreign kings, instead of in Yahweh. This came about when King Menachem, impressed by Assyrian power or, in the words of the allegory, ‘lusting after Assyrian officers in their blue uniforms’, in order to strengthen his place on the throne, agreed to pay tribute to King Pul of Assyria, thus taking the Assyrian king as his ‘lover’.

Israel’s last king, Hoshea, conspired with Pharaoh So against their Assyrian overlords, thus betraying his Assyrian ‘husband’ and committing ‘adultery’ with Egypt. As a result, the northern kingdom was conquered by King Sargon and its people marched off to slavery in Assyria. In the words of the allegory, Oholah (Israel) was stripped naked, her children captured, killed or enslaved, to serve as a lesson to all women who might ‘betray’ their husbands.

The kings of Judah behaved no better. In the allegory, undeterred by the terrible fate of her sister, Oholibah (representing Judah) also betrayed her husband with Assyrian lovers. This refers to the reign of King Ahaz. Instead of following the advice of the prophet, Isaiah, and trusting in Yahweh to protect him from the joint armies of Israel and Syria, Ahaz bribed the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, to protect his kingdom.

Whilst on a visit to Damascus to pay tribute to the Assyrian king, Ahaz saw an altar with which he was so taken, that he arranged to have one made just like it for the Temple. According to II Kings Chapter 16 and II Chronicles Chapter 28, Ahaz strayed so far from the worship of Yahweh that, to placate the bloodthirsty god, Moloch, he passed his son ‘through fire’. Thus, in the allegory, Oholibah is accused of compounding her crime of adultery by murdering her own children.

Although, in all respects, a much better king than his father, Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah, made the fatal mistake of revealing his riches to the members of a Babylonian delegation, arousing their greed and leading to the inevitable conquest of Judah. This came about when the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians and Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish, replacing the Egyptians as overlords of Judah. In Ezekiel Chapter 23 this is expressed as: "*And the children of Babylon came to her for a bed of love, and they defiled her with their harlotry, and she became defiled through them, and her soul was disgusted with them.*" ²⁸²⁶

NARRATOR

²⁸²⁶ Ezekiel 23:14-17

Oholibah's 'affair' with Babylon came to an end when King Zedekiah enlisted Egyptian support to overthrow Babylonian rule. Thus Oholibah, as insatiable for their charms as ever, found herself 'in bed' with the Egyptians. The result was the fall of Judah.

OHOLAH AND OHOLIBAH (SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM)

I was one of two sisters who shared the same mother. As young women we worked as prostitutes in Egypt, where our breasts were squeezed and our bosoms pressed. Oholah was the elder and I, Oholibah, the younger. We both married the same man, to whom we bore sons and daughters.

Oholah was the first to betray our husband. Attracted to handsome young Assyrian officers and cavalrymen in their blue uniforms, she offered herself to the entire Assyrian elite, adopting their ways and their gods. Nor did she cease the prostitution she had begun in Egypt where, as a young girl, men had slept with her, caressed her bosom and satisfied their lust. Our husband punished her by delivering her up to the Assyrian lovers for whom she so craved, who stripped her, took away her children and killed her with a sword. She became an example to all women everywhere of what would happen to any woman who committed adultery.

When I saw what Oholah had done, I became even more depraved than her. I, too, lusted after the handsome young Assyrian officers and cavalrymen in their blue uniforms.²⁸²⁷ But I went even further. After seeing pictures of Chaldeans painted on a wall, mighty-looking men with belts tied around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads, I became inflamed with lust and summoned them to my bed. So many came for a night of love that, in the end, they filled me with disgust.

When I began to practice prostitution openly, by exposing my body for all to see, my husband was as disgusted by me as he had been by my sister, Oholah.

Remembering the insatiable Egyptian lovers of my youth, I became even more promiscuous,²⁸²⁸ continuing to prostitute myself even after I grew old.²⁸²⁹ Determined to make me forget my Egyptian lovers,²⁸³⁰ my husband decided to use my former lovers against me – the Babylonians and the Chaldeans, whom I now hated, the handsome young officers and cavalrymen – making them agents of his justice.

OHOLAH AND OHOLIBAH (SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM)

²⁸²⁷ Ezekiel 23:1-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#t=primary

²⁸²⁸ Ezekiel 23:14-21

²⁸²⁹ Ezekiel 23:43-44

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#t=primary

²⁸³⁰ Ezekiel 23:27

He warned me that hordes would come against me with their weapons and chariots, surrounding me with shields, bucklers and helmets.²⁸³¹ They would deal with me in fury, stripping me of my clothes and jewelry, cutting off my nose and ears, killing or capturing my children and burning my property.²⁸³²

Because I had gone the way of my sister, my husband placed her cup in my hand, saying,

“You shall drink from the same cup as Oholah,
a cup brimming with scorn and derision,
a cup that will fill you with drunkenness and grief.
Like her, you will drink it till the dregs.
Like her, you will scrape it clean.
Since you have forgotten me, Oholibah, and have cast me aside,
now you must face your punishment.”²⁸³³

My husband dragged me before the court for judgment, accusing me of adultery and murder.²⁸³⁴ The charges were many: first, I had sacrificed our children to idols; second, I had desecrated his house on the Sabbath; third, I had beautified myself for strangers; fourth, I had offered my husband’s incense and olive oil to others; and fifth, I had allowed drunkards and worthless men to pay me homage.²⁸³⁵ Therefore, I would suffer the fate of all adulteresses with blood on their hands. A mob would be brought to terrorize and plunder me, to pelt me with stones and slash me with swords, to slay my sons and daughters and burn down my house.

All this our husband did to Oholah and me, in order to put an end to our promiscuity and to warn women everywhere not to take the same path as us.²⁸³⁶

²⁸³¹ Ezekiel 23:22-24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

²⁸³² Ezekiel 23:25-26 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

²⁸³³ Ezekiel 23:31-35 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

²⁸³⁴ Ezekiel 23:45 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

²⁸³⁵ Ezekiel 23:36-42 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

²⁸³⁶ Ezekiel 23:45-49 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16121/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-23.htm#l=primary

The night before my execution, I had a dream in which my sister, Oholah, appeared to comfort me. We spent the night comparing our situations, each claiming that her misfortune was the greatest.

SAMARIA CALLS FORTH

A poem by the Andalusian poet, Solomon Ibn Gvirol.

In what follows Samaria and Oholah equal Israel, Oholibah represents Judah, and Edom stands for Rome.

Samaria calls forth: My sins are descried.
In a far off land my children reside.
And Oholibah cried: My cities have died.
And Zion sighed: By God cast aside.

Do not, Oholibah, think your hardship like mine!
Will you compare your misfortune to mine?
I, Oholah, strayed, with my willfulness betrayed,
By my denial now assailed, by my rebelliousness now flayed.
Short were the days before my debt I repaid
And Tiglath Pileasar my people enslaved.
Of my treasures denied, of my jewels deprived,
To Halah and Habor my people exiled.
Be silent, Oholibah, do not weep as I!
I wandered far, satiated am I.
Your years were long, no so were mine!

And Oholibah cried: My cities have died.
And Zion sighed: By God cast aside.

I too was headstrong, Oholibah replied.
At the height of my youth like Oholah betrayed.
Be silent, Oholah, for my grief I recall!
You wandered once, many times have I strayed.
Into the hands of Chaldeans twice did I fall,
A destitute captive taken in thrall.
Burned is the palace in which I was courted.
Seventy years to Babylon was I deported.
To Zion returned, a palace secured,
This time, too, not long I endured.
Taken by Edom and, almost shattered,
Throughout all the lands my masses were scattered.

And Oholibah cried: My cities have died.
And Zion sighed: By God cast aside.

THE POET

He who pities the poor, pity their poverty,
See their desolation, the length of their exile.
Restrain Thy wrath, see their abasement.
Remember no more their iniquity and folly!
Pray heal their wound and comfort their grief,
For You are their hope and You are their strength!
Renew our days as days passed by,
Then no more will Zion have cause to sigh:
By God have I been cast aside.²⁸³⁷

²⁸³⁷ שומרון קול תתן

<https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nlis/he/Song/Pages/Song.aspx?SongID=389#25,75,1568,516>

Part 20
Exile to Babylon

CHAPTER 66
AFTER THE CONQUEST
The Book of Jeremiah

After the Babylonian conquest, Judah, now known as Yehud, was not completely deserted. The poorest of the poor had been left behind to till the fields and tend the vineyards. A Jew named Gedaliah was appointed governor, with Mizpah as his administrative center.

Here Governor Gedaliah's wife tells us of her husband's tragic end (Jeremiah Chapter 40).

The wife of Baruch, the son of Neriah, whom we have already met in Chapter 59 (The Nemesis of Judah's Last Kings) and Chapter 63 (King Zedekiah), describes how she and her husband joined their compatriots in their flight to Egypt (Jeremiah Chapters 42-3).

A devotee of the Queen of Heaven explains why she and her family remained faithful to the worship of their goddess, even after they settled in Egypt (Jeremiah Chapters 7 and 44).

Baruch's wife returns to tell us what she knows of Jeremiah's death (Jeremiah Chapters 42-3).

Finally the wife of the prophet, Habakkuk, relates the story of her husband's last mission from Yahweh. This is according to a legend found in two apocryphal texts: *Bel and the Dragon* Chapter 1 and the *Lives of the Prophets*.

THE WIFE OF GOVERNOR GEDALIAH

My husband, Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, came from a highly respected Jerusalemite family. A peace-loving man, he was willing to do almost anything to keep the peace. Unlike many of our countrymen, Gedaliah took to heart the words of Yahweh's holy man, Jeremiah, and threw in his lot with the Babylonians. This didn't make him very popular among certain sections of the population, especially among the minor princes of the House of David.

After the Babylonians' capture of Jerusalem, in recognition of his services, they made Gedaliah governor of those of us remaining in Judah.²⁸³⁸ My husband set up his headquarters at Mizpah,²⁸³⁹ in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, which served as the seat of government for the entire province of Yehud, as Judah was now called.²⁸⁴⁰ It was to Mizpah that King Zedekiah's wife and daughters and the holy man, Jeremiah, were brought for safe keeping.²⁸⁴¹

Not everyone had surrendered to the Babylonian forces. Groups of our soldiers had formed a resistance movement. From their hiding places in the mountains, they carried out isolated attacks on the enemy. When they learned that my husband had been appointed governor of Yehud, they came to Mizpah to discuss the situation²⁸⁴²

CHAPTER 66 AFTER THE CONQUEST **THE WIFE OF GOVERNOR GEDALIAH**

²⁸³⁸ II Kings 25:22

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸³⁹ Jeremiah 40:6

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁴⁰ Joshua 18:21-26

²⁸⁴¹ Jeremiah 39:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16036/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁸⁴² Jeremiah 40:7-8

II Kings 25:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15931/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

Naturally my peace-loving husband advised them to lay down their arms. He explained that if we submitted to Babylonian rule and caused no trouble, we would be left in peace to work the land and enjoy the fruits of our labor.²⁸⁴³ Fortunately they had the sense to take his advice, and were well-rewarded. When news of our returning prosperity reached those of our people who had fled across the border to Moab and Ammon, they too began to drift back to Yehud.²⁸⁴⁴

My husband was by nature a trusting man. However, his willingness to believe in the basic goodness of his fellow human beings led to his downfall. One day, an army officer named Johanan accused a distant member of the royal family, named Ishmael, of plotting to assassinate Gedaliah.²⁸⁴⁵ Johanan even took my husband aside and offered to kill Ishmael in secret - anything to avoid endangering the remnant of our people left in Yehud.²⁸⁴⁶ My poor, deluded husband wouldn't hear a word said against a member of the royal family and forbade him to do any such thing.²⁸⁴⁷ Johanan left, shaking his head in despair.²⁸⁴⁸

²⁸⁴³ Jeremiah 40:9-10 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16037/jewish/Chapter-40.htm#t=primary&showrashi=true

²⁸⁴⁴ Jeremiah 40:11-12
II Kings 25:24
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁴⁵ Jeremiah 40:13-14
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁴⁶ Jeremiah 40:15
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁴⁷ Jeremiah 40:16
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁴⁸ Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

Soon after, Ishmael came to visit, accompanied by ten of his men. Naturally we invited them to join us for a meal, as was only right and proper. Indeed, everything seemed very amicable as Ishmael and my husband discussed the political situation. Therefore, what happened next came as a terrible shock. In the middle of the meal, Ishmael and his men suddenly sprung to their feet and started laying about them with their swords. My husband, the members of his administration and his Babylonian advisers all died that day. ²⁸⁴⁹ Only we women and children survived.

It was now that we learned that Ishmael was in league with the Ammonites, and that he intended taking us across the border into their territory. Herded along the road leading down to the River Jordan, there seemed little we could do. We had almost given up hope of ever seeing our country again, when word reached us that an army, under the leadership of Johanan, was on its way to rescue us. ²⁸⁵⁰

The two armies fought a pitched battle by the pool of Gibeon ²⁸⁵¹ and Ishmael was put to flight. He was last seen, with eight of his men, fleeing in the direction of Ammon. ²⁸⁵²

²⁸⁴⁹ Jeremiah 41:1-3 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16038/jewish/Chapter-41.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
II Kings 25:25
Babylonian Talmud: Rosh HaShana 18b
http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁵⁰ Jeremiah 41:10-11
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:4-5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁵¹ Jeremiah 41:12 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16038/jewish/Chapter-41.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁸⁵² Jeremiah 41:15
Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:5
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

NARRATOR

After the assassination of Governor Gedaliah, the remaining Judahites had no choice but to flee to Egypt, ironically the only country where they could be sure of a welcome. This, however, failed to prevent their capture and exile but merely delayed it.²⁸⁵³

NARRATOR

²⁸⁵³ II Kings 25:26

Jeremiah 41:17-18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16038/jewish/Chapter-41.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

Contrary to Baruch's vision, in which he was told he would be transported up to heaven, forty days came and went and nothing happened. I, for one, breathed a sigh of relief. Even Baruch began to have his doubts. I told him it was a waste of time hanging around for something that might never happen and suggested we join the remnant of our people.

When we eventually caught up with them, it was to find them in the midst of a violent argument. Some said that if we remained in Judah, we would face the wrath of the Babylonians who, as we well knew, would not take the murder of their governor lightly. Others pointed out that, if we fled to Egypt, where we could be sure of a welcome, we might never see our homeland again. It was not an easy choice.

We consulted Jeremiah who recommended we remain in Judah and trust in Yahweh. ²⁸⁵⁴ Unfortunately, this was not the advice the people wanted to hear. They accused Jeremiah of lying. Worse, they accused my husband, Baruch, of treachery, claiming he was in the pay of the Babylonians! Nothing we said or did made any difference. In the end Baruch and I, Jeremiah and King Zedekiah's wife and daughters were taken to Egypt by force.

Once we reached Egypt, we settled at Tahpanhes. ²⁸⁵⁵ Here our people rebelled against the worship of Yahweh, blaming Him for our misfortune. Instead, they returned to the worship of the Queen of Heaven, maintaining that, when they had worshipped her in Judah, she had brought them luck. Although Jeremiah remonstrated with them, they refused to listen. And who can blame them? ²⁸⁵⁶

After Jeremiah saved the Egyptians from a plague of locusts, he became something of a local hero. The gullible Egyptians even started treating him as a god! What else can you expect of a people who worshipped their king and said he would live forever? ²⁸⁵⁷

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

²⁸⁵⁴ Jeremiah 42:1-22

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁵⁵ Jeremiah 43:1-7

Antiquities of the Jews Book 10 Chapter 9:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁸⁵⁶ Jeremiah 44:15-29 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16041/jewish/Chapter-44.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

<http://hebrewbooks.org/6618>

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A DEVOTEE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

All my life I worshipped the Queen of Heaven and she never let me down. As a woman devotee, it was my task to make sure there was bread for my family²⁸⁵⁸ and grain, wine and incense for the goddess.²⁸⁵⁹

Even before our exile to Egypt, I and my family had worshipped her. My sons would gather wood to make a fire, my husband would light it, while I and my daughters would knead dough to make her traditional, star-shaped cakes. For this, we were severely reprimanded by Yahweh's holy man, Jeremiah.²⁸⁶⁰ However, we all ignored him, for what right had he to criticize us for what we did in the privacy of our own home?²⁸⁶¹

When we set out for Egypt, we had no idea what awaited us. Therefore, we were overjoyed to find scattered colonies of our people who welcomed us with open arms. With the encouragement of our new friends, we soon adopted their religious practices, delighted to find that they resembled ours.²⁸⁶²

We were sure that, in Egypt, Jeremiah would trouble us no more. How wrong we were! Instead, he seemed to be everywhere, criticizing our every move. In vain we explained that, in Judah, the goddess had brought us luck, and that it was only after we had deserted her for Yahweh, that our luck had changed for the worse. This seemed to anger him even more.²⁸⁶³

A DEVOTEE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

²⁸⁵⁸ Leviticus 26:26 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9927/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-26.htm#lt=primary

²⁸⁵⁹ I Samuel 1:24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Menachoth 76b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Menachoth.pdf>

²⁸⁶⁰ Jeremiah 7:17-20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16004/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#lt=primary

²⁸⁶¹ Jeremiah 44:15-19

²⁸⁶² Jeremiah 44:1

²⁸⁶³ Jeremiah 44:15-30

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

Even in Egypt, Jeremiah continued to have his visions, warning us about the fate of the country which had granted us sanctuary.²⁸⁶⁴ According to him, nowhere would be safe, not even our cities of Tahpanhes, Migdol and Noph.²⁸⁶⁵ Jeremiah predicted that all the misfortunes that had befallen our people in Judah would befall us again in Egypt.²⁸⁶⁶ Egypt would be conquered by the Babylonians and we, too, would die from starvation, the plague or by the sword.²⁸⁶⁷

He was right. When Egypt was overrun, we were captured and marched off to captivity. Once in Babylon, Baruch put all he had learned from Jeremiah to good use, by establishing an academy for the study of the law.²⁸⁶⁸

THE WIFE OF JEREMIAH'S SCRIBE, BARUCH

²⁸⁶⁴ Jeremiah 43:8-13

²⁸⁶⁵ Ezekiel 30:18
Jeremiah 44:1

²⁸⁶⁶ Jeremiah 44:12-13

²⁸⁶⁷ Ezekiel 29:17 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16127/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-29.htm#It=primary

סדר עולם רבה כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.26?lang=en

²⁸⁶⁸ מדרש רבה - שיר השירים רבה סדרא תנינא פרשה ה א (ה)

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 16b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 71b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

All sorts of legends have been woven around his teacher's death. Some say that, when the Babylonians invaded Egypt, Jeremiah fled back to Judah,²⁸⁶⁹ others that he was exiled to Babylon.²⁸⁷⁰ Yet others claimed that, tired of his unceasing criticism, our people stoned him to death.²⁸⁷¹

Whatever the truth, no-one showed any interest in what happened to my husband, Baruch, who, throughout his entire life, had lived in Jeremiah's shadow.

²⁸⁶⁹ Ezekiel 29:17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16127/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-29.htm#lt=primary

Jeremiah 44:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16041/jewish/Chapter-44.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

סדר עולם רבה כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.26?lang=en

²⁸⁷⁰ סדר עולם רבא פרק כו

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8_%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D_%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%90_%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A7_%D7%9B%D7%95

²⁸⁷¹ שושלת הקבלה עמוד 244

<http://hebrewbooks.org/6618>

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HABAKKUK

Unfortunately my husband's vision of the destruction of Jerusalem proved only too accurate. The Babylonians invaded our country, conquered Jerusalem, burned down the Temple and exiled most of our people to Babylon. Forewarned by his dream, Habakkuk and I had already fled to Ostracina in Egypt, where we remained until we were certain that it was safe to return to Judah.²⁸⁷²

In Judah we lived quietly on our farm, doing our best to keep out of trouble. Occasionally, reports reached us from far-off Babylon. Apparently things were not as bad as we thought. Our people had started to put down roots, building themselves homes and working the land. Some of our young nobility had even found favor with the king. One, named Daniel, had, in spite of all Babylonian attempts to make him worship their gods, made quite a name for himself by remaining faithful to the worship of Yahweh.²⁸⁷³

Habakkuk was in the habit of preparing food for the reapers harvesting our fields, usually a thick stew containing vegetables, grains, and sometimes even meat or fish, which he served accompanied by my homemade bread.²⁸⁷⁴ One day, he told me he had an urgent errand. If he did not return in time for the mid-day meal, he asked me to take the food to the reapers.²⁸⁷⁵ On his return, I asked him where he had been.

“To Babylon,” came his enigmatic reply.

“What do you mean, Babylon?” I asked.

“It's far more than a day's journey from here.”

“Well, if you must know,

I took some stew to someone who was very hungry.”

“And who was that?”

“A young man named Daniel. He was very grateful.”

That was the end of the conversation.²⁸⁷⁶

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HABAKKUK

²⁸⁷² Lives of the Prophets – Habakkuk 2-3

https://archive.org/stream/SBLMS1/SBLMS1_djvu.txt

²⁸⁷³ Apocrypha: Bel and the Dragon 1:1-22

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/bel001.htm>

²⁸⁷⁴ Apocrypha: Bel and the Dragon 1:33

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/bel001.htm>

²⁸⁷⁵ Lives of the Prophets - Habakkuk 4-7

https://archive.org/stream/SBLMS1/SBLMS1_djvu.txt

אברבנאל על חבקוק ²⁸⁷⁶

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Abarbanel_on_Habakkuk.1.1.10?lang=en

Apocrypha: Bel and the Dragon 1:34-30

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/bel001.htm>

Habakkuk had one more vision before he died. This time it was about a new Temple that would rise on the ashes of the old and how it, too, would eventually be destroyed. I shook my head and sighed. Why did Yahweh's visions have to be so depressing? ²⁸⁷⁷

For some reason, which he never explained, Habakkuk's dying wish was to be buried, not in our family plot as you would expect, but in the field where the reapers had been working the day that Habakkuk went to feed Daniel in Babylon. ²⁸⁷⁸

²⁸⁷⁷ Lives of the Prophets – Habakkuk 10-14
https://archive.org/stream/SBLMS1/SBLMS1_djvu.txt

²⁸⁷⁸ Lives of the Prophets – Habakkuk 8-9
https://archive.org/stream/SBLMS1/SBLMS1_djvu.txt

CHAPTER 67

THE FIRST DEPORTATION TO BABYLON

The Book of Jeremiah

The Book of Ezekiel

Unlike the ten tribes exiled to Assyria, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin (actually three for they included some Levites) had not forsaken utterly the worship of Yahweh. Therefore, even in exile, it was His laws that enabled them to retain their separate national and religious identity. This separateness was to bring them great suffering throughout the centuries to come.

According to Jeremiah Chapter 52, three deportations of Judahites took place.²⁸⁷⁹ The first, led by young King Jehoiachin, also known as Coniah, was composed of the leading citizens of Judah. Eleven years later, Jerusalem fell and its leading citizens, led by blind King Zedekiah, were exiled to Babylon. After another five years, there was a third and last deportation of Judahite rebels.

The women describing the first deportation are:

King Jehoiachin's mother, Nehushtah, whose name appears in II Kings Chapter 24.

King Jehoiachin's unnamed wife.

Then comes Semiramis, Nebuchadnezzar's queen, who tells us how she personally intervened to ensure the continuation of the House of David, a story related in the *Great Commentary on Leviticus*.

The legend related by Nebuchadnezzar's unnamed daughter, based on Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 93a, of the *Babylonian Talmud*, proves that not all the Judahite exiles were beyond reproach.

The chapter concludes with two accounts of the strange visions experienced by the prophet, Ezekiel, these being given first by his wife and then by a neighbor, both taken from the book that bears his name.

CHAPTER 67 THE FIRST DEPORTATION TO BABYLON

INTRODUCTION

²⁸⁷⁹ Jeremiah 52: 28-29 First Deportation

Jeremiah 52:12-15 Second Deportation

Jeremiah 52:30 Third Deportation

NEHUSHTAH, MOTHER OF KING JEHOIACHIN

It took months for us to reach Babylon. Fortunately the royal family was given some privileges denied to the common folk, which helped us survive the journey. My son was incarcerated in prison, leaving us without an undisputed leader. No longer was I able to participate in the government of our people, because all my power had been derived from Jehoiachin.²⁸⁸⁰

A power struggle soon broke out between the various parties. There were those who claimed that, since we would soon return to Judah, there was no reason for us to put down roots.²⁸⁸¹ Others claimed the opposite. Some took the law into their own hands, such as Shemaiah, the Nehelamite, who proclaimed himself acting High Priest.²⁸⁸²

It was at this low point in our fortunes that a letter arrived from Jeremiah. I was surprised by how eager I was to read the words of a man who had been such a thorn in our flesh, but whose predictions had proved so accurate. I even found myself wishing we had listened to him in the first place. I welcomed any advice he could give, for I no longer knew what to do in our new surroundings, with everyone at each other's throats.²⁸⁸³

NEHUSHTAH, MOTHER OF KING JEHOIACHIN

²⁸⁸⁰ Targum Shani to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

²⁸⁸¹ Jeremiah 29:8-9

²⁸⁸² Jeremiah 29:24-26
Jeremiah 29:30-32

²⁸⁸³ Jeremiah 29:1-2

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

We hadn't been in Babylon very long when two young men, Elasah, the son of Shaphan the scribe, and Gemariah, the son of Hilkiyah the priest, brought us a letter from the holy man, Jeremiah. In his letter he warned us not to listen to those who told us that we would soon return home, because it would take another seventy years before we would do so. In the meantime, he advised us to make the best of things by building homes, growing our own food and having many children. This set me off crying again. How was I supposed to bear children when my husband was in prison?²⁸⁸⁴

There were many who refused to believe Jeremiah and, just as they had ignored his words in Judah, continued to do so in Babylon. Chief among them was our acting High Priest, Shemaiah, who was so incensed by Jeremiah's letter that he wrote to Zephaniah, the priest in Jerusalem, urging him to have Jeremiah imprisoned. In response to Shemaiah's letter, Jeremiah wrote back, telling us that Shemaiah had no authority to speak in Yahweh's name.²⁸⁸⁵

In a third letter, Jeremiah warned us not to frequent astrologers, who claimed to be able to predict the future according to the stars.²⁸⁸⁶ If we were ordered to worship the gods of the Babylonians,²⁸⁸⁷ we were to explain that idols were man-made objects that possessed no power whatsoever, unlike our God, Yahweh, the source of all creation.²⁸⁸⁸

For thirty-six years Coniah languished in prison. Forbidden to visit him, I was at my wit's end as to how I could provide him with an heir to the House of David.²⁸⁸⁹ Eventually I explained my predicament to our council of elders. I don't know how they did it, but they succeeded in arranging for me to visit him in prison.²⁸⁹⁰

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

²⁸⁸⁴ Jeremiah 29:1-7

²⁸⁸⁵ Jeremiah 29:24-32

²⁸⁸⁶ Jeremiah 10:1-2

²⁸⁸⁷ Jeremiah 10:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16007/jewish/Chapter-10.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

²⁸⁸⁸ Jeremiah 10:5-7

²⁸⁸⁹ Jeremiah 22:30

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

ייקרא רבה 19 ²⁸⁹⁰

SEMIRAMIS, KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S QUEEN

As ruler of the entire world, my husband, Nebuchadnezzar, was often required to act in a way that was judged by some to be both harsh and cruel. Towards the Jews, the people of a minor kingdom in the south, who had caused him much trouble, he was an implacable enemy. I knew nothing about this strange people and their strange ways until, one day, a delegation asked to see me. Intrigued, I consented to hear their request.

They explained that their young king, Jehoiachin, languished in prison, deprived of conjugal visits by order of my husband and, therefore, was unable to produce an heir. In desperation, they had come to beg me to intervene. ²⁸⁹¹

Knowing that, in private, my husband could deny me nothing, I waited my turn to be summoned to his bed. After a night of love I whispered in his ear,
“My husband, just as you are king of Babylon,
was not Jehoiachin the king of Judah?
Just as you demand your rights as a king, doesn't he deserve the same?
Just as you demand your conjugal rights as a husband,
doesn't he also deserve them?
By your order, he and his wife have been kept apart all these years,
as a result of which he has no heir to succeed him.
I beg you to allow them to be reunited.”

My uxorious husband granted my request and Jehoiachin's wife was lowered down to him in his cell. I can only imagine the joy such a reunion must have brought them. ²⁸⁹²

SEMIRAMIS, KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S QUEEN

²⁸⁹¹ Jeremiah 22:30

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

ויקרא רבה 19

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

ויקרא רבה ²⁸⁹² 19

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

Throughout the years I had retained a picture in my mind of how Coniah had looked the last time I saw him. Therefore, I was quite unprepared for what I found. Prison had changed him, not only physically but also spiritually. He was now a devout Yahwist.

As luck would have it, at the time of my first visit I was menstruating. According to our laws, a man is not allowed to have sexual relations with a menstruating wife so, only after my menses had ceased and I had purified myself, were we able to have relations.

The ironic thing is that, when we lived in the holy city of Jerusalem, Coniah had never observed any of Yahweh's laws yet, here, in idol-worshipping Babylon, he did.²⁸⁹³

To our great joy, the result of our long-awaited union was a son named Zerubbabel.²⁸⁹⁴

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

²⁸⁹³ ויקרא רבה 19

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.19?lang=en

²⁸⁹⁴ Haggai 2:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16204/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

פסיקתא דרב כהנא פסקא כד אית יא (יא)

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_D'Rav_Kahanna.24.11?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DAUGHTER

I am the daughter of the greatest king who ever lived - Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkad, and King of the Universe. Many campaigns did my father wage, in all of which he was victorious. Many peoples did he bring back to Babylon to be our slaves.²⁸⁹⁵ One of them was a strange people called Jews, who worshipped an even stranger God.²⁸⁹⁶

In his first campaign against them, in addition to the magnificent gold and silver objects from their Temple, my father also brought back some of their noblest youths. Not only were they good-looking, but also very intelligent. My father's plan was to teach them our language and culture so that they could serve us.²⁸⁹⁷ Some were castrated, while others were allowed to father children.

Four caught the eye of the steward appointed to supervise them. Their behavior was exemplary. They did not laugh, they did not talk, they did not sleep, nor did they obey the call of nature for as long as they were in my father's presence.²⁸⁹⁸ To these four he gave Babylonian names. One, of royal descent, he named Belteshazzar,²⁸⁹⁹ a man who, after successfully interpreting my father's dreams, rose to high position at court.²⁹⁰⁰ It was Belteshazzar who interpreted the fateful dream that presaged my father's insanity.

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DAUGHTER

²⁸⁹⁵ Jeremiah 4:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16001/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁸⁹⁶ II Kings 24:1

²⁸⁹⁷ Daniel 1:1-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16484/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

²⁸⁹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

²⁸⁹⁹ Daniel 1:6-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16484/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁹⁰⁰ Daniel 2

In his dream, my father had seen a tree, the branches of which provided shade and fruit for all, so tall, that it could be seen from every place on earth. An angel had descended and ordered the tree chopped down, its roots bound in chains of copper and iron and left exposed to the elements.²⁹⁰¹

Belteshazzar explained that the tree was Nebuchadnezzar, so powerful that he ruled the whole world. The felling of the tree meant that my father, who now filled such an exalted position, would soon be brought down low. For seven years he would live like a wild animal, without a roof over his head, an outcast from human society. Only when he acknowledged that God, not he, ruled the world, would he be restored to his throne.²⁹⁰²

Then Belteshazzar offered my father some advice. He advised him to take pity on the starving Jewish exiles and feed them from the royal granaries. Perhaps this would mitigate his harsh fate. For a year this is what my father did, until he had completely forgotten the dream and its interpretation. Then, one day, whilst out walking in the palace gardens, he heard a commotion at the gates. Told it was caused by the Jews who had come for their food allocation from the royal granaries, my father exclaimed,

“What? Waste my money on riffraff! If I give away all my wealth,
how will I be able to continue building this great city of Babylon?
From now on they are to receive nothing.”²⁹⁰³

Suddenly, to everyone’s shock, he clutched at his throat and fell to the ground, his body writhing in convulsions. Completely insane, he became so uncontrollable that we were forced to set him free to wander the highways and byways of the land. From time to time rumors reached us of a wild man roaming the countryside, his body covered with hair and his nails like talons. It was said he lived off grass.²⁹⁰⁴ He was so animal-like that other animals would try and mount him from behind.²⁹⁰⁵ Frightful to look at, he was shunned by all.²⁹⁰⁶

²⁹⁰¹ Daniel 4:1-12

²⁹⁰² Daniel 4:17-23
Antiquities Chapter 10:6
<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

²⁹⁰³ Daniel 4:24-27 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16487/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁹⁰⁴ Daniel 4:30

²⁹⁰⁵ מדרש תנחומא - שמות פרשת וארא ט
http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01989.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L4

²⁹⁰⁶ Daniel 4:28-29

If the truth be told, even I, his favorite daughter, wasn't sorry to see the back of my father, because we had all lived in fear of his frequent rages. In such a state, he was totally unpredictable and capable of killing even the person he claimed to love most. Convinced we had seen the last of him, the people elected my half-brother, Evil-merodoch, king in his place.²⁹⁰⁷

One day, a tall, commanding figure strode into the audience chamber, demanding to see the king. My brother and I could hardly believe our eyes. It was our father, older and obviously wearing borrowed clothes, but undoubtedly our father, with the same imperious manner that no-one could mistake.²⁹⁰⁸

Recovering from shock, I rushed forward to greet him, lest I earn his reproof for not displaying daughterly affection quickly enough. My brother, however, hung back, fearing the worst. He was right to be afraid for my father immediately gave orders for Evil-merodoch to be thrown into prison, for usurping the throne. Everyone knew that whoever entered the prison never saw the light of day again.²⁹⁰⁹

Obviously my father's sanity had returned and, with it, something else. In spite of the anger he displayed towards my brother, I sensed a new humility about him. Moreover, instead of worshipping our gods, he now worshipped the God of the Jews.²⁹¹⁰

Just in case you think that all Jews were as highly principled as Belteshazzar and his three friends, I want to tell you about two who had the effrontery to proposition me - me, the daughter of great King Nebuchadnezzar!²⁹¹¹ These two, Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, requested an audience on the pretext of bearing an important message from their God. Intrigued, I agreed to see them.

²⁹⁰⁷ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשה יח ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_all.html#HtmpReportNum0017_L2

²⁹⁰⁸ Daniel 4:31-33

²⁹⁰⁹ מדרש רבה לחומש ויקרא פרשה יח ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_all.html#HtmpReportNum0017_L2

²⁹¹⁰ Daniel 4:34

²⁹¹¹ Jeremiah 29:21

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

Two middle-aged men entered, dressed in traditional Jewish robes. When I asked them the nature of their visit, they repeated that they had an important message from their God, which they could only convey to me in private. As a royal princess, I could hardly agree to be alone with them. Therefore, I drew them aside, so that they could deliver their message without being overheard. The one named Ahab said,

“Our God, Yahweh, appeared to me in a dream,
telling me you must sleep with my friend, Zedekiah.”

Then Zedekiah said the same regarding Ahab.

I nearly choked! I gave them a non-committal reply, telling them to return for my answer the next day. I immediately went to seek my father’s advice, for I knew he set great store by the Jewish God. My father commented,

“From what I’ve heard, their God, Yahweh,
commands His followers to lead chaste lives.
The next time they come, bring them to me.”

So when they presented themselves at the palace the following day, I conducted them to my father’s audience chamber. My father asked,

“Who told you to say what you did to my daughter?”

Without batting an eyelid, they replied, “Our God, Yahweh.”

“That’s strange,” responded my father.

“Three of your countrymen, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
told me that your God prohibits such behavior.”

Coolly they answered,

“We are Yahweh’s holy men and this is the message we received.”

My father retorted, “Very well.

I will subject you to the same test that they underwent,
to see if you are telling the truth.”

Their faces turned white because everyone knows the story of how the three Jewish friends survived trial by fire. Needless to say, the two imposters burned to death.²⁹¹²

²⁹¹² Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer Elisha and the Shunammite

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

The years passed. Then, just when I had given up hope that Coniah would ever be released, something truly wonderful happened. A new king named Evil-merodach sat on the throne.

His first act as king was to free my husband, with whom he had become friendly in prison. ²⁹¹³ His second was to have his father's corpse exhumed and dragged behind a horse. Although this satisfied his desire for revenge, it brought him no comfort, for then the superstitious king feared that his father's spirit would return to punish him. ²⁹¹⁴

My clever husband quickly took advantage of the situation, advising the king to have the corpse cut up into three hundred pieces and fed to three hundred vultures. In this way Evil-merodach could be sure that his father would never bother him again. ²⁹¹⁵

To show his gratitude, from that day forth Evil-merodach treated Coniah as a brother, inviting us to live at court at his expense. ²⁹¹⁶

KING JEHOIACHIN'S WIFE

²⁹¹³ II Kings 25:27 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15931/jewish/Chapter-25.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Jeremiah 52:31

²⁹¹⁴ Targum Shani to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

²⁹¹⁵ Chronicles of Jerahmeel 6

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/coj/coj070.htm>

²⁹¹⁶ II Kings 25:28-30

Jeremiah 52:32-24

Chronicles of Jerahmeel 5

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/coj/coj070.htm>

Targum Shani to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, EZEKIEL

From the moment we met, it was love at first sight for Ezekiel and me and, as the years went by, our love for each other only grew stronger. ²⁹¹⁷

From an early age Ezekiel had experienced visions which, he claimed, came from Yahweh. ²⁹¹⁸ His visions were so pessimistic that his father, Buzi, ordered him to stop bothering us with them. ²⁹¹⁹

Ezekiel and I were among the 3,000 leading citizens of Judah who accompanied young King Jehoiachin into exile. ²⁹²⁰ In Babylon we settled in a colony of exiles on the River Chebar, named Tel Abib. Our neighbors were a nice young couple with whom we became very friendly. ²⁹²¹

Five years after we arrived in Babylon, Ezekiel started having visions again. ²⁹²² It wasn't a pleasant sight. Sometimes they left him unable to walk or talk, so that he couldn't go out for days. Instead of relating what he had seen in his visions, Ezekiel mimed what he had seen. ²⁹²³

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, EZEKIEL

²⁹¹⁷ Ezekiel 24:15-16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16122/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#lt=primary

²⁹¹⁸ Ezekiel 1:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16099/jewish/Chapter-1.htm/showrashi/true

תרגום יונתן יחזקאל פרק א ג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Targum_Jonathan_on_Ezekiel.1.3?lang=en

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל מסכתא דפסחא בא

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%9E%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%AA_%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A6%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%93%D7%A4%D7%A1%D7%97%D7%90_%D7%91%D7%90#%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%93%D7%A4%D7%A1%D7%97%D7%90_%D7%91%D7%90 \(%D7%A4%D7%AA%D7%99%D7%97%D7%94\)](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%9E%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%AA_%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A6%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%93%D7%A4%D7%A1%D7%97%D7%90_%D7%91%D7%90#%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%90_%D7%93%D7%A4%D7%A1%D7%97%D7%90_%D7%91%D7%90 (%D7%A4%D7%AA%D7%99%D7%97%D7%94))

רד"ק ליחזקאל פרק א [א, ג]

http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/olam_hatanah/mefaresh.asp?book=14&perek=1&mefaresh=radak

²⁹¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud: Mo'ed Katan 25a

http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Moed_Katan.pdf

²⁹²⁰ II Kings 24:14

²⁹²¹ Ezekiel 1:3

Ezekiel 3:24

²⁹²² Ezekiel 1:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16099/jewish/Chapter-1.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁹²³ Ezekiel 3:25-27

First, he drew a map in the dirt, showing the road from Babylon to Canaan and the crossroads where King Nebuchadnezzar would decide which direction to take and which city to destroy first - Ammon or Jerusalem.²⁹²⁴ Next, Ezekiel mimed the siege of Jerusalem. After building a detailed model of the city, he placed in the center a brick on which Jerusalem's image was engraved. For long periods at a time he lay facing this brick, first on his left side and then on his right. As a result of remaining in the same position, he suffered the same excruciating pain as the besieged citizens of Jerusalem. Eating only coarse bread and drinking only miniscule amounts of water, he endured the same hunger and thirst.²⁹²⁵

Then Ezekiel boiled some choice pieces of meat in a pot. Once they were soft and tender, he extracted the pieces one by one and poured away the water. Then he reheated the empty pot until the bottom turned black and it was fully sterilized. This symbolized what would happen to Jerusalem, now that its leading citizens had been exiled. After being captured by the Babylonians, it would be burned to the ground and all the wicked would perish.²⁹²⁶

Ezekiel's next mime portrayed what would happen to our people after the Babylonian conquest. First, he shaved his head and beard. Then, he weighed all the hair he had collected and divided it into three equal portions. One portion he placed on the brick and burned to nothing. Another he pretended to slice with a sword. The third he tossed into the air, to be dissipated by the wind. This symbolized the fate that awaited the citizens of Jerusalem. Some would starve to death, since starvation causes the skin to shrink as though from fire. Others would be cut down by the sword, while the rest would be scattered to the four corners of the earth.²⁹²⁷

Ezekiel's next task was to eat and drink whilst continually looking over his shoulder, as if expecting to be captured any moment.²⁹²⁸ Behaving as if he was going into exile, every morning he would place a cup and a bowl in a sack. Every evening he would blindfold himself, to indicate that he did not know where he was going. Then he would leave our house by crawling through a tunnel he had dug under the wall, carrying the sack on his shoulder. All this Ezekiel did in full view of our neighbors.

²⁹²⁴ Ezekiel 21:23-27

²⁹²⁵ Ezekiel 4:1-17

²⁹²⁶ Ezekiel 24:3-14

²⁹²⁷ Ezekiel 5:1-4

²⁹²⁸ Ezekiel 12:17-20

When asked to explain his peculiar behavior, Ezekiel told them that it symbolized what was about to happen to King Zedekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem. Hearing this, his listeners would immediately hurry off to send a message of warning to their relatives.²⁹²⁹

Finally Ezekiel groaned out loud. When asked why he was groaning, he said that it was because of the news that would soon reach us, news which would cause our spirits to sink, our hearts to contract, our knees to turn to water and our hands to fall lifeless at our sides. What news was so terrible, that it could cause such a reaction? The news of the fall of Jerusalem!²⁹³⁰

From time to time our elders would consult him. The first time they witnessed Ezekiel having one of his visions, they thought he was having an epileptic fit. I explained that this was a common occurrence and that it would soon pass.²⁹³¹ After recovering, he told them what he had seen. The elders complained that they couldn't make head or tail of his vision and demanded to know why he couldn't describe it more clearly.²⁹³²

Behind his back, they compared my husband's predictions with those of Isaiah, commenting that, while Isaiah's were those of a courtier, Ezekiel's were those of a country bumpkin. They claimed that Isaiah had managed to say exactly the same thing with far fewer words. When I heard this, all I could do was shake my head at their ingratitude.²⁹³³

Surprisingly, the elders continued to consult my husband.²⁹³⁴ I took this as a sign that they believed what he said. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It was just as though his words went in one ear and out the other. The only reason they came to our house was to be entertained!²⁹³⁵

²⁹²⁹ Ezekiel 12:3-16

²⁹³⁰ Ezekiel 21:10-12

²⁹³¹ Ezekiel 8:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16099/jewish/Chapter-1.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

²⁹³² Hosea 12:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16166/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#lt=primary

מדרש רבה - חומש ויקרא סדר ויקרא פרשה א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_part_1.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

²⁹³³ Babylonian Talmud: Chagigah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Chagigah.pdf>

²⁹³⁴ Ezekiel 14

Ezekiel 20

²⁹³⁵ Ezekiel 33:30-32

Ezekiel continued to have his visions. In some of them, our people were depicted as the adulterous bride of Yahweh or as two prostitute sisters. My husband's descriptions were so graphic that I often wondered just how the son of a priest, like my husband, knew so much about adultery and prostitution.²⁹³⁶

²⁹³⁶ Ezekiel 16
Ezekiel 23

THE NEIGHBOUR OF THE HOLY MAN, EZEKIEL

My husband and I lived next door to Ezekiel and his wife. Even though I was much younger, we women became very friendly and she treated me as the daughter she never had.

Like all Yahweh's holy men, Ezekiel had some very strange ways. Until his wife's death, he had kept mostly to himself though, from time to time, he would present himself in public to act out what his wife explained were visions from Yahweh. At first this was a great source of entertainment, but his audiences soon lost interest when it transpired that the visions only concerned what was happening far away in Jerusalem. In addition, Ezekiel used to lie unmoving on the ground for long periods at a time and people quickly became bored.

Tragically Ezekiel's wife died of the plague. One moment she was healthy. The next she was dead. Since no-one dared approach her corpse for fear of contagion, Ezekiel was forced to bury her himself. He displayed no outward signs of grief, nor did he exhibit any public sign of mourning, continuing to put on phylacteries, wear sandals, go around bare-headed and prepare his own food. In fact, he was surprisingly matter-of-fact about the whole thing.

Knowing how much Ezekiel had loved his wife, I couldn't understand his behavior. So I asked him why he was behaving in what seemed so unfeeling a fashion. He replied that he had been ordered to do so by Yahweh, to symbolize how our people would behave when Jerusalem was finally conquered. Not a family would escape the horror of losing someone they loved. Just as he was, we would all be numb with grief, afraid to show any sign of emotion in front of the Babylonians.²⁹³⁷

Seeing Ezekiel sitting alone in the shade of a date palm, my heart went out to him. My husband and I decided to take him under our wing, providing him with food and keeping his house clean, as his children would have done if he had had any.

THE NEIGHBOUR OF THE HOLY MAN, EZEKIEL

²⁹³⁷ Ezekiel 24:15-25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16122/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-24.htm#t=primary

One day a fugitive arrived from Jerusalem to tell us that the city had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar.²⁹³⁸ Suddenly, Ezekiel, who had been so taciturn,²⁹³⁹ began to talk quite freely. It was as though a dam had burst.²⁹⁴⁰ Although he became very popular as a public speaker, no-one took his words to heart. Like our elders they only came to be entertained.²⁹⁴¹

Ezekiel died of old age, having spent the major part of his life first trying to warn and then to console us.²⁹⁴² No-one could have done more for his people. We buried him next to the wife he had loved so much. In life they had been parted, but in death they were reunited, ready when the time came to rise together from their graves.

²⁹³⁸ Ezekiel 33:21

²⁹³⁹ Ezekiel 3:26-27
Ezekiel 24:26-27

²⁹⁴⁰ Ezekiel 33:22

²⁹⁴¹ Ezekiel 33:30-33

²⁹⁴² Babylonian Talmud: Baba Bathra 14b
http://www.halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_14.html

CHAPTER 68
THE SECOND DEPORTATION TO BABYLON
The Book of Jeremiah
The Book of Lamentations

The second and third deportations are described by two unnamed woman exiles, whose stories are pieced together from various Biblical and post-Biblical sources.

A WOMAN EXILE FROM JERUSALEM

I'm a poor woman of Jerusalem who lost everything when our country was conquered by the Babylonians, our beautiful city of Jerusalem destroyed and the Temple burned to the ground. My husband and adult sons died in battle, while my younger children and I were captured and exiled to Babylon. All this because King Zedekiah ceased paying tribute to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar.²⁹⁴³

It was high summer when we set out for Babylon. Although the weather was very hot, as it always was at that time of the year, had we been forced to set out during the winter months, it is doubtful we would have survived at all.²⁹⁴⁴ As we left Jerusalem, I looked back to see a trail of blood on the ground from the wounds of our injured,²⁹⁴⁵ and the hand and footprints of our infants, as they crawled on their hands and knees into captivity.²⁹⁴⁶

CHAPTER 68 THE SECOND DEPORTATION TO BABYLON **A WOMAN EXILE FROM JERUSALEM**

²⁹⁴³ II Kings 25:21

Jeremiah 52:27

²⁹⁴⁴ Great Commentary on Genesis 9:10-11

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁹⁴⁵ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁹⁴⁶ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

You would have thought that such a sight would awaken anyone's sympathy, but if so, you would be wrong.²⁹⁴⁷ Those who we thought our friends, offered us food purposely salted to make us thirsty. To quench our thirst, they offered us flasks of what we thought was water but which, when we gulped down the contents, turned out to be just air.²⁹⁴⁸ Those whom we had suspected of being our enemies, no longer hid their hatred.²⁹⁴⁹ Lining the streets, they hissed and booed as we passed by. Gnashing their teeth, they snarled,

“We’ve waited a long time to see your downfall,
and now we’ve seen it with our own eyes.”
Clapping their hands in celebration, they called out,
“Where now is the city of which you were once so proud?”²⁹⁵⁰

As I walked along the road I looked up to see huge flocks of birds flying overhead, while on each side of the road could be seen great herds of animals making their way north. Had I but known it, all the fish in the sea were also swimming north in the direction of Babylon, leaving no creature alive in Judah. Only with the end of our exile would they return.²⁹⁵¹

²⁹⁴⁷ Lamentations 1:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁹⁴⁸ Lamentations 1:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת תענית פרק ד דף כה, א פרק ד הלכה ה גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r2904.htm>

²⁹⁴⁹ Lamentations 1:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

²⁹⁵⁰ Lamentations 2:15-16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16458/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

²⁹⁵¹ Jeremiah 9:9

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת תענית פרק ד דף כה, א פרק ד הלכה ה גמרא

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r2904.htm>

איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי לד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

At the border between Judah and Benjamin, a woman sat by an open grave at the side of the road, weeping copious tears. It was none other than Mother Rachel.²⁹⁵² All these centuries she had been waiting to console us, as we set out on the long road to Babylon.²⁹⁵³ Although we did not know it at the time, it would be thanks to her intervention that Yahweh would end our exile.²⁹⁵⁴

At Ramah, we were placed in concentration camps, before setting out for Babylon.²⁹⁵⁵ Some of us had our hands tied behind our backs, some of us were bound in chains and some of us were naked. All of us were made to walk in the hot sun without food and water. Our spirits could not have been lower.²⁹⁵⁶

Then we saw Jeremiah, the Yahwist holy man who, for years, had been warning us what would happen if we deserted the worship of Yahweh. No-one had ever paid him any attention. Therefore, it meant all the more when he told us that, instead of remaining in Judah, he had decided to join his fate with ours. By following the trail of blood, he had been able to catch up with us.²⁹⁵⁷

²⁹⁵² Genesis 35:19-20
I Samuel 10:2

²⁹⁵³ Jeremiah 40:1

²⁹⁵⁴ Jeremiah 31:14-16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16028/jewish/Chapter-31.htm#showrashi=true

מדרש אגדה עמוד 159

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/33178>

מדרש רבה לחומש בראשית פרשת וישלח פרשה פב: ברכות ה' ליעקב י [ותקבר בדרך אפרת]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/82.htm>

מגילת איכה פתיחתא

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha-ptichta.htm>

איכה רבה 2

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah%2C_Petichta?lang=en

English Translation

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rachel-midrash-and-aggadah>

²⁹⁵⁵ Jeremiah 40:1

²⁹⁵⁶ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ח

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28?lang=he

²⁹⁵⁷ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

Hugging and kissing us, his tears flowing freely, in a sorrowful voice he repeated over and over again,

“My dear brothers and sisters,
all this has happened because you did not heed my warnings.”²⁹⁵⁸

Whenever he saw a group of youths yoked together by the neck, Jeremiah would place his own neck inside the yoke.²⁹⁵⁹ Tired of releasing him, Nebuchadnezzar’s general, Nebuzaradan, said to Jeremiah,

“Either you are an imposter, a masochist or a murderer.
For years you have been predicting the downfall of Jerusalem
and now that it has come to pass, you regret it.
This proves you don’t believe in your own predictions.
Or you are a masochist since you insist in sharing the suffering
of your fellow Judeans,
even though I have express orders to prevent you from doing so.
Or perhaps you just want to see me killed for not performing my duties
and protecting you from harm?”²⁹⁶⁰

After many long months we reached the mighty Euphrates. Many had died on the way, their corpses picked clean by predators. We knew that once we crossed the river into Babylon, there was no possibility of return. Then, just as we thought things could get no worse, Jeremiah announced that he had decided to return to Judah,²⁹⁶¹ explaining that Yahweh could do far more for us than he ever could.²⁹⁶² All that was required was to ask Yahweh for forgiveness and obey His laws.

²⁹⁵⁸ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁹⁵⁹ Jeremiah 40:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16037/jewish/Chapter-40.htm#t=primary&showrashi=true

איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי לד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

²⁹⁶⁰ איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי לד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

²⁹⁶¹ Jeremiah 40:4

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁹⁶² Jeremiah 40:1,5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16037/jewish/Chapter-40.htm#t=primary&showrashi=true

איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי לד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

We sank down on the riverbank, weeping inconsolably, begging him not to desert us in our hour of need. ²⁹⁶³ Jeremiah gazed down at us with a pitying expression on his face.

“I swear by heaven and earth,” he said,
“had you cried one single tear while you were in Zion,
you would not have been exiled.” ²⁹⁶⁴

With that, he turned and set out on his way back to Judah, all the time shaking his head and mumbling,

“My poor people, what a pity.” ²⁹⁶⁵

All this time we had not been allowed a moment’s respite. ²⁹⁶⁶ Now, with Babylon in sight, Nebuzaradan gave orders to his troops to let us rest, saying,

“Once we have crossed the river into Babylon,
their God will no longer be able to help them.” ²⁹⁶⁷

Half-crazed with thirst, some of us crouched down to drink from the river and quickly regretted it. The waters of the Euphrates were different from the rainwater and spring-water of Judah and caused severe stomach pains. Some of us even died after drinking it. So now we had something else to cry about, besides the dead we had left behind. ²⁹⁶⁸

²⁹⁶³ Psalms 137:1

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

²⁹⁶⁴ מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.26?lang=he

²⁹⁶⁵ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ו

²⁹⁶⁶ Lamentations 5:5

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha5.htm>

²⁹⁶⁷ מגילת איכה פרשה ה

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28?lang=he

²⁹⁶⁸ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

דרש תהילים 137 קלז

In the middle of the river was a magnificent barge carrying Nebuchadnezzar, members of his court and his musicians.²⁹⁶⁹ Seeing that many of us had nothing in our hands, he demanded,

“Why are these people allowed to walk empty-handed?”

Swiftly the scrolls of the law were torn from the arms of our elders, made into sacks and filled with sand, which we then had to carry, bent double under the weight.

This was bad enough, but even worse was to follow.²⁹⁷⁰ When ordered to play their instruments in worship of Babylonian idols, the Temple musicians chose to bite off their fingers or meet their deaths, rather than commit such sacrilege.²⁹⁷¹

Once on Babylonian soil, we found ourselves the object of intense curiosity. No conquered people had ever been treated so harshly. Among those who pushed forward to see us, were the people of Beerah, descendants of the tribe of Reuben who had been exiled to Assyria.²⁹⁷² Seeing us naked and weighted down by chains, they cried out,

“Surely these must be Yahweh’s people, come from the Promised Land?”²⁹⁷³

Immediately they stripped off their clothes and refused to put them on again, until Nebuchadnezzar agreed to clothe us. Surely such noble behavior deserved to be rewarded?²⁹⁷⁴

²⁹⁶⁹ Isaiah 43:14

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28?lang=he

²⁹⁷⁰ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ח

איכה רבה ה

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Eichah_Rabbah.5?lang=he

מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

²⁹⁷¹ פסיקתא רבתי כח

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28.1?lang=he&with=all&lang2=he

מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

²⁹⁷² I Chronicles 5:6

מי אתם בני בארי

<https://www.mayim.org.il/?holiday=%D7%9E%D7%99-%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%A0%D7%99-%D7%91%D7%90%D7%A8%D7%99#gsc.tab=0>

²⁹⁷³ Ezekiel 36:20

²⁹⁷⁴ פסיקתא רבתי כח

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28.1?lang=he&with=all&lang2=he

מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

Eventually we arrived at our destination, where we were met by previous exiles who had settled along the banks of the many tributaries of the Euphrates, their most important city being Tel Abib on the Chebar canal. We soon discovered that our aristocracy had received preferential treatment and were living like princes, while the rest of our people were still in temporary accommodation, having been persuaded by the astrologers that the exile would be of short duration.

What a shock they got when they saw us! After we told them that Jerusalem was in ruins, the Temple burned to the ground and most of our people in captivity, you could see the hope fade from their eyes. ²⁹⁷⁵

²⁹⁷⁵ Jeremiah 27:14-16

CHAPTER 69
THE THIRD DEPORTATION TO BABYLON

The Book of Jeremiah
The Book of Ezekiel
The Book of Psalms
The Book of Zechariah

A WOMAN EXILE FROM JUDAH

I'm an old woman who has seen more than her fair share of hardship. Even at the best of times, when rain was plentiful and the locusts passed us by, it was all that we could do to scrape a living from the bare hills of Judah. Yet I counted myself lucky, for it was our poverty that had saved us from the forced deportation of our people to Babylon during the reigns of young King Jehoiachin and poor, blind King Zedekiah.²⁹⁷⁶

So much time had passed since the fall of Jerusalem that I thought we had seen the last of the Babylonian army. Then a rebellion broke out, fomented by some young hotheads, among them my own son, who should have known better. Nebuchadnezzar's General Nebuzaradan returned to Judah, rounded up the rebels and took more than seven hundred families back to Babylon.²⁹⁷⁷

I don't know how I managed to survive the journey, but survive it I did. Not for nothing was I described as stubborn as an old mule. We joined the rest of our people who had already settled in towns along the Chebar canal. Nor were we the last of our people to be deported to Babylon for, a few years later, a woebegone group of captives arrived from Egypt, including Baruch, the former scribe of the holy man, Jeremiah.²⁹⁷⁸

CHAPTER 69 THE THIRD DEPORTATION TO BABYLON

A WOMAN EXILE FROM JUDAH

²⁹⁷⁶ Jeremiah 39:10

Jeremiah 52:16

²⁹⁷⁷ Jeremiah 52:30

²⁹⁷⁸ סדר עולם רבה כ"ו פרק כו

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.26.2?lang=he&with=all&lang2=he

At first we were very dispirited. It took all our strength just to get through each day. I and my family had never been particularly religious but now, more than ever, we needed Yahweh to comfort us in our homesickness and grief. More and more of us sought to return to His worship. The problem was how? We had no Temple,²⁹⁷⁹ no Holy of Holies, no sacred chest containing the stone tablets on which were engraved our laws, no sacred vessels, no altar on which to make sacrifices, and no oracle stones to consult.²⁹⁸⁰ Anything of value had been spirited away during the reign of good King Josiah.²⁹⁸¹ It was all very well people saying that Nebuchadnezzar had found them and brought them to Babylon, but no-one seemed to know where they were.²⁹⁸²

All we had were Yahweh's holy men - the few who survived. These used to hold prayer meetings on a regular basis, which we would all attend, some because the meetings brought them comfort, others because it provided them with cheap entertainment.²⁹⁸³

²⁹⁷⁹ שישה סדרי תוספתא מסכת סוטה פרק יג יג,א

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f35.htm>

²⁹⁸⁰ שישה סדרי תוספתא מסכת סוטה פרק יג יג,ג

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f35.htm>

²⁹⁸¹ II Chronicles 35:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16584/jewish/Chapter-35.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 42b

<https://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

שישה סדרי תוספתא מסכת סוטה פרק יג יג,ב

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f35.htm>

²⁹⁸² I Kings 8:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15892/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

II Kings 20:15-17

II Chronicles 36:7,18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

שישה סדרי תוספתא מסכת סוטה פרק יג יג,ב

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/f/f35.htm>

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת שקלים פרק ו דף כד,א פרק ו הלכה א גמרא

<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r2506.htm>

²⁹⁸³ Ezekiel 33:31

As time passed, the situation changed. Those who laughed and joked during the sermons, now found themselves shunned by the rest of us.²⁹⁸⁴ We even began observing the Sabbath.²⁹⁸⁵ Seeing this, the Babylonians mocked us, saying, “Fools! In your land you did not keep the Sabbath and now, in exile, you keep it?”²⁹⁸⁶

Then the inevitable happened - our people went one of two ways. The majority looked at the Babylonians, saw how they lived and decided they wanted the same way of life. It did not take long before they were completely lost to us.

A small minority also looked at the Babylonians and was disgusted by what they saw, my family and I among them. All we could think of was what we had left behind. Why, oh why, had we not listened to Jeremiah and the others?²⁹⁸⁷ Only now, when it was too late, did we have a heightened appreciation for what we had lost. Now we yearned so much for our beloved country, that we treated the everyday utensils we had brought with us from Judah as if they were holy, and lovingly hung our harps on the willow branches, until such time as we would need them again.²⁹⁸⁸

²⁹⁸⁴ Isaiah 64:5

²⁹⁸⁵ Ezekiel 20:12

²⁹⁸⁶ Lamentations 1:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16457/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

איכה רבתי פתיחתא דחכימי יז

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

איכה רבתי פרשה ג ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

²⁹⁸⁷ Psalms 137:1-9

²⁹⁸⁸ פסיקתא רבתי כ"ח

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Pesikta_Rabbati.28?lang=he

Jewish Encyclopedia: Incidents Connected with the Exile.

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4012-captivity>

We began to pray to Yahweh. ²⁹⁸⁹ We spent days fasting ²⁹⁹⁰ and weeping. ²⁹⁹¹ We ceased eating meat, because we could no longer perform sacrifices. We ceased drinking wine, because we could no longer pour libations. We ceased eating dates and grapes, because we could no longer bring them as offerings. We ceased eating bread, because we could no longer bake shewbread for the Sabbath. Eventually we were told that we were carrying things too far, and that there is a limit to how much one should grieve. ²⁹⁹² Ceremonial behavior meant little. What was important was a sincere change of heart. ²⁹⁹³

The hardest thing to bear was the mockery of the Babylonians, who attributed our defeat and capture to Yahweh's inability to save us, instead of our inability to keep His laws.

²⁹⁸⁹ I Kings 8:48

²⁹⁹⁰ Zechariah 8:19

²⁹⁹¹ Zechariah 7:1-3

²⁹⁹² מדרש תהילים 137 קלז

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Midrash_Tehillim.137?lang=he

²⁹⁹³ Ezekiel 11:19
Ezekiel 18:30-32
Ezekiel 36:26

CHAPTER 70
THE YOUNG JEWS
The Book of Daniel

The first wave of deportees, composed of those leading citizens of Judah who might pose a future threat to Babylonian rule, included Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, otherwise known by their Babylonian names as Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Telling Daniel's story are:

One of the Chaldean women citizens of the city of Babylon, based on Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 92b of the *Babylonian Talmud*.

Shoshana, a virtuous Jewish wife, from Chapter 1 of an apocryphal work entitled *Susanna*.

Semiramis, grandmother of the Babylonian king, Belshazzar (Daniel Chapter 5). We first met Semiramis in Chapter 70 (The First Deportation) as Nebuchadnezzar's wife.

ONE OF THE CHALDEAN WOMEN CITIZENS OF BABYLON

Our great king, Nebuchadnezzar, invariably chose the best and the brightest of the peoples he conquered to serve in his administration. Whenever a new batch of captives arrived in the capital, we women, both single and married, would flock to see the ‘merchandise’. So, when we heard that an especially fine-looking race, called the Jews, was approaching our city of Babylon, we hurried to seize a good vantage point along the route they would follow. We were not disappointed. They were every bit as attractive as they were rumored to be.

When we enquired what would happen to the handsome young Jews, we were informed that they were to be enrolled in a special three-year program to prepare them for their duties,²⁹⁹⁴ and be fed an especially rich diet to ensure they were in tip-top condition. After three years they would commence their duties and, in their spare time, become available to us.

Four of the Jewish youths were outstandingly handsome. Whether or not it was due to their special diet, their beauty increased from year to year. We women were left with our tongues hanging out. They were also rumored to be uncommonly intelligent, not that their intelligence was what attracted us to them. No, it was more their strong, lithe bodies.²⁹⁹⁵

By the time three years had passed we could hardly wait. Every day we would congregate outside the palace, hoping to gain a glimpse of the handsome young men who had aroused our lust. Whenever they appeared, we would try to catch their eye so that they would come over and talk to us.

Unfortunately our husbands discovered what was going on and lodged a protest with the king. He responded by giving orders to have the young Jews executed.²⁹⁹⁶ Weeping and mourning, we joined in their funeral procession, devastated that we would never be able to enjoy those lovely bodies. Only the lives of those Jewish youths most valuable to the king were spared. As eunuchs, they were of no interest to us at all.²⁹⁹⁷

CHAPTER 70 THE YOUNG JEWS

ONE OF THE CHALDEAN WOMEN CITIZENS OF BABYLON

²⁹⁹⁴ Daniel 1:1-4

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

²⁹⁹⁵ Daniel 1:5-20

²⁹⁹⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 92b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_92.html

²⁹⁹⁷ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

SHOSHANAH, JOACHIM'S WIFE

A good name is everything. The trouble is that people are only too willing to believe the worst.

Take my story for example. Born into a Yahweh-fearing household, I followed the religion of my people, endeavoring to keep all our 613 laws. Considered very beautiful, it wasn't difficult for my parents to find a wealthy husband for me. The man they chose, Joachim, besides being rich was also greatly respected, and the garden adjoining our house was constantly filled with people seeking his advice.

The burden on his time was lifted when two elderly men, each reputed to be a great scholar, were appointed judges of our people. They continued to use my husband's garden as an informal courthouse, with petitioners coming and going from dawn to dusk. Only when the last of them had left was I able to leave the shelter of our house and enjoy the coolness of the evening.²⁹⁹⁸

It was the height of summer and I decided to take my bath outdoors. After telling my servants to lock the garden gate, so that no-one could enter, I sent them into the house to bring me a sponge and some oil. While they were gone, there was a movement in the bushes. To my shocked surprise, the two elderly judges emerged from hiding and demanded I lie with them, threatening to accuse me of adultery if I refused, the proof being that I had asked to be left alone.

What would you have done in my place? I decided to take my chances and shout for help. When my servants came running to see what had happened, before I could explain, the judges carried out their threat and accused me of adultery. Although my servants found it difficult to believe such a thing of me, they could not ignore an accusation made by two such respectable men.

The next day I was ordered to appear in court. I didn't go alone, but accompanied by all the members of my family, who did not doubt my innocence for a minute. First I was ordered to remove my scarf, the only reason being that it gave all the men present the opportunity to gaze to their heart's content at what was supposed to be a privilege reserved for my husband. All my supporters groaned at my shame.

Each of the two elderly judges then approached in turn, laying a hand on my shoulder as he voiced his accusation. I shuddered at their touch. Under normal circumstances they would never have been allowed to lay a finger on me. They repeated their charge - that while walking in the garden they had seen me under a tree having intercourse with an unknown young man. Before they were able to prevent it, the young man had escaped and, although they questioned me, I had refused to divulge his name.²⁹⁹⁹

SHOSHANAH, JOACHIM'S WIFE

²⁹⁹⁸ Apocrypha: Susanna 1:1-7

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/sus001.htm>

²⁹⁹⁹ Apocrypha: Susanna 1:15-40

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/sus001.htm>

Unfortunately, adultery was a common occurrence among my people.³⁰⁰⁰ Although I vehemently protested my innocence before the court and Yahweh, since the charge had been brought by two judges, it was instantly believed.

My story would have ended with my death. However, Yahweh decreed otherwise. As I was being led to the place of execution, a young man stepped forward and shouted,

“This woman is innocent!”

“Whatever do you mean?” everyone responded in surprise.

“Can’t you see?” he replied.

“It’s obvious that the two judges have perjured themselves.”

The young man, whose name was Daniel, was invited to join the assembly and explain himself. After requesting that the two judges be brought separately for questioning, he asked each in turn under which tree I had committed adultery. Each gave the name of a different tree, proving that both had been lying. The place was in an uproar. Needless to say, the two judges were executed in my place.³⁰⁰¹

Among our people it is said: *“Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that harbors thoughts of violence, feet quick to run to evil, a lying tongue, a mouth that incites quarrel are all punished by leprosy.”*³⁰⁰²

Therefore, beware the next time you are tempted to believe the worst of anyone!

³⁰⁰⁰ Jeremiah 29:23

³⁰⁰¹ Apocrypha: Susanna 1:41-62
<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/sus001.htm>

³⁰⁰² Proverbs 6:16-19
Great Commentary on Leviticus 16:1
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Vayikra_Rabbah.16.3?lang=en

SEMIRAMIS, KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S QUEEN

After the death of my son, Evil-merodach, my grandson, Belshazzar, ascended the throne of Babylon. For some reason he seemed to take great delight in tormenting the poor Jews. He fully deserved the nickname he was called behind his back. Our subjects had described my husband, Nebuchadnezzar, as a ravenous lion; Belshazzar they described as a ferocious bear.³⁰⁰³

Belshazzar's officers had won a great victory over the Medes and Persians.³⁰⁰⁴ Desiring to reward them, my grandson held a banquet in their honor,³⁰⁰⁵ at which he presented each officer with a goblet filled with silver and gold.³⁰⁰⁶ Normally Belshazzar was able to consume great quantities of wine, without getting drunk.³⁰⁰⁷ On this occasion, however, he drank such an enormous amount that the wine went to his head. Too drunk to think of the consequences, he gave orders for the golden chalices, taken from the Jewish Temple, to be brought to the banqueting hall. With these unusual chalices of wine in their hands, my grandson's guests toasted their respective gods.³⁰⁰⁸

SEMIRAMIS, KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S QUEEN

³⁰⁰³ Amos 5:19

פתיחתא דאסתר רבא ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

³⁰⁰⁴ Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:2

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

³⁰⁰⁵ Daniel 5:1

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁰⁶ יוספון פרק ג' עמודים 11-12

https://www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL_ALEPH001268325/NLI

³⁰⁰⁷ Daniel 5:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16488/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Isaiah 21:5

³⁰⁰⁸ Daniel 5:2-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16488/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:2

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

No-one was prepared for what happened next. A human hand appeared out of nowhere and started writing on the wall. What it wrote made no sense whatsoever. Belshazzar turned pale, started to his feet and shouted for his astrologers, promising a reward to whoever succeeded in deciphering it. Each astrologer approached the wall in turn, peered at the writing, shook his head and turned away. It was obvious that none of them had any idea what it meant.³⁰⁰⁹

This is where I came into the story. When my servants came running to tell me what had happened, I set out for the banqueting hall. When I entered, I couldn't believe my eyes. The place was in a complete uproar. Raising my voice, I shouted out as loud as I could,

“Long live the king!”

Immediately there was silence.

I walked over to my grandson and whispered,

“Don't show that you're afraid. There's someone at court who can help you.

Do you remember the Jewish noble we call Beltshazzar?

He, alone of all your grandfather's advisors, was able to solve many riddles.

Send for him and he will help.”³⁰¹⁰

Beltshazzar was summoned. I had not seen him in years. No longer a handsome youth, now he was a dignified old man. Belshazzar indicated that he should approach the throne, saying,

“I understand from my grandmother that you are able to solve riddles.

If you can explain to me what is written on the wall,

you shall be raised to the most important position in the kingdom.”

Beltshazzar replied,

“Sire I have no need of your gifts. Keep them or give them to someone else.

Nevertheless, I will do my best to do what you ask.”

His appearance might have changed, but his voice was still as melodious as I remembered it.³⁰¹¹

³⁰⁰⁹ Daniel 5:5-8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16488/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³⁰¹⁰ Daniel 5:10-12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16488/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:2

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

³⁰¹¹ Daniel 5:13-17

שיר השירים רבה פרשה ז

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Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:3

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

Then he said,
“Do you remember what happened to your grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar,
the greatest king to rule the world?
How he was punished for his haughtiness
by being an outcast from human society for seven years,
until he acknowledged the authority of a higher being?
You, O king, have chosen to ignore his lesson in humility.
You have profaned the sacred vessels of our Temple
by using them to toast your idols.
For this reason Yahweh has decreed your fate.
The words written on the wall are ‘Mene, Mene, Tekel, Ufarsin.’
Mene means that the days allotted to your kingdom are at an end.
Tekel means that you have been judged and found wanting.
Ufarsin means that your kingdom will be divided up
between the Medes and the Persians.”³⁰¹²

His words were met at first by complete silence, which was then followed by loud groans.

³⁰¹² Daniel 5:18-28 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16488/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:3

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm><https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

Belshazzar may have had his bad points, but one good thing can be said about him. In spite of the harshness of the message, my grandson kept his word and elevated the Jew to the highest position in the kingdom.

Determined not to accept his fate without a struggle, and suspecting that someone might try and assassinate him in the night, Belshazzar gave orders to behead anyone who attempted to enter the palace by force, even if the person claimed he was the king of Babylon himself. One evening Belshazzar drank too much wine. Feeling nauseous, he staggered out of the palace by a back exit. Having relieved himself outside, he tried to re-enter, but was prevented from doing so by two guards. Explaining that he was King Belshazzar, he begged to be allowed to enter his own palace. The two mocked him, saying,

“Didn’t the king himself order us to kill anyone
who tried to enter the palace by force?”
before battering in his skull with a candelabrum.³⁰¹³

So perished the last of our house. As the writing on the wall had predicted, our kingdom of Babylon was divided between the Medes and Persians.³⁰¹⁴

³⁰¹³ Daniel 5:29-30

Antiquities Book 10 Chapter 11:4

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-10.htm>

שיר השירים רבה פרשה ג ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

³⁰¹⁴ בראשית רבה פרשת לך לך פרשה מד: הבטחת הארץ והבנים טו [שעבוד מלכויות]

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/raba1/44.htm>

Chronicles of Jerahmeel:6

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/coj/coj070.htm>

CHAPTER 71 ESTHER THE QUEEN

The Book of Esther, called in Hebrew, the Scroll of Esther

Purim, the ‘Festival of Lots’, celebrates the legend of how two cousins, Esther and Mordecai, saved the Jews of Persia from genocide at the hands of a Persian vizier named Haman. The name of the festival commemorates how Haman selected the day on which to murder the Jews. Besides Ruth the Moabitess, Esther is the only other woman to have a book named after her in the Hebrew Bible.

Many traditions have arisen to celebrate the festival: the exchange of gifts of food, especially small, three-cornered pastries traditionally filled with poppy-seed and called ‘Haman’s Ears’; the public recitation of the Scroll of Esther in the synagogue, whilst drowning out the name of Haman by making a noise with rattles; public parades in which the participants wear masks and costumes; dispensing charity to the poor, and finally eating a celebratory meal.

The main sources for this chapter are the various texts concerning Esther called Scrolls: The Biblical Scroll of Esther, the *Talmudic Scroll of Esther*, the *Great Commentary on the Book of Esther* and the *Targum Sheni* (the second and more detailed of two translations into Aramaic of the Book of Esther)

Five women tell the story:

Vashti, the first wife of the Persian king, Ahasuerus. The tradition that Vashti was Belshazzar’s daughter derives from a short Midrash named *Panim Acherim*, in which can be found the traumatic incident from her childhood which she describes here.

The wife of a Jewish courtier named Memucan.

Twin sisters, Hadassah and Esther. This demands an explanation. In the texts, the names Hadassah – Hebrew for myrtle – and Esther – Persian for star – belong to the same person - the Jewish wife of King Ahasuerus who saved her people. For the purposes of our narrative, we have taken the liberty of applying them to two different women - Hadassah who marries their cousin, Mordecai, and Esther who marries King Ahasuerus. The discussion as to whether Esther was Mordecai’s cousin or his wife can be found in the *Babylonian Talmud* (The Scroll of Esther, Folio 13).

Zeresh, the wife of Haman, the Persian vizier whose name appears in the *Great Commentary on the Scroll of Esther*.

VASHTI, AHASUERUS'S FIRST WIFE

People accuse me of being proud, but I have every right to be, for I am descended from the greatest kings the world has ever known. My great grandfather was Nebuchadnezzar, of whom all the world lived in fear, my grandfather was Evil-merodach and my father was Belshazzar.³⁰¹⁵

I shall never forget the night I awoke to find the palace in an uproar. All around me were men shouting, fighting and looting the palace treasures. Frightened out of my wits, I ran to find my father. Greatly relieved to see him sitting on the throne, I climbed up onto his lap, only to discover a strange face staring down at me.³⁰¹⁶ It was Darius, the member of my father's bodyguard who had killed my father and usurped the throne.³⁰¹⁷ He could so easily have had me executed on the spot. However, he didn't. Instead, he married me to his son, Prince Ahasuerus.³⁰¹⁸

After three and a half years on the throne of Persia, my husband held a banquet for the citizens of Shushan,³⁰¹⁹ while I held one for the wives and daughters of my husband's guests.³⁰²⁰

CHAPTER 71 ESTHER THE QUEEN

VASHTI, AHASUERUS'S FIRST WIFE

³⁰¹⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 10b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰¹⁶ מדרש פנים אחרים, נוסח ב פרשה א

<https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=802000&page=4>

³⁰¹⁷ שיר השרים רבה פרשה ג ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0002_L2

³⁰¹⁸ מדרש פנים אחרים, נוסח ב פרשה א

<https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=802000&page=4>

³⁰¹⁹ Esther 1:5 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16474/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

³⁰²⁰ Esther 1:9:9

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

My banquet was held in my husband's private chamber where, instead of eating fattened birds, my guests could view the artistic paintings on the walls³⁰²¹ and partake of the sweetmeats and delicacies of which we women are so fond.³⁰²²

Our festivities were rudely interrupted by a delegation of my husband's seven chamberlains, sent by Ahasuerus to order me to appear before his guests naked, wearing only my crown.³⁰²³ I could scarcely believe my ears. In certain circles it may have been customary for wives to entertain their husband's guests by dancing naked before them, but surely my husband didn't expect me, the daughter of a king, to do the same?³⁰²⁴

“Tell me, is my husband drunk?” I asked.

When they avoided my eyes, I knew the answer.³⁰²⁵

³⁰²¹ ילקוט שמעוני על אסתר א

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%98_%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%90%D7%A1%D7%AA%D7%A8/%D7%A8%D7%9E%D7%96_%D7%AA%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%9E%D7%98

אסתר רבה פרשה ג י

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³⁰²² אסתר רבה פרשה ג י

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³⁰²³ Esther 1:10-11

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

ילקוט שמעוני על אסתר א

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%98_%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%9C_%D7%90%D7%A1%D7%AA%D7%A8/%D7%A8%D7%9E%D7%96_%D7%AA%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%9E%D7%98

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰²⁴ Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer

http://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt

³⁰²⁵ Daniel 5:1

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Of course I had no intention of obeying such an order. ³⁰²⁶ Three times I sent the delegation back with a good reason for not doing as my husband asked. The first time I tried logic. I said,

“If your guests see that I am as beautiful as you claim,
they will want me for themselves and kill you to get me.

If they judge me to be ugly, they will mock you and call you a liar.”

Unfortunately Ahasuerus was so drunk, that he was unable to appreciate the logic of my message or even to be annoyed, for the delegation returned a second time. ³⁰²⁷

This time I appealed to his self-respect. I said,

“It was all very well for you to invite naked women
to entertain you when you were a humble steward,
but now you are king, such a thing is beneath you.”

Again, Ahasuerus was so drunk that he was unable to take in what I had said and sent the delegation back a third time. ³⁰²⁸

Finally, I tried to awaken his compassion. I said,

“Even my father refused to judge miscreants
unless they were suitably dressed.” ³⁰²⁹

Nothing I said could change my husband’s mind. He was adamant that his order be obeyed. I was equally adamant not to obey it. ³⁰³⁰

³⁰²⁶ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:1

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰²⁷ Targum Sheni to Esther

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³⁰²⁸ אסתר רבה פרשה ג יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

³⁰²⁹ אסתר רבה פרשה ג יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0003_L2

³⁰³⁰ Esther 1:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16474/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#t=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

MEMUCAN'S WIFE

I was amazed when my father, a wealthy Persian merchant, agreed to my marriage to a penniless Jew named Memucan.³⁰³¹ He reassured me that my husband would not remain penniless for long, for ambition such as Memucan's knew no limits and was bound to benefit us in some way.

Then came the day when Queen Vashti refused to appear before the king. When the king's advisers were asked what the law decreed in such a situation, my husband was the first to offer his opinion.³⁰³² On the grounds that Vashti had set a bad example to other women, he recommended that the queen be banished from court and another found to replace her.³⁰³³

This may sound like a disinterested opinion, but I can assure you that my ambitious husband never said or did anything unless it furthered his own ends. For some inexplicable reason, the queen had taken a dislike to Memucan. On the slightest pretext she would slap him about the face with her shoe so, when Memucan claimed that Vashti's refusal to obey her husband was an offence, not just against the king but against all men, he had in mind her ill-treatment of him. When he recommended her banishment, he had in mind the fact that alone of all the wives of the court, I had not been invited to the queen's banquet. Lastly, when he suggested that a more suitable wife be found for the king, he had in mind our daughter.³⁰³⁴

MEMUCAN'S WIFE

³⁰³¹ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰³² Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰³³ Esther 1:16-19

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰³⁴ מדרש אבא גוריון עמוד 17 פרשה אב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifrideagadata/sifrideagadata02.pdf>

אסתר רבה פרשה ד ו

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To prevent Vashti from changing the king's mind, he suggested that the king's decision be recorded immediately in the statute books. Once written, it could never be revoked.³⁰³⁵ Unfortunately this proved to be my husband's undoing. When the king awoke the next morning and demanded to see his wife, he was told she had been banished. After learning who had recommended her banishment, the king had Memucan and his other advisers summarily executed.³⁰³⁶

My daughter and I were left fatherless and husbandless, dependent entirely on the goodwill of my father who blamed me for everything, despite the fact that it had been his idea to marry me to Memucan.

³⁰³⁵ Esther 1:19

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Legends of the Jews Volume 4: Ch. 12:36

https://www.sefaria.org/Legends_of_the_Jews.4.12?lang=en

אסתר רבה פרשה ד ו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0004_L2

³⁰³⁶ מדרש אבא גוריון עמוד 17 פרשה ב

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifrideagadata/sifrideagadata02.pdf>

Targum Sheni to Esther

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HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

My twin sister, Esther, and I were orphaned at birth, for our father died a short time before our mother died in childbirth.³⁰³⁷ Adopted by our young cousin, Mordecai, Esther was considered very beautiful,³⁰³⁸ I merely virtuous.³⁰³⁹ Nevertheless, it was me that Mordecai chose for his wife.³⁰⁴⁰

The news of Queen Vashti's banishment, followed by the announcement that King Ahasuerus sought a second wife, caused an uproar throughout the kingdom.³⁰⁴¹ There was hardly a family that did not present its unmarried daughters for consideration. Not so Mordecai, who hid Esther on our summer estate until, faced with the death penalty, he had no choice but to hand her over to the authorities.³⁰⁴²

HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

³⁰³⁷ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰³⁸ Esther 2:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³⁰³⁹ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁴⁰ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁴¹ Esther 2:2-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁴² Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Mordecai had given Esther strict instructions not to reveal that she was Jewish, let alone a descendent of the House of Saul, hoping the king's officials would reject her on the grounds that she was a commoner.³⁰⁴³

When this deception failed and she was chosen to be the next queen, we moved from Babylon to Shushan to give her moral support. Mordecai took to sitting by the palace gates in case she should ever need our help.³⁰⁴⁴

³⁰⁴³ Esther 2:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁴⁴ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

When it was announced that our recently divorced king was looking for a wife, ³⁰⁴⁵ in spite of all his efforts, my cousin and guardian, Mordecai, was unable to prevent me from being taken to the palace as one of the four hundred candidates. ³⁰⁴⁶

The chamberlain in charge of the royal harem explained that each of us would spend a night with the king, after which he would decide who to marry. ³⁰⁴⁷ I felt very much out of place. The other girls were prepared to do anything to attract the king's attention, whereas I wanted to avoid it at all costs. ³⁰⁴⁸ Among my people, whoever marries a non-Jew is mourned as though they are dead. Therefore, were the king to choose me, I would be cut off from my people forever.

Given a year to prepare ourselves, we spent it rubbing myrrh and perfume into our skin to bring our bodies to a peak of perfection. ³⁰⁴⁹ Every night a different girl was taken to the king. The following morning she was taken to the concubines' harem. Most never saw the king again. ³⁰⁵⁰

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

³⁰⁴⁵ Esther 2:1-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 7

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁴⁶ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁴⁷ Esther 2:8

³⁰⁴⁸ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁴⁹ Esther 2:12

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁵⁰ Esther 2:14

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

When my turn came it was winter, perfect weather for cuddling up in bed. ³⁰⁵¹
I won't go into the details of what happened. All you need to know is that the king
chose me as his queen. ³⁰⁵²

According to the promise I had made to Mordecai, despite the king's
persistent entreaties, I refused to reveal my background. ³⁰⁵³ It gave me confidence,
knowing that my cousin was at the palace gates, ready to help if anything went wrong.
³⁰⁵⁴

³⁰⁵¹ Esther 2:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁵² Esther 2:17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁵³ Esther 2:18

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁵⁴ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:2

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

It was while sitting at the palace gates that Mordecai's knowledge of languages stood him in good stead. One day, he overheard two guards from the city of Tarsus plotting to murder the king.³⁰⁵⁵ Mordecai managed to pass a message to Esther, who ensured that it reached her husband.³⁰⁵⁶ An investigation was carried out, the charge proved true and the two guards executed.³⁰⁵⁷

Then came the day that my husband's arch enemy, Haman, was appointed the king's vizier.³⁰⁵⁸

HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

³⁰⁵⁵ Esther 2:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁰⁵⁶ Esther 2:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³⁰⁵⁷ Esther 2:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16475/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:4

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁵⁸ Esther 3:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16476/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 8

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

Ever since the two of them had served together in the army, there had been bad blood between them.³⁰⁵⁹ By royal decree, we were now obliged to bow down to Haman and treat him as if he was royalty. Everyone did so, except Mordecai.³⁰⁶⁰ When asked why he refused to do so,³⁰⁶¹ Mordecai replied that he bowed to no man, only to our God, Yahweh.³⁰⁶²

In order to save face, each time Haman encountered Mordecai, Haman pretended that Mordecai had greeted him by saying,

“And peace be with you, too.”

He was utterly taken aback when Mordecai replied in a loud voice,

“There’s no peace for someone as wicked as you!”³⁰⁶³

This is what must have caused Haman to decide to kill not just Mordecai, but all us Jews.³⁰⁶⁴

³⁰⁵⁹ Legends of the Jews 94 Mordecai's Pride 101-104
https://www.sefaria.org.il/Legends_of_the_Jews.4.12.98?lang=en

³⁰⁶⁰ Esther 3:1 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16476/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁶¹ Esther 3:3
Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁶² Targum Sheni to Esther
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁶³ Isaiah 48:22
<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifrideagadata/sifrideagadata03.pdf>

מדרש אבא גוריון פרשה ג עמוד 4

³⁰⁶⁴ Esther 3:6
Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

ZERESH, THE WIFE OF HAMAN

My husband, Haman, was a self-made man who had worked as a barber in Kefar Karzum for twenty-two years,³⁰⁶⁵ before working his way up the ladder of Persian society until he arrived at the top.³⁰⁶⁶ Eventually he was appointed vizier of Persia and, as such, treated like a god, with everyone throwing themselves at his feet, everyone, that is, except for one man, the Jew named Mordecai.³⁰⁶⁷ As you can appreciate, Haman was not prepared to take this insult lying down.³⁰⁶⁸

Few people knew the real reason behind my husband's anger. He and Mordecai had once served together as generals in the army. Sent to quell an uprising in India, each had been provided with supplies for a three-year campaign. When Haman's supplies were exhausted before the three years were up, he turned to Mordecai for help. Mordecai agreed to share his supplies only if my husband agreed to be Mordecai's slave. Lacking paper, their agreement was written down on Mordecai's kneecap. Ever since then, whenever they met, Mordecai would reveal his knee to remind my husband of their agreement.³⁰⁶⁹

ZERESH, THE WIFE OF HAMAN

³⁰⁶⁵ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁶⁶ Esther 3:1

Targum Sheni to Esther 8

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁶⁷ Esther 3:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16476/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 8

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁶⁸ Esther 3:5

Targum Sheni to Esther 8

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁶⁹ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 15a-b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

Legends of the Jews 94 Mordecai's Pride 101-104

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Legends_of_the_Jews.4.12.98?lang=en

Now that Haman was vizier, with the power to punish whomever he chose, he determined to rid himself and the kingdom of Mordecai and the Jews.³⁰⁷⁰ One day he arrived home with a smug expression on his face. He told me that the king had authorized the killing of the Jews and that a day had been appointed for their execution.³⁰⁷¹

“How on earth did you get the king to agree?” I asked.

Hearing my husband’s answer, I had to laugh.³⁰⁷² The Jews were indeed different to us, but the way he described them was too ludicrous for words. Only a king as foolish as Ahasuerus would have believed such nonsense. I’ll give you some examples.

First of all, Haman had claimed that the Jews would do anything to avoid hard work. As it so happens, they were known to be a very hard-working people who, within a few generations, had transformed themselves from penniless exiles into wealthy citizens, and who virtually monopolized the wax and candle trade.

Then he described how they ill-treated the weak and helpless, when everyone knows that the Jews look after their own, providing all sorts of services for free. Indeed it might be a good thing if we did the same.

Haman also told the king that, on every possible occasion, they went to their synagogues, read their books, interpreted the words of their prophets, and invariably ended their prayers by cursing the king and his officials.³⁰⁷³ The truth was that they were model citizens, who took care to avoid giving offence, as long as they were left alone to govern themselves and practice their religion.

³⁰⁷⁰ Esther 3:6

Targum Sheni to Esther 8

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁷¹ Esther 3:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16476/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³⁰⁷² BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁷³ Targum Sheni to Esther 8

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

When I heard his final argument, I nearly had a fit. Seeing the king hesitate before signing the edict, Haman had offered to cover, out of his own pocket, the considerable loss in revenue from the taxes paid by the Jews.³⁰⁷⁴ To my great relief, our stupid king had told him there was no need!³⁰⁷⁵

There were, however, two legitimate accusations that my husband levelled against the Jews. The first was that they considered themselves better than us³⁰⁷⁶ and the second, that they were sharp businessmen.³⁰⁷⁷

Haman finished by informing me that he was due to dine with the king and queen the following day. When I asked why he did not sound more enthusiastic, he answered,

“How can I enjoy going anywhere near the palace, knowing that Mordecai will be sitting by the gate, waiting to mock me?”³⁰⁷⁸

³⁰⁷⁴ Esther 3:9 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16476/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁷⁵ Esther 3:11
Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 13b - 14a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:6
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁷⁶ Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁷⁷ Targum Sheni to Esther 8
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:5
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁷⁸ Esther 5:12-13 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16478/jewish/Chapter-5.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther
https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt
The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

I told him,
 “If this Mordecai is a Jew, there is no way to overcome him except by guile.
 Three of his countrymen have already survived a trial by fire,
 so burning him won’t kill him.
 Another of his countrymen emerged unharmed from a den of lions,
 so throwing him to wild beasts won’t harm him.
 Another, a king, was released from prison,
 so there is no point in imprisoning him.
 Yet another managed to kill thousands of Philistines,
 even though he was blind, so blinding him won’t stop him.
 Nor is there any point in leaving him to die in the desert,
 since his people survived there for forty years.
 No, the only way to kill him is to hang him,
 for no Jew has ever survived a hanging.”³⁰⁷⁹

Following my advice, before setting out for the palace Haman had some gallows erected.³⁰⁸⁰

Upon his arrival at the palace, Haman was just about to request permission to hang Mordecai, when the king asked him, what was the best way to honor a person to whom the king owed a debt of gratitude? Naturally my husband assumed the king was referring to himself. After all, who else could it be?³⁰⁸¹

³⁰⁷⁹ מדרש אבא גוריון פרשה ה עמ' 17-18

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/vl/sifrideagadata/sifrideagadata03.pdf>

מדרש רבה - אסתר רבה פרשה ט ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0009_L2

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁸⁰ Esther 5:14

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁸¹ Esther 6:6

Targum Sheni to Esther 10

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

Haman replied that, in such a situation, the only fitting reward³⁰⁸² was to dress that person in royal garments, set a crown on his head, seat him on the king's horse³⁰⁸³ and have the king's highest official lead him around the city, announcing to one and all that this was how the king treated someone who had done him a great service.³⁰⁸⁴

Having said this, Haman waited for the king to summon one of his courtiers to honor him according to his recommendations. He was totally unprepared when the king told him it was the Jew whom the king intended to honor, and my husband the official who would honor him.³⁰⁸⁵

When Haman tried to discharge the king's orders, Mordecai said, "How can I wear such magnificent clothes when I haven't bathed for three days?" Since the public baths were closed, Haman had no choice but to bathe Mordecai and trim his hair, just as if he was still a common barber.³⁰⁸⁶

When Haman asked him to mount the horse, Mordecai replied that, after fasting for three days and nights, he was far too weak to do so. My husband had no choice but to bring him some tasty morsels from the queen's table.

³⁰⁸² Esther 6:7

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁸³ Esther 6:8

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁸⁴ Esther 6:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16479/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 10

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁸⁵ Esther 6:10

Targum Sheni to Esther 10

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:10

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁸⁶ Targum Sheni to Esther 10

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

After Mordecai had eaten, he claimed he was still unable to mount without help, so Haman had to allow Mordecai to step on his back. For all Haman's pains to please the Jew, all he received in return was a kick on his buttocks.³⁰⁸⁷

Led by a procession of handsome young men, each toasting Mordecai's health along the way, Haman led Mordecai through the streets of Shushan. Every so often Haman would call out,

"This is how the king honors a man who has done him a service."

Hearing a great commotion outside our house, we hurried up to the roof to see what was happening. Below us, riding on a white horse, was a man dressed in gorgeous attire. His horse was led by a groom, calling out something we couldn't hear. Not yet understanding what was happening, I turned to my daughter and said,

"Surely that must be your father riding on the horse and Mordecai leading him."

She turned, entered the house and returned with a brimming chamber pot, the contents of which she emptied out on the groom's head. When the groom looked up, we saw that it was not Mordecai but our poor Haman, dripping with urine.

My daughter was so shocked at the sight, that she took a step forward and fell off the roof, hitting the ground at her father's feet.³⁰⁸⁸

³⁰⁸⁷ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 16a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁸⁸ Esther 6:12
BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 16a
<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

Soon after the belated honor paid to Mordechai by the king for saving his life, we learned of the royal edict sentencing us to death. Mordecai rushed to the city square and cried out, ³⁰⁸⁹ “Fellow Jews, I have terrible news. We are all about to die!” A crowd gathered and Mordecai explained, “The king and his vizier, Haman, have issued an edict to have us all killed.” ³⁰⁹⁰

For a moment there was a shocked silence, followed by a great uproar. People rushed around, shouting, screaming and tearing out their hair. They only calmed down when the council of elders appeared.

Upon hearing the news, the elders sent for a scroll of the law. It was the Book of Deuteronomy which, by chance, opened at the place where the following words were written:

"Only when misfortune comes upon you will you seek the guidance of Yahweh who will never desert you in your hour of need. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not let you loose or destroy you; neither will He forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them." ³⁰⁹¹

Well, this was certainly our hour of need. Mordecai recommended that we do as the king of Nineveh had done when faced with the same situation. The king had ordered a national fast and told his people to mend their ways. As a result, their lives had been spared. ³⁰⁹²

HADASSAH, MORDECAI'S WIFE

³⁰⁸⁹ Esther 4:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³⁰⁹⁰ Targum Sheni to Esther 9

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁹¹ Deuteronomy 4:30-31

Targum Sheni to Esther 9

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³⁰⁹² Targum Sheni to Esther 9

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Mordecai returned to his station by the palace gates. ³⁰⁹³ I know he felt guilty at having brought this catastrophe down on all our heads but, as he said, he could not bear the thought of paying the same honor to Haman as he paid to Yahweh. ³⁰⁹⁴

Having decided that our only hope was Esther, Mordecai sent her a message asking her to intervene. ³⁰⁹⁵

³⁰⁹³ Esther 4:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 9

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁹⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 15a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³⁰⁹⁵ Esther 4:6-8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

Shocked to hear that my cousin was wearing sackcloth and ashes, a sign of mourning among our people, ³⁰⁹⁶ I asked Hatach, one of the king's officials whom I felt I could trust, to ask Mordecai who had died. ³⁰⁹⁷

Hatach returned with the news that the king's vizier, Haman, had persuaded Ahasuerus to have all the Jews put to death, offering him a huge bribe to do so. ³⁰⁹⁸ Hatach showed me a copy of the edict, adding that Mordecai wanted me to intercede with the king to save the lives of our people. ³⁰⁹⁹

I sent Hatach back with a message, explaining that it was against the law to present oneself before the king without being summoned. If I did so, I stood the risk of being executed on the spot. ³¹⁰⁰

Mordecai replied by saying that this was no time to think of myself but of our people. ³¹⁰¹

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

³⁰⁹⁶ Esther 4:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 9

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁹⁷ Esther 4:5

Targum Sheni to Esther

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³⁰⁹⁸ Esther 4:6-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³⁰⁹⁹ Esther 4:8

Targum Sheni to Esther

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹⁰⁰ Esther 4:9-12

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 15a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:3,7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹⁰¹ Esther 4:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

My answer was to ask all the Jews in Shushan to observe a three-day fast. Then I would do as Mordecai asked.³¹⁰²

Motivated by the threat not only to my people, but also to myself, if it was ever discovered that I was a Jewess, I spent the next three days on my knees, praying to Yahweh. Neither a morsel of food nor a drop of water passed my lips.³¹⁰³ After three days, dressed in my finest robe³¹⁰⁴ and accompanied by two of my serving women, I entered the throne room.³¹⁰⁵ Standing on each side of the king was a royal executioner, ready to behead anyone entering the king's presence without permission.³¹⁰⁶

As cool, calm and collected as I appeared on the surface, inside I was quaking with fear. At the sight of the king's stern visage and splendid attire, my legs suddenly buckled under me and I sank to the ground. Ahasuerus, genuinely concerned to see me in such a state, jumped up from his throne, scooped me into his arms and embraced me. He assured me that I had nothing to fear, for the law that forbade anyone from approaching the king without permission, did not apply to the queen. As a result, I soon recovered and was able to stand.³¹⁰⁷

³¹⁰² Esther 4:15-16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16477/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 15a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:7

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹⁰³ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:8

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹⁰⁴ Esther 5:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16478/jewish/Chapter-5.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³¹⁰⁵ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:9

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹⁰⁶ BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 15b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³¹⁰⁷ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:9

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

Ahasuerus asked me why I had come. Obviously in a good mood, he promised me half of his kingdom should I so desire. I wonder how he would have reacted had I actually taken him up on his offer? My reply was to invite him and his vizier, Haman, to a banquet,³¹⁰⁸ at which not only would I present my petition, but reveal my true identity.³¹⁰⁹

At the banquet, attended only by Haman, Ahasuerus and myself, I informed the king that someone had given orders to have me and my people put to death, begging him to save us.³¹¹⁰ When Ahasuerus demanded to know who it was,³¹¹¹ I pointed to Haman, whose face turned white with fear.³¹¹²

I explained that by signing the edict ordering the execution of the Jews, in effect Ahasuerus was sentencing me to death, for I too was a Jewess. Then I told my credulous husband that, had we merely been condemned to a life of servitude, I would never have complained. The only reason I had chosen to speak out was because of the loss to the royal coffers. (Can you believe it? Ahasuerus actually took this nonsense seriously!)³¹¹³

³¹⁰⁸ Esther 5:3-4

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹⁰⁹ Esther 5:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16478/jewish/Chapter-5.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³¹¹⁰ Esther 7:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹¹¹ Esther 7:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹¹² Esther 7:6

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹¹³ Esther 7:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

My husband was so furious that he retired to the garden to recover, leaving Haman pleading for his life.³¹¹⁴ When Ahasuerus returned, I arranged for it to appear that Haman was trying to rape me. This ended any hope he had for a reprieve.³¹¹⁵

Haman was condemned to death and Mordecai appointed vizier.³¹¹⁶ My cousin's first task was to hang Haman on the same gallows he had prepared for him.
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³¹¹⁴ Esther 7:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

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Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹¹⁵ Esther 7:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

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Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer

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The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹¹⁶ Esther 8:2

Targum Sheni to Esther 11

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:12

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹¹⁷ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

ZERESH, THE WIFE OF HAMAN

Just when we thought that things couldn't get any worse, the queen revealed that she was a Jewess³¹¹⁸ and, therefore, one of the people whom Haman intended to put to death.³¹¹⁹

The king was so incensed, that he ordered Haman's execution³¹²⁰ and appointed that odious Jew, Mordecai, his executioner.³¹²¹

Not only was Haman executed, but so were all our sons.³¹²² Every day I went to where my sons' corpses hung from the gallows. The stench became so great that I petitioned the queen to allow me to take them down and bury them.

What was her reply? Hanging was too good for my husband and our sons. As far as she was concerned, their corpses could rot there forever.³¹²³

ZERESH, THE WIFE OF HAMAN

³¹¹⁸ Esther 7:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16480/jewish/Chapter-7.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹¹⁹ Esther 7:6

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 16a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹²⁰ The Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 6:11

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_XI

³¹²¹ Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹²² Esther 9:7-10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16482/jewish/Chapter-9.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Targum Sheni to Esther 11

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

BabylonianTalmud: Megilah 16b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³¹²³ Targum Sheni to Esther 11

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

Even though our arch enemy, Haman, was dead, the death sentence still hung over our heads. A king's edict, once entered into the chronicles of the kingdom, could never be revoked.³¹²⁴ Therefore, the only solution was to send out letters to all the corners of the empire, written in the king's name, bearing his seal and delivered with all haste,³¹²⁵ authorizing our people to defend themselves and to kill anyone who tried to attack them³¹²⁶ on the day decreed for our destruction, the thirteenth of Adar.³¹²⁷

My people survived and flourished for the remainder of my husband's reign. No longer did I fear they would disown me for marrying a non-Jew.

In time, I even came to appreciate Ahasuerus's better qualities. A modest man, he had delayed three years before celebrating his rise to power. A sensible man, he was prepared to seek and accept advice. A patient man, he had waited a year until he found the right wife. An appreciative man, he showed gratitude to those who served him well.³¹²⁸

Did we have any children, you ask? Well, I am reputed to be the mother of King Darius.³¹²⁹

ESTHER, AHASUERUS'S SECOND WIFE

³¹²⁴ Esther 8:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16481/jewish/Chapter-8.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³¹²⁵ Esther 8:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16481/jewish/Chapter-8.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther 11
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³¹²⁶ Esther 8:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16481/jewish/Chapter-8.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary
Targum Sheni to Esther 11
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Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer
https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

³¹²⁷ Esther 8:12

Targum Sheni to Esther 11

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹²⁸ אסתר רבה פרשה א טו

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0001_L2

³¹²⁹ מדרש רבה - חומש ויקרא פרשה יג ה

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01635_all.html#HtmpReportNum0012_L2

Great Commentary on Leviticus

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl07.htm>

NARRATOR

Ahasuerus went down in history as a complete fool. Every time his name was mentioned people would chant:

“Ahasuerus? Which Ahasuerus?

“The Ahasuerus who went to the expense of serving his guests the same wine they drank at home?

“The Ahasuerus who said, ‘Better my kingdom be destroyed than my decree be disobeyed?’

“The Ahasuerus whose decisions made no sense and whose orders were unjust?

“The Ahasuerus who commanded Vashti to appear before him naked, and who refused?

“The Ahasuerus who agreed to sell the Jews for nothing? ³¹³⁰

“The Ahasuerus during whose reign the faces of the Jews turned black with despair? ³¹³¹

“The Ahasuerus who ordered cedars from Lebanon and gold from Ophir, none of which arrived?

“The Ahasuerus who was so afraid that, when it was morning he wished it was evening, and when it was evening he wished it was morning? ³¹³²

“The Ahasuerus who killed his wife, Vashti, for the sake of his friend, Memucan, and who killed his friend, Haman, for the sake of his wife, Esther?” ³¹³³

After which everyone would burst out laughing. ³¹³⁴

NARRATOR

³¹³⁰ Targum Sheni to Esther 8

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹³¹ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 11a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³¹³² Deuteronomy 28:67

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/v1/sifrideagadata/sifrideagadata02.pdf>

An explanatory commentary on Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹³³ מדרש אבא גוריון פרשה א

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01642.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

Targum Sheni to Esther

https://archive.org/stream/explanatorycomme00cassrich/explanatorycomme00cassrich_djvu.txt

³¹³⁴ פתיחתא דאסתר רבא י

Part 21
Return to Yehud

CHAPTER 72
THE FIRST WAVE OF RETURNEES
The Book of Ezra

By the reign of King Cyrus (c. 600–530 BCE), the Jews had become well-established in the kingdom of Persia. Nevertheless, they still yearned for the Promised Land. So when the opportunity arose, at various intervals four groups set out for Judah, now known as Yehud, to re-establish the Temple, rebuild Jerusalem and resettle the land. Leading the first wave of returnees was Sheshbazzar, a prince of Judah. Here Sheshbazzar's wife tells what happened when they arrived in Yehud.

THE WIFE OF PRINCE SHESHBAZZAR OF JUDAH

I was born in the city of Tel Abib on the banks of the Chebar canal, where many of us exiles had made our home. My parents had been among those of our people brought by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon after the fall of Judah.

Yahweh's holy man, Jeremiah, had warned us that it would take seventy years before we would return to Judah.³¹³⁵ Of those seventy years, fifty-two had already passed. During that time, no-one had set foot in Judah. We could not bear to think of the utter desolation we would find on our return - the mountains denuded of trees, the countryside empty of man and beast, the utter silence unbroken by the lowing of cattle and the song of birds.³¹³⁶ Surely, after so long Yahweh was no longer angry with us?³¹³⁷ Would it take the same number of years to repent of our crimes that it had taken to commit them? If so, we could expect to remain in exile forever.³¹³⁸

CHAPTER 72 THE FIRST WAVE OF RETURNEES

THE WIFE OF PRINCE SHESHBAZZAR OF JUDAH

³¹³⁵ II Chronicles 36:20-21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³¹³⁶ Jeremiah 9:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16006/jewish/Chapter-9.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 54a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

³¹³⁷ מגילת איכה פרשה ב. ב. איכה יעיב באפו ה' את בת ציון

<http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/midrashim/midrash-raba/eicha-raba/eicha2.htm>

³¹³⁸ Leviticus 26

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9927#lt=both

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0326.htm>

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01640.html

איכה רבתי פרשה א נז

After King Cyrus ascended the throne of Persia, in his first year as king, he announced that those of us who wished to do so, could return to Judah to rebuild the Temple.³¹³⁹ Moreover, he decreed that all those unable to make the journey were to help those who could, by contributing money, goods or cattle. Naturally this caused a great wave of rejoicing and many were inspired to join the group of returnees. It was heart-warming to see how even people from other nations were prepared to help.

King Cyrus took the unprecedented step of returning to us the sacred vessels from the Temple, brought by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon as booty. For all these years they had stood in a temple to a foreign god.³¹⁴⁰ The king himself handed them over to the prince of Judah selected to lead the group of returnees,³¹⁴¹ who was none other than my husband, Sheshbazzar.³¹⁴² How proud I was and how excited at the prospect of returning to our beloved country of Judah, or Yehud as it was now called, and seeing Jerusalem, the city of my forefathers.

It took us months to reach Yehud. I cannot begin to describe our feelings as we ascended the road leading to Jerusalem and saw the city for the first time. Very few of us were old enough to remember what Jerusalem had looked like before it was destroyed, with the Temple rising above it like snow on a mountain crest. What we saw was complete desolation. Every building had been razed to the ground. The only living creatures to be found among the ruins were foxes scavenging for food.

³¹³⁹ II Chronicles 36:22-23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16585/jewish/Chapter-36.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Ezra 1:1-3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16498/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Ezra 5:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16502/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 1:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁴⁰ Ezra 1:4-7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16498/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 1:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁴¹ I Chronicles 3:16-19

³¹⁴² Ezra 1:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16498/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Ezra 5:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16502/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

After our initial shock subsided, we set up camp. My husband organized us into work units, assigning the majority to clearing the rubble and the rest to seeing to their needs.

We had just reached the stage of rebuilding the Temple foundations, when we discovered that not everyone was happy with the idea of a new Jewish kingdom rising from the ashes of the old. In fact, the peoples of the region seemed determined to stop us. The worst were those who the Assyrians had settled in Samaria.³¹⁴³

Hearing of the death of our great benefactor, King Cyrus, we waited in trepidation to see whether his successor, Cambyses, would continue to support the project that his father had initiated. The answer was not long in coming.

Unknown to us the peoples of the region had written to Cambyses, accusing us of rebuilding Jerusalem with the intention of throwing off Persian rule.³¹⁴⁴ As a result, on his way to conquer Egypt, Cambyses passed by Jerusalem, did away with my husband and gave orders to suspend building entirely.³¹⁴⁵

From being the wife of an important man, I was left a widow and my children orphans, dependent entirely on the goodwill of others until, nine years later, my husband's nephew appeared.

³¹⁴³ II Kings 17:24

Ezra 5:16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16502/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Daniel 9:25 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16492/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 2:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁴⁴ Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 2:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁴⁵ Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 2:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

CHAPTER 73
THE SECOND WAVE OF RETURNEES PART 1

The Book of Ezra
The Book of Haggai
The Book of Zechariah

Eighteen years after the abortive attempt of Prince Sheshbazzar to rebuild the Temple,³¹⁴⁶ a second attempt was made by his nephew, Prince Zerubbabel, with a much greater number of returnees.³¹⁴⁷ As a result, the reconstruction of the Temple was completed in 516 BCE. In this chapter the correspondence between Zerubbabel and his daughter, Shlomit, recounts the vicissitudes the group underwent before their mission was accomplished.

King Darius's question: "Which is strongest – wine, kings, women or truth?" derives from Chapter 4 of an apocryphal work entitled *1 Esdras*. It was Zerubbabel's answer to this question that gained him the king's consent to rebuild the Temple.

CHAPTER 73 THE SECOND WAVE OF RETURNEES PART 1
INTRODUCTION

³¹⁴⁶ Jewish Encyclopedia: Sheshbazzar

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13567-sheshbazzar>

³¹⁴⁷ Jewish Encyclopedia: Zerubbabel

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15251-zerubbabel>

SHLOMIT, PRINCE ZERUBBABEL'S DAUGHTER

My family comes from Nehardea, one of the cities established by our people in Babylon.³¹⁴⁸ Here my father was born and given the name Zerubbabel.³¹⁴⁹ Although my mother bore him seven sons, I was his only daughter.³¹⁵⁰

During the reign of good King Cyrus, a small group of our people had returned to Yehud to rebuild the Temple, under the leadership of my husband's uncle, Sheshbazzar. However, after encountering stiff opposition from the locals, the work had ceased.

As a king's son, my father had been appointed a member of King Darius's personal bodyguard. Every night three guards watched over the king while he slept. One night, unable to sleep, the king fell into conversation with the three, posing them the question, "Which is strongest - wine, kings, women or truth?" The first guard argued that wine was the strongest of the four, the second kings.³¹⁵¹ Then came my father's turn to speak. First he proved how women were the strongest, since even the king could deny his concubine nothing.³¹⁵² Then he said that, stronger than all three, was truth.³¹⁵³

SHLOMIT, PRINCE ZERUBBABEL'S DAUGHTER

3148 אגרת רב שרירא גאון א' פג

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Epistle_of_Rav_Sherira_Gaon.1.83?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en

3149 Zechariah 4:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16208/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi=true#lt=primary

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת תולדות יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L4

3150 I Chronicles 3:16-20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16523/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

3151 Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:1-4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

3152 1 Esdras 4:13-32

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/es1004.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

3153 1 Esdras 4:33-40

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/es1004.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

He spoke so convincingly that everyone applauded his choice. To show his appreciation, the king offered to grant any request he might wish to make. Without thinking twice, my father reminded him of the vow Darius had made before ascending the throne - to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.³¹⁵⁴ This is how the king came to issue an edict authorizing my father to lead our people back to Yehud.³¹⁵⁵

42,000 people joined him and Joshua, the son of the High Priest, on the journey.³¹⁵⁶ We watched them as they set out for Jerusalem - a long, straggling caravan, moving slowly in a northwest direction along the west bank of the River Euphrates.

³¹⁵⁴ 1 Esdras 4:41-46

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/es1004.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁵⁵ Haggai 1:1-2,21

1 Esdras 4:47-57

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/es1004.htm>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:8

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁵⁶ Ezra 2:1-2

Ezra 2:64

Nehemiah 7:6-7,66

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 3:10

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

BUILDING BEGINS

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. Four months have passed ³¹⁵⁷ since you and your expedition set out for Yehud. ³¹⁵⁸

Since we have not heard from you, mother has asked me to write in the hope that you will find time to reply to this letter, if only a few words.

Mother, Meshullam, Hananiah, Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah and Jushab-Hesed all send their love, as do I.

Shlomit ³¹⁵⁹

Jerusalem, undated letter

My Dear Daughter,

I regret I have not written to you before, but the way was long and fraught with danger and the task before us great. With Yahweh's protection and King Darius's safe conduct, ³¹⁶⁰ after four months on the road, we eventually arrived at Jerusalem. ³¹⁶¹ When we saw what remained of our holy city, we could have wept.

As for the work on the Temple started by my Uncle Sheshbazzar, only part of the foundations is still standing. Upon my arrival I immediately searched for his family, only to find his widow and children living in the greatest of poverty. Naturally, as their kinsman, I have extended to them my protection. The remainder of our people lives very quietly, trying to keep as low a profile as possible, in order not to arouse the hostility of our non-Jewish neighbors.

BUILDING BEGINS

³¹⁵⁷ Ezra 7:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³¹⁵⁸ סדר עולם זוטא פרק ז א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Zutta.8?lang=en

³¹⁵⁹ I Chronicles 3:17-20

³¹⁶⁰ 1 Esdras 4:47

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/es1004.htm>

³¹⁶¹ Ezra 7:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

My first order was to start building houses both for shelter and for protection, for the surrounding populace is not at all friendly and view us with the greatest suspicion. My second order was to dig wells, for this year there is a drought and little water to be had for us and our animals. It is most unfortunate. These two tasks have taken up so much of our time and energy that I really don't know when we will be able to begin the task for which we have come. ³¹⁶²

Meanwhile, I send you all my blessings. May Yahweh bless you and keep you safe until my return.
Your loving father,
Zerubbabel

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

We were overjoyed to receive your letter with all the news. Naturally we have told everyone of your safe arrival and what you have accomplished up until now.

However, I judged it wise to leave out the part about you not knowing when you will be able to make a start on the Temple. I hope you approve.
Your daughter,
Shlomit

Jerusalem, 1st Elul (Aug-Sep) 520 BCE

My Dear Daughter,

You did well in not mentioning my doubts. We must do all in our power to keep up the spirits of our people, both in Babylon and in Yehud.

Since writing to you last, the most unexpected thing has happened. One of Yahweh's holy men, Haggai by name, paid us a visit, accusing Joshua and myself of procrastination. He told us that now wasn't the time to rest on our laurels, but to start building the Temple. According to him, it is precisely because of our procrastination that we are suffering from drought.

Although I don't like to admit it, he's right. Both Joshua and I have been stalling for time. We needed someone as fearless as Haggai to say so to our faces. ³¹⁶³
Father

³¹⁶² Haggai 1:1-9

³¹⁶³ Haggai 1:1-11

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I was glad to hear that I did the right thing in remaining silent about starting work on the Temple. Rest assured I shall do my utmost never to do or say anything that might undermine your efforts.

Please write and tell me the outcome of your meeting with Yahweh's holy man.

Shlomit

Jerusalem, 24th Elul (Aug-Sep) 520 BCE

Dear Daughter,

I am happy to tell you that we have finally made a start on rebuilding the Temple. Haggai assures us that Yahweh is with us.

There is much to be done. Therefore, you will forgive me if I cannot write more at the moment.

Your father³¹⁶⁴

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

What wonderful news! I look forward to hearing of your progress. So please continue writing to us as often as you can.

Your loving daughter,

Shlomit

³¹⁶⁴ Haggai 1:12-15

Ezra 5:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16502/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Jerusalem, 21st Tishri (Sep-Oct) 520 BCE

Dear daughter,

Good news and bad. Haggai visited us again, telling us we must have faith and continue the work of my uncle. It just so happens that he came at a perfect time, for everyone in Yehud had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. With so many people to help, we managed to erect the altar in precisely the same location as it stood in former times. This means that, once again, we can offer up sacrifices to Yahweh.

The bad news is that owing to the drought, the harvest has been very poor and the offerings few. And we still have to finish laying the foundations.

Your father,
Zerubbabel³¹⁶⁵

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I have made sure to spread the word that we now have an altar on which to offer up sacrifices to Yahweh.

However, for obvious reasons, I omitted any mention of the poor harvest and the extent of the work that lies ahead.

Still, the erection of the altar is an achievement in itself, of which you can rightly be proud.

Shlomit

³¹⁶⁵ Haggai 2:1-9

Ezra 3:1-6 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16500/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Jerusalem, Heshvan, (Oct-Nov) 520 BCE

My Dear Shlomit,

Another Yahwist holy man has come to help us. His name is Zechariah, the son of Berechiah. He comes of good stock, for his grandfather was the holy man, Iddo.

He warned us not to be like our forefathers who deserted Yahweh's worship. He promised us that, if we return to the worship of Yahweh, Yahweh will return to being our God.

His comforting words have come just when we need them.

Your father,
Zerubbabel ³¹⁶⁶

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

Thank heaven for Yahweh's holy men! Where would we be without them?

I know that they annoy many people but their intentions are good.

Your daughter,
Shlomit

Jerusalem, 24th Kislev (Nov-Dec) 520 BCE

Dear Shlomit,

It is now winter here in Yehud and we are about to plant the winter crops. In addition, we hope to continue the work of building the foundations started by my uncle.

Haggai came to see us twice on the same day. On his first visit he talked about the necessity, when rebuilding the foundations, of carrying out the priests' precise instructions, to prevent anything from going wrong. He also reminded us how important it is to finish laying the foundations before spring, so that Yahweh will reward us with bountiful grain and fruit harvests.

On his second visit he asked to speak to me in private, whereupon he told me that Yahweh will recompense me for what happened to my grandfather, King Jehoiachin. I am not sure I understand what he meant by this.

Father ³¹⁶⁷

³¹⁶⁶ Zechariah 1:1-6

³¹⁶⁷ Haggai 2:10-23 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16204/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear father,

I wish I could be with you when you bring in the harvest in our own land. Just the thought of it brings tears of emotion to my eyes.

I too cannot make sense of the holy man's words. Isn't being a prince of Yehud, in the land of Yehud, recompense enough?
Shlomit

Jerusalem, the month of Iyar (Apr-May) 519 BCE

Dear Family,

I have momentous news. We have started work on the foundations! It has taken me seven months just to organize the supply of raw materials we will need in order to complete them. Then just a few days ago we started laying the first blocks.

I wish you could have been here to see it. Joshua arranged for his priests and Levites to be present. The priests were dressed in their priestly robes and, from time to time, blew fanfares on their trumpets. The Levites sang psalms of David, harmonizing with each other. It was truly moving. Then, after the first blocks were dragged into position, the people let out a great shout of joy.

My heart is so full, that I find it difficult to put into words what I feel.
Zerubbabel³¹⁶⁸

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear father,

You can have no idea of the effect your letter has had on all who have read it. There has been as much rejoicing here it was as if we were with you in Jerusalem.

To think the first stones have been laid! I can almost see it in my mind's eye.
Your loving daughter,
Shlomit

³¹⁶⁸ Ezra 3:11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16500/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Jerusalem, undated letter

My Dear Daughter,

Bad news I'm afraid. Just when things were going so well, a delegation arrived from Samaria, offering to help us rebuild the Temple. Joshua and I explained that only we had been authorized to do so. They took this very badly. Even after we told them that, once the Temple was finished, they were welcome to come and worship in it, they were not placated. Mark my words! No good can come of this...

Written sometime later:

Now I have time to complete this letter. Just as we feared, instead of helping us, the people of Samaria are now doing everything they can to be a hindrance, deliberately sabotaging our work and frightening our people. Where it will all end I do not know.

Your father,
Zerubbabel ³¹⁶⁹

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

How sorry I was to hear your news about the people of Samaria. The task of rebuilding the Temple is hard enough as it is, without them making things more difficult.

Is there nothing that can be done?
Shlomit

³¹⁶⁹ [Ezra 4:1-4 Rashi Commentary](#)

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16501/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:3

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

My Dear Daughter,

Yet another letter from one who misses you all greatly and cannot wait to see you.

We continue to work on the foundations. This is a very long and arduous task because of the size of the blocks of stone. Our neighbors come to watch us almost every day. Word of what we are doing has spread throughout the whole region. The other day, a governor from this side of the Euphrates, Tattenai by name, came to check up on us. He demanded to know who is in charge and by whose authorization we are rebuilding the city of Jerusalem.

Joshua and I explained who we are, what we were doing and by whose authority. We suggested that, if he wanted proof of what we said, he should search the royal archives for Cyrus's original edict. Meanwhile, we intend to continue with the task we have been sent to do.

After humming and hawing, in the end Tattenai went on his way, muttering that we would be hearing from him the moment he receives an answer from the king. I admit that we won't rest easy until we hear what he has to say.

Your father,
Zerubbabel³¹⁷⁰

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

Oh dear! How worrying for you. I'm sure that things will work out in the end - just as long as they find the original edict.

Please let me know what happens as soon as you can.

Your loving daughter,
Shlomit

³¹⁷⁰ Ezra 5:2-17 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16502/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Zechariah 8:9-12

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:4-5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Jerusalem, undated letter

My Dear Daughter,

Great news! A memorandum of Cyrus's original edict has been found in the royal archives in Ecbatana. King Darius has ratified the edict, which means that Tattenai and his like will have no choice but to cooperate.

I cannot tell you how relieved we all are.

With great affection,

Your father,

Zerubbabel ³¹⁷¹

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear father,

I must have been as relieved to receive your last letter as you were to receive the king's reply. I feel as though a great weight has been lifted from my shoulders. With King Darius behind us, surely there will be no further trouble in rebuilding the Temple?

Your daughter,

Shlomit

Jerusalem, undated letter

Dear Shlomit,

I have the most wonderful news to relate. We have finally completed the Temple foundations. It has been a long and difficult task but, thanks to everyone's efforts, we have succeeded. Now we can continue with the next stage, which is to build the Temple walls.

Reactions have been mixed. Those who were born in exile and who never saw the first Temple shouted with joy. Those old enough to remember the massive foundations of the first Temple wept in sorrow. It is difficult to say which was greatest - the laughing or the crying.

Yours,

Zerubbabel ³¹⁷²

³¹⁷¹ Ezra 6:1-13

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:6-7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁷² Haggai 2:3

Zechariah 4:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16208/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Ezra 3:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16500/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:2

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

The fact that you have completed the foundations is truly wonderful. Not even your Uncle Sheshbazzar was able to accomplish so much. Naturally all of us here were overjoyed to hear of your progress.

When reading out what you wrote in your letter, I did not mention that the dimensions of the new Temple fall far short of the old. Let people think that you are restoring the Temple to its former glory, which in a way you are, only not on the same scale.

With love and affection,
Shlomit

Jerusalem, 25th Shvat (Jan-Feb) 519 BCE

Dear Daughter,

Winter will soon be over.

Do you remember the holy man, Haggai, who I mentioned in some of my previous letters? Well, we haven't heard from him in a while. I can't help wondering if this is because he is old or sick, or whether he is no longer alive.

Fortunately, Zechariah still drops in occasionally, to bring us comfort. Yesterday he came to tell us that Yahweh has forgiven us for our past crimes.

It was with great sorrow that we learned of the death of Joshua's father, Jehozadak, may his memory be blessed. But it comforts us to know that he lived long enough to hear the good news about the foundations. According to custom, Joshua and his family have been mourning him for the past week, just in time for Joshua's coronation ceremony as High Priest.

May we know no more sorrow.

Fondly,
Your father,
Zerubbabel ³¹⁷³

³¹⁷³ Zechariah 1:7-17

Zechariah 6:9-15

Babylonian Talmud: Middoth Chapter 3

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Middoth.pdf>

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I was glad to hear that there remains one holy man to guide you in the important task of rebuilding the Temple. Nothing must be allowed to go wrong, now that you are so close to completing it.

Just think! Joshua will be the first High Priest in almost seventy years to officiate in the new Temple when it is built. What a great honor that will surely be!
Shlomit ³¹⁷⁴

Jerusalem, 4th Kislev (Nov-Dec) 518 BCE

My Dear Family,

I can hardly believe it. It is now two years since I last saw you. How I miss your dear faces. Here we continue our labors, more determined than ever not to stop until the Temple is completed.

A few days ago, a delegation arrived from Beth-el to ask the priests if they should continue fasting on the 9th of Av to mourn the destruction of the first Temple, now that the second is almost finished. Today, Zechariah gave them his answer.

It was not what they expected. He told them fasting meant nothing if they didn't act justly, charitably and mercifully towards each other. If they did so, then all our fast days would be transformed into days of rejoicing.

What do you make of that?

Zerubbabel ³¹⁷⁵

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

Thank you for your last letter, addressed to all the family.

I have been asked to clarify something you wrote. Does Zechariah mean that we don't have to observe fast days any longer, or is he saying that we have to do both - fast and perform good works?

Awaiting your explanation,

Shlomit

³¹⁷⁴ BabylonianTalmud: Yoma 9a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

BabylonianTalmud: Arachin 12b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Arachin.pdf>

Daniel

<http://www.betemunah.org/sederolam.html>

³¹⁷⁵ Zechariah 7:1-14

Zechariah 8:1-23

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

Jerusalem 3rd Adar (Feb-Mar) 516 BCE

My dear family,

Today has been the happiest day of my life for today, after four long years, we finally were able to dedicate the Temple. You can imagine the joy we felt as we renewed the old rituals.

The new Temple may be more modest than the first, but Yahweh's holy man, Haggai, promised us that one day it will be even greater. We just have to be patient.
Zerubbabel ³¹⁷⁶

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I'm sorry I have been unable to answer your momentous letter until now. The truth is, I was quite overcome. To think that after so many years and after so many difficulties, the new Temple is standing. It is difficult to believe. Now, more than ever, I wish I could be there with you to see it with my own eyes.

Since receiving your letter telling us the great news, we have spent every day in our synagogues, offering up praises to Yahweh, for it is thanks to Him that we have reached this great day.

Your daughter,
Shlomit

Jerusalem, 14th Nisan (Mar-Apr) 516 BCE

Dear Ones,

My hand is trembling as I write these lines. For the first time in seventy years, we were able to celebrate the Passover in the same way that our people have celebrated it for centuries. Just as we are no longer slaves in Egypt, so now we are free to worship in our own Temple, in our own land.

Zerubbabel ³¹⁷⁷

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

³¹⁷⁶ Ezra 6:14-18

Haggai 2:9

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 21b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³¹⁷⁷ Ezra 6:19-22

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:8

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

I understand exactly how you feel regarding the celebration of the Passover. It must have been a truly momentous occasion.

Here in Babylon we, too, celebrated the Passover, but in our synagogues and homes, as we have done for the past seventy years.

When, oh when, will we be able to celebrate it like you, father, in the Temple?
Shlomit

Jerusalem, undated letter

My Dear Family,

How wonderful it was to see you all again, if only for a short time! Perhaps I should be grateful to the Samaritans for causing us trouble, since it enabled me to accompany the delegation to the king and visit you at the same time.

Fortunately Joshua was right. My presence convinced the king that the situation between us and the Samaritans was serious enough to warrant his intervention. He has ordered them to contribute towards the cost of the sacrifices made in the Temple, asking only that we pray for him and his people.

Zerubbabel³¹⁷⁸

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

Your unexpected visit was far too short. Why could you not have stayed longer, for a few days at least?

Seeing you again for such a short time makes your absence so much harder to bear. Who knows if and when we will see you again?
Shlomit

³¹⁷⁸ Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:9
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Jerusalem, undated letter

Dear Shlomit,

Believe me, it was as hard for me to say goodbye as it was for you to see me go. However, as I have already explained, being a prince of Yehud brings with it not only rights but also obligations.

I am sorry to have to burden you, but a new problem has arisen, one of a very sensitive nature. Because of the shortage of Jewish women, many of our men have taken foreign wives. In itself this is bad enough, but the situation has been made more complicated by the fact that the worst culprits are the sons of Joshua, the High Priest, who should be setting an example to the rest.

At the moment I am uncertain how to deal with this problem.

Your loving father,
Zerubbabel³¹⁷⁹

Nehardea, undated letter

Dear Father,

Oh dear! The lack of Jewish women is indeed a problem. What on earth can be done?

Shlomit

³¹⁷⁹ Zechariah 3:1-10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16207/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#t=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 38a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_38.html

SHLOMIT, DAUGHTER OF ZERUBBABEL - EPILOGUE

I never received an answer to my last letter. At the end of his life, when he was too old to govern, my father returned home to Nehardea. After his death, my eldest brother, Meshullam, became head of our house. ³¹⁸⁰

I like to think that, by rebuilding the Temple for our people, my father died, comforted by the fact that he had done his duty. He had never been ambitious, never sought power but, when given it, did his best to satisfy everyone's expectations. People had only good to say about him, saying that he towered over all others of his generation. ³¹⁸¹

He would have made a wonderful king. The royal signet ring, removed by Yahweh from his father's right hand, ³¹⁸² would have fitted my father's finger perfectly ³¹⁸³ - for he was like a tender shoot that grows into a great tree, starting out as a prince without a kingdom, and ending up as governor of our people in our own land. ³¹⁸⁴

SHLOMIT, DAUGHTER OF ZERUBBABEL - EPILOGUE

³¹⁸⁰ I Chronicles 3:17-20

סדר עולם זוטא פרק ז א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Zutta.8?lang=en

³¹⁸¹ Zechariah 4:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16208/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

מדרש תנחומא – בראשית פרשת תולדות יד

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01988.html#HtmpReportNum0005_L4

³¹⁸² Jeremiah 22:24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16019/jewish/Chapter-22.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³¹⁸³ Wisdom of Sirach 49:11

<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/sirach.html>

Haggai 2:23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16204/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³¹⁸⁴ Zechariah 3:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16207/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Zechariah 6:12 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16210/jewish/Chapter-6.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

CHAPTER 74
THE SECOND WAVE OF RETURNEES PART 2
The Book of Ezra
The Book of Haggai
The Book of Zechariah

The wife of the prophet, Haggai, plus the mother of the prophet, Zechariah, together with the wife of Joshua, the High Priest, complete the story of the second group of exiles to return to Yehud.

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HAGGAI

My husband and I were both born in Judah and exiled to Babylon when we were children. We were already old when we set out with Prince Zerubbabel for Jerusalem. Somehow or other we survived the journey, which took about four months. It wasn't easy, but our faith in Yahweh and our belief that He wanted us to reach Jerusalem, spurred us on.

Most of our fellow Jews had been born in exile and had never seen Jerusalem or the Temple. I don't know what they expected, but it obviously wasn't the desolation that confronted us. They right away lost heart and started complaining. To distract them, Prince Zerubbabel gave orders to start building their homes. This helped to raise morale.

One morning Haggai awoke with the strangest expression on his face. Telling me he had an urgent message for Prince Zerubbabel and the priest, Joshua, he prepared to leave the house.

“What message?” I asked.

“That we mustn't wait any longer

but start rebuilding the Temple immediately,” was his reply.

“Who told you to say that?” I asked.

“Yahweh,” he answered before disappearing out the door. ³¹⁸⁵

Naturally I was agog to hear what happened so, the first thing I did after his return, was to question him on the subject. Haggai looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said,

“You'll have to wait until I've finished eating.”

That's when I knew that his message had been well received.

Sure enough, twenty-three days later work started on the Temple. ³¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately, our people were easily discouraged and kept downing tools. Every time this happened, my husband was there to encourage them with one of his visions. Without him, I don't think they would ever have even made a start.

The strange thing is that, once work started in earnest, Haggai experienced no more visions.

CHAPTER 74 THE SECOND WAVE OF RETURNEES PART 2

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, HAGGAI

³¹⁸⁵ Haggai 1:1-11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16203/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 11b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³¹⁸⁶ Haggai 1:12-15 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16203/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, ZECHARIAH

Our family was among the group that emigrated from Babylon to Judah with Prince Zerubbabel.³¹⁸⁷ In spite of all our good intentions, we didn't start rebuilding the Temple until one of our number, an elderly holy man named Haggai, persuaded Prince Zerubbabel and Joshua, our priest, to start work on the altar.

My son, Zechariah, held very strong views. One was of the necessity of rebuilding the Temple as quickly as possible. Another was about the correct way to worship Yahweh. According to him, what was important was justice, charity and good works, not fasting or ritual.³¹⁸⁸

When he saw how our people were discouraged by the slightest difficulty, and sought any excuse to leave off building, Zechariah became more and more agitated until, one night, he had a series of strange dreams.³¹⁸⁹

The first was about red, black and white horses.³¹⁹⁰ Now, I've seen black and white horses, but red? When I asked Zechariah what they meant, he replied that Yahweh still loved us and would restore our country.³¹⁹¹ Where the horses came in, I'm not quite sure.

The next was about four horns and four craftsmen. The horns were supposed to represent our enemies and the craftsmen those who would overthrow them.³¹⁹² I couldn't see the connection myself.

The third dream concerned our city of Jerusalem. Someone was surveying it, prior to its enlargement.³¹⁹³ Whatever for? thought I. It's only half-occupied as it is!

THE MOTHER OF THE HOLY MAN, ZECHARIAH

³¹⁸⁷ Nehemiah 12:1-4

Zechariah 1:1

³¹⁸⁸ Zechariah 7:4-5

³¹⁸⁹ Zechariah 1:1

³¹⁹⁰ Zechariah 1:7-11

³¹⁹¹ Zechariah 1:12-17

³¹⁹² Zechariah 2:1-4

³¹⁹³ Zechariah 2:5-17

The fourth was all about our priest, Joshua. In Zechariah's dream he was dressed in filthy old clothes, not like a priest at all. Fortunately, someone gave him some new clothes to wear.³¹⁹⁴ Just as well, thought I. We can't have a priest going around in rags!

In the next dream Zechariah had seen how the oil for the candelabrum used in the Temple was constantly replenished from two nearby olive trees, without anyone lifting a finger.³¹⁹⁵ What a wonderful invention, thought I. It's a shame we don't have something similar for our water supply. Then we women wouldn't have to spend all day carrying heavy pitchers from the well.

The sixth dream was all about a flying scroll on which was written the whole of the law. The scroll was so big, that it covered the whole land, punishing all those who had transgressed.³¹⁹⁶ Well, thought I, there are certainly plenty of people like that!

Then came a dream about a woman named Wickedness, who was stuffed into a basket with a heavy lid. Two other women with wings came to take her back to where she belonged - to Babylon.³¹⁹⁷ How typical to accuse us women of being wicked, thought I. What about the men?

In the last dream we were back to horses again, this time red, white, black and speckled, leading four chariots to the four corners of the earth. This was supposed to represent Yahweh's rule over the entire world.³¹⁹⁸ About time too, thought I. It can't come quickly enough.

As a result of these strange dreams people began to regard Zechariah as a holy man of Yahweh. I can't tell you how strange it felt, to suddenly find myself the mother of one.

³¹⁹⁴ Zechariah 3:1-7

³¹⁹⁵ Zechariah 4:1-14

³¹⁹⁶ Zechariah 5:1-4

³¹⁹⁷ Zechariah 5:5-11

³¹⁹⁸ Zechariah 6:1-8

THE WIFE OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST

I warned my husband it was just asking for trouble, bringing so few women and so many men, but of course he didn't listen. Men never do. They think we women haven't a brain in our heads and that all we're good for is having children.

Prince Zerubbabel was recruiting volunteers to accompany him to Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple. Nine years previously, a first expedition, under his uncle Sheshbazzar, had done the same but, after encountering local opposition, Sheshbazzar was killed and the project abandoned. This time a far larger group was formed, consisting of about 40,000 settlers, of whom the men far outnumbered the women.³¹⁹⁹ Because my father-in-law, the High Priest, Jehozadak, was too old to travel, it was my husband, Joshua, who accompanied us as our spiritual leader.³²⁰⁰

Once we arrived at Jerusalem, we were shocked at what we found. The half-finished foundations were like a silent reproach. However, before we could even think about starting work on the Temple, there were more urgent things to be done, like building houses and digging wells.³²⁰¹ Prodded by two holy men, named Haggai and Zechariah, eventually we made a start, completing the Temple after four years.³²⁰² During that time, my father-in-law died and Joshua was anointed High Priest.³²⁰³

It was now that we began to feel the effects of the disastrous policy of bringing far fewer women than men. Tensions rose as the unmarried men fought over the few remaining single women, until the last one was married off. The remaining single men, my sons included, were faced with a dilemma. Should they remain celibate, or should they take foreign wives? Celibacy is frowned upon in the Jewish religion – our duty is to procreate – and this led to a heated argument between Joshua and me. I was in favor of our sons marrying out of our religion so that I would have grandchildren to comfort me in my old age. What else does a woman have to look forward to? However, my husband hesitated. As High Priest, Joshua felt that he could not condone the practice of marrying out of our faith. Yet, as a father, he sympathized with our sons' plight.

THE WIFE OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST

³¹⁹⁹ Ezra 2:64

³²⁰⁰ Ezra 2:1-2

³²⁰¹ Haggai 1:1-9

³²⁰² Ezra 6:14-15

³²⁰³ Zechariah 6:9-13

Up till then I had never opposed my husband on anything but, on this particular matter, I was determined to get my way. Needless to say, after being badgered for weeks, he capitulated. After one particularly stormy exchange of words, instead of ending as he usually did with, "I absolutely forbid it!" Joshua turned away with a sigh and said,

"I'm tired of arguing. Do whatever you think best."³²⁰⁴

³²⁰⁴ Ezra 10:18-19

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

CHAPTER 75
THE THIRD WAVE OF RETURNEES

The Book of Ezra

The Book of Joel

Sixty-two years after the second group, a third group of returnees set out for Jerusalem. It differed from the first two groups in a number of ways. It was a comparatively small group, consisting of Temple personnel and their families, and was led by a priest and scribe named Ezra. Its mission was to enforce observance of the law.

Three women describe what happened as a result - Ezra's wife, the non-Jewish wife of one of the settlers and the wife of the prophet, Joel.

THE WIFE OF EZRA, THE SCRIBE

When Artaxerxes, the son of King Darius, succeeded his father on the throne, somewhat surprisingly he expressed great interest in our religion.³²⁰⁵ My husband, Ezra, the foremost scholar among our people, seized the opportunity to ask the king for permission to return to Yehud, to instruct our people in the law.³²⁰⁶ To our joy, the king agreed.

Our group was different from that which had accompanied Prince Zerubbabel. Composed of 1,800 trained personnel who, together with their families, brought our numbers to about 5,000-6,000 souls, its purpose was to regulate worship in the new Temple.³²⁰⁷ Once all the members of our group were assembled, Ezra ordered a fast,³²⁰⁸ at the end of which we broke camp and set off on our way.³²⁰⁹

It took us four months to traverse the nearly nine hundred miles from Babylon to Jerusalem.³²¹⁰ I won't pretend that the journey was easy. Organizing food, water and campsites for so many people at the height of summer was hard work, even for my efficient husband with his attention to detail. Just getting everyone going each morning was a challenge in itself. Yahweh must have been watching over us because we reached Jerusalem safe and sound.³²¹¹

CHAPTER 75 THE THIRD WAVE OF RETURNEES

THE WIFE OF EZRA, THE SCRIBE

³²⁰⁵ Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁰⁶ Ezra 7:6, 10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:1

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁰⁷ Ezra 7:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁰⁸ Ezra 8:21 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16505/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁰⁹ Ezra 8:31 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16505/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²¹⁰ Ezra 7:8-9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²¹¹ Ezra 8:23

The first thing we did was to set up camp. Three days later, all the silver, gold and sacred vessels, that we had brought with us from Babylon, were handed over to the Temple authorities. This was followed by offering up sacrifices to Yahweh.³²¹²

Everything was going according to plan,³²¹³ when it was brought to Ezra's attention that many of our men had intermarried with women from other tribes, including, would you believe it, the sons of the High Priest.³²¹⁴ Ezra was so horrified, that he tore his clothes, pulled out his hair and beard as though in mourning, then sank to his knees and did not move.

Word soon spread, yet even surrounded by a weeping crowd, Ezra did not stir or utter a word.³²¹⁵ Then an Elamite named Shechaniah stepped forward and cried, "It's true that we have done wrong in marrying wives from other tribes, but isn't there something we can do? What about if we divorce them? Won't that help?" Hearing this, Ezra rose to his feet and demanded that all those married to foreign wives swear to divorce them.³²¹⁶

³²¹² Ezra 8:32-35 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16505/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:2
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²¹³ Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:3
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²¹⁴ Ezra 9:2 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16506/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²¹⁵ Ezra 9:4-5 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16506/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²¹⁶ Ezra 10:2-5 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16507/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

A proclamation went out, ordering everyone to gather in Jerusalem on pain of having their property confiscated and being declared an outlaw.³²¹⁷ By the 20th of Kislev, the entire Jewish population of Yehud was assembled in the large forecourt in front of the Temple, quaking with fear over the enormity of what they had done and shivering in the heavy winter rain. Ezra addressed them, saying,

“By marrying foreign wives you have betrayed Yahweh
and added to our guilt as His people.
Now you must acknowledge your crimes
and expiate them by having nothing more to do with your wives.”

There was a roar of assent from the crowd. However, it was clearly impractical to carry out his order immediately, for there were far too many people. In addition, it was a process that would take many days and, most important of all, no-one wanted to remain outside in the pouring rain! Therefore, a compromise was arrived at, whereby all those married to foreign wives would present themselves at an appointed time for judgment.

The decision wasn't unanimous - a number of men argued against it. These included Jonathan, the son of Asahel, and Jahzeiah, the son of Tikvah, with the support of Meshullam and Shabtai the Levite. However, the majority carried the day.

Ezra and the heads of the main houses convened later in the same month, on the 1st Tevet, to start divorce proceedings against the foreign wives. By March, the 1st of Nisan, it was all over. The whole process had taken three months.

As for the sons of the priests who had married foreign wives, including those of Joshua, the High Priest, they were advised to sacrifice a ram to expiate their crime. Some had not only taken foreign wives, but had fathered children with them. They were forced to give up not only their wives but their children too.³²¹⁸

So ended the saga of the foreign wives.

At the end of our lives Ezra and I returned to Babylon, where my husband died at the age of a hundred and twenty, greatly respected by all.³²¹⁹

³²¹⁷ Ezra 10:7-8 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16507/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²¹⁸ Ezra 10:9-44 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16507/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²¹⁹ The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela
<https://archive.org/details/HighRes32882013067304/page/n16/mode/2up>

THE WIFE OF JONATHAN, THE SON OF ASAHIEL

My family came from one of the many tribes that inhabited the region once known as Judah and, since the Babylonian conquest, called Yehud Medinata.³²²⁰ Once there had been another tribe called the Judahites, but after most of them were exiled to Babylon, few were left to prevent us from appropriating their lands and property. After many years their descendants began to return to the area, to reclaim their land and rebuild their Temple. Naturally we were determined to prevent them.

They came in waves over many years. The first, a small advance party, posed no real threat and was easily deterred, especially after their leader was killed. The second was a much larger group of over 40,000 people. We decided that if we could not beat them, then we would join them, but our services were refused.

From that day onwards we did all we could to stop them, even going so far as to ask the Persian governor to intervene.³²²¹ Unfortunately, this had the opposite effect to the one intended. The king decided that the Judahites were in the right and we were in the wrong,³²²² so that the Judahites were able to complete their Temple without further hindrance.

However, there were other ways to combat the threat they posed. The group of 40,000 included only half the number of women to the number of men. So when all the available Judahite women had been spoken for, the men naturally sought wives from among the surrounding tribes.³²²³ Our families raised no objection to us marrying them, for it meant that their lands would stay safely in our hands.³²²⁴

THE WIFE OF JONATHAN, THE SON OF ASAHIEL

³²²⁰ II Kings 17:24

³²²¹ Ezra 5:3-10

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:4

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²²² Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 4:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²²³ Ezra 9:2-3

³²²⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 47b-48a

<https://halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Nedarim.pdf>

The first to take wives from among us were the sons of Joshua, the Judahite chief priest.³²²⁵ The rest soon followed suit. This is how I came to marry my husband, Jonathan, the son of Asahel.³²²⁶ Inevitably our husbands began worshipping our gods instead of theirs, a mysterious God you couldn't see who made harsh demands and required absolute loyalty.

Then came the day that a third, smaller wave of exiles arrived, numbering about 6,000 Judahite religious fanatics.³²²⁷ My husband's people greeted them with joy. Even my people made them welcome. Why not? The Judahites were no longer a threat. Surely we were all one people now?

However, I had a sense of foreboding. I told Jonathan that no good would come of their arrival, but he dismissed my fears. I was right to fear their coming. When their leader, a scribe named Ezra,³²²⁸ was told that many of his people had intermarried with women from other tribes, we heard that he was so horrified, he couldn't speak.³²²⁹ Then he announced that all such marriages were null and void and ordered our husbands to divorce us.³²³⁰ When we heard this, we could hardly believe our ears. Surely he wasn't serious? It was too ridiculous for words. What would become of our children? What would become of us?

³²²⁵ Ezra 10:18

³²²⁶ Ezra 10:15

³²²⁷ Ezra 7:7 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16504/jewish/Chapter-7.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Zutta.8?lang=en

סדר עולם זוטא פרק ז א

³²²⁸ מדרש רבה - חומש בראשית נח פרשה לו ח

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01633_all.html#HtmpReportNum0035_L2

³²²⁹ Ezra 9:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16506/jewish/Chapter-9.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²³⁰ Ezra 10:2-5

Every Judahite husband married to a non-Judahite wife was summoned to Jerusalem, where they were forced to agree to this outrageous proposal.³²³¹ The only husbands to speak out against it were Jonathan and his supporters. Unfortunately they were easily overruled.³²³²

Over the course of the next three months our husbands presented themselves before a court of law, where they received a writ of divorce.³²³³ When Jonathan came home with the writ in his hand, I was so shocked I didn't know what to say. I could tell from his face that Jonathan was as upset as me for, over the years, we had come to love each other. I asked him,

“What about our children?”

Jonathan explained that the writ applied to our children as well.³²³⁴ I burst into tears and begged him not to send us away. He explained that there was nothing more he could do.

The heartbreak this cruel edict caused was overwhelming for both sides. Hundreds of families were affected. We women were left with no choice but to return to our fathers and brothers, begging them to take us in. Understandably, they were very angry for not only were we and our children left without husbands and fathers to support us, but all of us were once again under the threat of dispossession.

Of course, some of our Judahite husbands ignored the edict and came to see us from time to time. However, our meetings had to be conducted in the utmost secrecy, lest the Judahite authorities found out. For those who disobeyed the edict, their punishment was to be declared an outlaw, one of the worst punishments a people can impose. For those who obeyed it, their punishment was no more than the price of a ram, which they were required to offer up to their cruel and heartless God.³²³⁵

³²³¹ Ezra 10:10-12

³²³² Ezra 10:15

³²³³ Ezra 10:13-17

³²³⁴ Ezra 10:44 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16507/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary
Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:4
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²³⁵ Ezra 10:18-19

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JOEL

My husband and I lived in Jerusalem. Of course it was nothing like the Jerusalem that had existed before it was sacked by the Babylonians, but it was grand enough for us. As worshippers of Yahweh, we regularly visited the Temple to offer up sacrifices as the law required. We were simple people, not asking for much out of life, just enough to put food on the table and peace and quiet in which to rear our children and grandchildren.

However, there was one difference between us and everybody else, something that, unfortunately, tended to keep people at a distance, and that was the fact that Joel was prone to visions.³²³⁶ Like any holy man of Yahweh, his visions weren't always very pleasant. Don't get me wrong. I'm not complaining. It's just that sometimes I wished that Joel was normal like everyone else.

According to my husband, one day everyone would be capable of having visions.³²³⁷ He called this, 'The day of Yahweh', which would be heralded by blood, fire and smoke. The sun would turn to darkness and the moon to blood.³²³⁸ The exiles would return³²³⁹ and only those who believed in Yahweh would survive.³²⁴⁰

On that day our enemies would be called to account for their crimes, and suffer the same cruelties they had inflicted on us.³²⁴¹ In the Valley of Jehoshaphat they would be mown down like ripe corn, trampled underfoot like ripe grapes. Multitudes upon multitudes would die, when Yahweh passed sentence upon them. On that day sun, moon and stars would grow dim, and Yahweh would let out a roar from Jerusalem, so loud, that even the heavens would quake.

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, JOEL

³²³⁶ Joel 1:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16169/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#lt=primary

³²³⁷ Joel 3:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16171/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³²³⁸ Joel 3:4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16171/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³²³⁹ Joel 4:1

³²⁴⁰ Joel 3:5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16171/jewish/Chapter-3.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³²⁴¹ Joel 4:2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16172/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

Yet we, His children, would remain safe. Never again would Jerusalem be invaded by foreigners, for Yahweh would protect us. Our land would overflow with water, milk and wine. That of our enemies would become a desert. All else might be forgiven, but not the spilling of our innocent blood. And Yehud and Jerusalem would last forever.³²⁴²

When Joel spoke to us in such a way, we couldn't help but be moved. Such words brought us great comfort for, if what he said was true, we could indeed look forward to a time when we would once again be Yahweh's people, and He would once again be our God.

After being uplifted by such visions, it was hard to return to the endless drudgery of our lives, scraping a living from the sparse soil, subject to drought, famine and the constant hostility of our neighbors.

³²⁴² Joel 4:13-21 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16172/jewish/Chapter-4.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

CHAPTER 76
THE FOURTH WAVE OF RETURNEES
The Book of Nehemiah

Fourteen years later, the fourth and last group of returnees set out from Babylon. Like the preceding group, it was entirely different from those that had come before. Headed by King Artaxerxes's Jewish cupbearer, Nehemiah, its mission was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, a mission that was accomplished within the amazingly short time of fifty-two days.

Telling the story are:

Damaspia, King Artaxerxes's queen, who is mentioned briefly in Nehemiah Chapter 2. Her name is taken from the *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

Nehemiah's sister, whose brother's request of King Darius is amplified in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Rosh Hashanah, Folio 3).

The daughters of Shallum, from Nehemiah Chapter 3.

Noadiah the healer, who is mentioned in Nehemiah Chapter 6.

DAMASPIA, KING ARTAXERXES'S QUEEN

A clever woman can rule without occupying the throne. I, Damaspia, consort of King Artaxerxes and mother of King Xerxes II, can attest that this is so. From the start of our marriage my husband was so devoted to me that he insisted I accompany him on all his military campaigns.³²⁴³ In fact, I became his most trusted adviser. If anyone could be said to have the ear of the king, surely it was me, for I shared not only the food at his table but also his bed. This brings me to the story of how I helped the strangest people in my husband's empire and their even stranger God.

My husband had a cupbearer from a tribe named the Jews. The tribe came from a distant land of no great importance. It was rumored that, once, they had possessed a Temple of great beauty in a city named Jerusalem, but all had been destroyed when King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded their land and brought them captive to Babylon.

Normally the cupbearer, Nehemiah by name, wore a cheerful countenance, for it was well known that Artaxerxes could abide no other. On the evening in question, he seemed very agitated. Seeing this, Artaxerxes jumped to the conclusion that Nehemiah, having poisoned his wine, was unable to hide his nervousness over being caught. Before he could have the cupbearer put to death, I persuaded my husband to simply ask the other what was wrong.

Nehemiah explained that he had just received bad news from his people in Yehud. Their chief city, Jerusalem, was in ruins and its gates a heap of charred cinders. As a result, his people were constantly in danger of attack. Hearing his explanation, Artaxerxes relaxed and permitted his cupbearer to request whatever he wished. Breathing deeply, Nehemiah said,

“Sire, I beg you to temporarily release me from your service, so that I may return to Yehud and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.”

Noticing that my husband wasn't too happy at losing the services of the man he trusted to taste his wine, I leaned towards Artaxerxes and whispered in his ear,

“Nehemiah is a loyal servant. Grant him his request. He will soon return and resume his duties.”

Artaxerxes asked his cupbearer how long it would take him to accomplish such a task. After promising he would return by a certain date, Nehemiah was granted his request. I saw to it that he was provided with two letters, one of safe conduct and the other permitting him to take wood from the royal forest for the city's walls and gates.³²⁴⁴

CHAPTER 76 THE FOURTH WAVE OF RETURNEES

DAMASPIA, KING ARTAXERXES'S QUEEN

³²⁴³ Encyclopedia Iranica: Damaspia

<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/damaspia-gk>

³²⁴⁴ Nehemiah 2:8 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

For some time we did not see Nehemiah. Then, one day, he reappeared at court to inform my husband that his mission had been accomplished.

NEHEMIAH'S SISTER

My brother, Nehemiah, and I were born in Susa, the capital of Persia. Our father, Hachaliah, was a devout Yahwist and brought us up to be the same. I was very proud of my brother, who held an important position at the court of King Artaxerxes - that of the king's butler. This was a two-edged sword. On the one hand, he was required to taste the king's wine, to make sure it wasn't poisoned. On the other, he had the king's ear and could wield great influence if he chose. However, such an honor came at a great price – that of castration – something required of all personal servants of the king.³²⁴⁵

One day, led by a man named Hanani, a group of settlers from Yehud came to visit their families in Babylon. Anxious for the welfare of our people in Jerusalem, we gathered round to hear their news. It came as a great shock to learn that they were in trouble. The walls of Jerusalem had not yet been rebuilt and there were no gates to keep their enemies out.

Poor Nehemiah! He took the news very badly.³²⁴⁶ In the end he seized the first opportunity to ask the king if he could go to Yehud and rebuild the walls of the city. Thanks to the intervention of Queen Damaspia, the king's favorite wife, his request was granted.³²⁴⁷

When I heard that Nehemiah was organizing an expedition to Yehud, I pleaded to join him, making such a nuisance of myself that eventually my brother agreed. Accompanied by a military escort,³²⁴⁸ after an arduous journey, we eventually arrived in Jerusalem. Even though we had been warned, we were dismayed at the sight of the crumbling walls and the gates hanging off their hinges. Even the Temple did little to restore our spirits, because it fell so far short of what we expected.

NEHEMIAH'S SISTER

³²⁴⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Rosh Hashanah 3a-b

https://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf

³²⁴⁶ Nehemiah 1:2-4 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16508/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁴⁷ Nehemiah 2:1-8

³²⁴⁸ Nehemiah 2:9 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

Three days after our arrival, under cover of night, Nehemiah and a small group of trusted men deliberately made further breaches in the walls. ³²⁴⁹ No doubt you are asking yourselves, why would my brother want to make matters worse, rather than better? The answer is, had he not done so, the leading citizens of Jerusalem would never have backed his plan to rebuild the walls. ³²⁵⁰

From the very beginning we encountered opposition, not only from our own people but also from the neighboring tribes. ³²⁵¹ My brother ignored them, never ceasing work for a moment. ³²⁵² The situation became so bad that we were forced to divide the people into two groups - one to work on the walls and one to guard us. Even those working on the walls did so with swords strapped to their thighs. We ended up working by day and guarding by night, with no time to sleep or bathe. My brother kept a bugler constantly by his side, in order to sound the alarm should the need arise. ³²⁵³

³²⁴⁹ Nehemiah 2:12-16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁵⁰ Nehemiah 2:17-18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:7

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁵¹ Nehemiah 2:19 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:8

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁵² Nehemiah 2:20 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16509/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Nehemiah 3:38 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16510/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁵³ Nehemiah 4:10-17

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16511/jewish/Chapter-4.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:8

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

These were not our only problems. Most of our people were heavily in debt to the rich.³²⁵⁴ This was where I came in, supervising food for the poor. Every day we fed a hundred and fifty people at our own expense, knowing that otherwise they would starve.³²⁵⁵ Nehemiah led the way in cancelling their debts and, much to the anger of the aristocracy, indicated in no uncertain fashion that he expected them to do the same.³²⁵⁶

³²⁵⁴ Nehemiah 5:1-5 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16512/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁵⁵ Nehemiah 5:17-18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16512/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁵⁶ Nehemiah 5:6-11 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16512/jewish/Chapter-5.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

THE DAUGHTERS OF SHALLUM

After our new governor, Nehemiah, arrived, he immediately put us to work rebuilding the city walls.³²⁵⁷ This was done none too soon, for the walls were half-destroyed and the gates charred and hanging off their hinges, leaving us vulnerable to attack.³²⁵⁸ The whole population was recruited to accomplish the task. The wall and gates were divided into sections and each section allotted to a different group. These groups included members of the priesthood, the chief families of Jerusalem, guilds of craftsmen, and citizens of nearby towns.

Our family was given the task of rebuilding a section of the west wall between the Tower of the Furnaces and the Valley Gate.³²⁵⁹ As ruler of half of Jerusalem, our father, Shallum, was a wealthy man, wealthy enough to hire servants to rebuild our section of the wall. He never thought of asking for our help, as he would have done had we had been his sons. After conferring amongst ourselves, we demanded to be assigned our share of the burden. Just to stop our nagging, our father eventually agreed. At first we superintended the work of our servants but, when it became vital to complete the work in the shortest possible time,³²⁶⁰ we worked with them side by side.³²⁶¹

Once the walls were rebuilt, we felt more secure. However, Governor Nehemiah had not yet finished with his demands. The first we knew about them was when we were summoned to a public meeting. In front of everyone, the governor accused people like our father of enriching themselves at the expense of the poor for by borrowing money which they could never repay, the majority of our people were now destitute - dispossessed of their property, their lands confiscated and their children enslaved.

THE DAUGHTERS OF SHALLUM

³²⁵⁷ Nehemiah 2:5-9

³²⁵⁸ Nehemiah 1:3 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16508/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:6

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁵⁹ Nehemiah 3:11-13

³²⁶⁰ Nehemiah 4:16

³²⁶¹ Nehemiah 3:12

When the governor finished speaking, there was a deadly silence. You could feel the tension in the air. Then he announced that he and his staff had decided to cancel all outstanding debts owed to them and expected the rest of us to do the same.

By now our father was white-faced with anger. However, he said nothing, not even when the other leading citizens grudgingly agreed to the governor's demands.³²⁶² Although he remained silent, it was obvious to us that, from that day forth, our father was implacably opposed to the governor. We would not have been at all surprised to learn that he had joined the so-called 'peace faction'.

NOADIAH, THE HEALER

I was born to a very poor family in a small village outside Jerusalem. My family's lowly status actually served as an advantage when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and exiled our people to Babylon, for he left behind poor families, like ours, to tend the fields and vineyards.³²⁶³

However, I wasn't content to lead a life like that of my parents and grandparents, who toiled from dawn till dusk in order to survive. I wanted more out of life. So I persuaded my father to take me to Jerusalem, where there was always a dearth of Jewish women, and find me a husband. Eager to rid himself of an argumentative woman, one who was neither young nor attractive, my father found a widower willing to let me follow my profession, in return for keeping house and looking after his children.

From the time I was a young girl, I used to hang around the woman healer in our village, who helped our women deliver their babies and cured them of their ailments. A widow, with no children of her own, released by her brother-in-law from a levirate marriage, she had remained single. Adopting me as the daughter she never had, she taught me all she knew about plants and herbs, knowledge she had acquired from her mother. Indeed, she was the only person I regretted leaving.

After moving to Jerusalem I established a practice of my own. I became so adept at diagnosing ailments that some ignorant people thought that I was able to predict the future.³²⁶⁴ Among the Yahwist establishment, we healers had a bad name, mainly because we were confused with those of our sex who practiced fortune-telling. These would cover their heads with veils and hang magic charms round their wrists, in order to attract paying customers. Such fortune-tellers did more harm than good. Authentic healers, like me, never asked for money, but accepted whatever each patient could give.³²⁶⁵

NOADIAH, THE HEALER

³²⁶³ Jeremiah 39:10 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16036/jewish/Chapter-39.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁶⁴ Nehemiah 6:14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16513/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁶⁵ Ezekiel 13:17-23 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16111/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-13.htm#lt=primary

After the arrival of Governor Nehemiah, things changed. The leaders of the first three waves of returnees, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Ezra, had been more interested in reviving the religion of Yahweh than in politics. Nehemiah was different. He had come to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This put a different complexion on matters, certainly for the neighboring tribes that must have regarded us as a threat.³²⁶⁶

By now, there was a group of us who were in favor of peaceful co-existence. This group included a number of leading citizens who had married foreign spouses, or whose children had done so. For example, the daughter of Shechaniah, the son of Arah, was married to Tobiah the Ammonite, while Tobiah's son was married to the daughter of Meshullam, the son of Berechiah.

Through the agency of Tobiah we held secret meetings with the leaders of the neighboring tribes, such as the Persian satrap, Governor Sanballat of Samaria, and Geshem the Arab. They mocked Nehemiah's attempt to rebuild the walls of the city, saying he would never succeed.³²⁶⁷ Tobiah assured Governor Sanballat that, even if Nehemiah managed to rebuild them, whatever he had built could just as easily be destroyed.³²⁶⁸

As the walls grew higher, Sanballat decided to take action by organizing a surprise attack on Jerusalem. He promised us that we would be rewarded for our loyalty, by being appointed leaders of our people.³²⁶⁹ Unfortunately, word of the attack reached Nehemiah and it was called off.³²⁷⁰

We begged Sanballat to hold peace talks with Nehemiah. Surely our governor would listen to reason, seeing that the city, lacking gates, was still so vulnerable. So Sanballat sent Nehemiah a message, suggesting a meeting at Kefirim in the Ono Valley.³²⁷¹ Nehemiah had the effrontery to reply that he couldn't spare the time. Couldn't spare the time, when there was a chance to make peace? The arrogance of the man! Where was his concern for his people?

³²⁶⁶ Nehemiah 2:10

³²⁶⁷ Nehemiah 6:17-19

³²⁶⁸ Nehemiah 3:35

³²⁶⁹ Nehemiah 4:1-2, 5

³²⁷⁰ Nehemiah 4:9

³²⁷¹ Nehemiah 6:1-2

Fortunately Sanballat was prepared to try again. Four times he invited Nehemiah to a meeting, and four times Nehemiah refused. The fifth time Sanballat tried a different strategy to bring him to the negotiating table. He sent Nehemiah a letter, telling him that if he didn't agree to meet, Sanballat would write to King Artaxerxes, informing him that Nehemiah had declared himself king of Yehud and was fomenting a rebellion.

Nehemiah wouldn't have any of it. He replied that Sanballat was making false charges just to stop him completing the city's defenses. Why couldn't Nehemiah see that Sanballat's offer of peace was genuine?

Not only did Nehemiah distrust Sanballat, he also distrusted us, his own people. Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, tried to warn Nehemiah of an attempt on his life, and suggested that Nehemiah take refuge in the Temple, which at least had doors that could be locked. Instead of thanking Shemaiah, Nehemiah accused him of trying to deceive him into breaking the law, according to which only priests had the right of entry to the Temple.

Nehemiah even accused me of trying to frighten him into stopping work on the city walls, claiming I was in Sanballat's pay!³²⁷²

³²⁷² Nehemiah 6:3-14

NEHEMIAH'S SISTER

In spite of all the obstacles placed in our way, within fifty-two days the city walls were finished, a feat that astonished everyone.³²⁷³ Words could not express our relief. At last we were protected from our hostile neighbors.

It was with great pride that Nehemiah organized a dedication ceremony, in which two processions left through the Dung gate, circling the walls in opposite directions until they met by the gate leading to the Temple, where we offered up sacrifices to Yahweh.³²⁷⁴

At the New Year, Nehemiah arranged for a public reading of the law, led by Ezra the scribe.³²⁷⁵ Then we celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles in much the same way as it had been celebrated at the time of Joshua.

During the week of the festival, every day Ezra read to us from the scroll of the law.³²⁷⁶ On the eighth day a covenant was drawn up between us and Yahweh, according to which we promised to keep all the laws we had heard.³²⁷⁷

Before we dispersed, one out of every ten families was chosen by lot to repopulate Jerusalem.³²⁷⁸ This was Nehemiah's last act before he announced it was time for us to return to Babylon.

NEHEMIAH'S SISTER

³²⁷³ Nehemiah 6:15-16 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16513/jewish/Chapter-6.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁷⁴ Nehemiah 12:31-43 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16519/jewish/Chapter-12.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁷⁵ Nehemiah 8:1-2 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16515/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁷⁶ Nehemiah 8:16-18 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16515/jewish/Chapter-8.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

Antiquities of the Jews Book 11 Chapter 5:5

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-11.htm>

³²⁷⁷ Nehemiah 10:1-30 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16517/jewish/Chapter-10.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

³²⁷⁸ Nehemiah 11:1 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16518/jewish/Chapter-11.htm#showrashi=true<=primary

NOADIAH, THE HEALER

When Nehemiah and his sister returned to Babylon, we breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that, at long last, we would be able to live in peace with our neighbors. Indeed, for a long time things were very quiet and we were able to go about our daily lives without disturbance.

Then, one day, we heard that Nehemiah had returned to Jerusalem. We could hardly believe our ears. What on earth could have caused him to return? ³²⁷⁹

The answer was not long in coming. Tobiah and his property were forcibly removed from the Temple and the Temple regulations, observance of which had grown lax in Nehemiah's absence, began to be strictly enforced. ³²⁸⁰

However, from our point of view, what most damaged our cause was Nehemiah's antagonism towards intermarriage with the other tribes, and his intolerance towards those of us who continued to have close contact with them. ³²⁸¹

NARRATOR

In spite of all his efforts, Nehemiah came in for a great deal of criticism for disparaging his predecessors ³²⁸² and boasting of all he had achieved. ³²⁸³ Because of this, Ezra the scribe was considered the more important of the two men. ³²⁸⁴

NOADIAH, THE HEALER

³²⁷⁹ Nehemiah 13:4-5

³²⁸⁰ Nehemiah 13:7-14

³²⁸¹ Nehemiah 13:23-31

NARRATOR

³²⁸² Nehemiah 5:15

³²⁸³ Nehemiah 5:19

Nehemiah 13:31

³²⁸⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 93b

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_93.html

CHAPTER 77
THE LAST OF YAHWEH'S MESSENGERS
The Book of Malachi

The wife of Malachi, the last of the prophets, relates her husband's message to the people, as recorded in the book that bears his name. We also learn how he and his brother prophets found the strength to withstand the apathy, mockery and hostility they constantly encountered, as they carried out their mission to spread Yahweh's word.

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, MALACHI

If you had told me that my husband, Malachi, was going to be one of Yahweh's messengers, I would never have believed you. For centuries there had always been one of them going around the country, at times reproving us, at times consoling us, depending on the situation. Sometimes they were laughed at, other times they were abused, but more often than not they were simply ignored. Yet they never gave up, but continued to preach their message, whether we listened or not.

Malachi and I lived in Yehud, having returned from Babylon with one of the groups of exiles. By now, the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. Yet in spite of the promises of Malachi's two friends, the holy men, Haggai and Zechariah, we were still only a small backwater of the Persian Empire, struggling to survive amidst drought, famine and the destruction of our crops by locusts. No wonder most of our people were dispirited and couldn't be bothered to keep Yahweh's laws.

A serious problem had arisen concerning the problem of intermarriage with women from other tribes, the cause of which had been the small numbers of Jewish girls who had come from Babylon. It was bad enough that our unmarried men had married foreign wives. They, at least, had some sort of excuse. But married men had started setting aside their Jewish wives in favor of second wives from other tribes.

Because we Jews were always on the verge of starvation, Jewish women looked old before their time, whereas foreign women bloomed with good health. So now there were households where the first wife was virtually consigned to widowhood, while the second wife ruled in her place. These Jewish 'widows' would come to the Temple to weep, and ask Yahweh what they had done to deserve such a fate. ³²⁸⁵

CHAPTER 77 THE LAST OF YAHWEH'S MESSENGERS

THE WIFE OF THE HOLY MAN, MALACHI

³²⁸⁵ Malachi 2:13 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16220/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

This upset Malachi who, as a devout follower of Yahweh, took such things very much to heart. So perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised when he started having visions.

Under their influence, every day he would take up his position at the entrance to the Temple and preach to the people coming to offer up their sacrifices. He explained that, just as I, his wife, was not ashamed to demand of him that he satisfy the needs of our family, so he was not ashamed to demand of Yahweh that He fulfill the needs of our people. ³²⁸⁶

This was his message.

"Yahweh says He loved you.
You ask, 'How did He love us?'
I say, He did so by favouring Jacob over Esau. ³²⁸⁷

"Yahweh says that, just as a child honours its parents
and servants their masters, so you priests should honor Him,
instead of treating Him with contempt.
You ask, 'How have we treated Him with contempt?'
I say, by no longer bothering to divide up the grain offering
according to the law,
or by offering up as a sacrifice an animal
that has something wrong with it. ³²⁸⁸

"Yahweh says there's no use flooding His altar with tears
because your sacrifices are no longer acceptable.
You ask why?
I say it's because you have divorced your wives. ³²⁸⁹

³²⁸⁶ מדרש רבה - שיר השירים רבה פתיחתא דחכימי פרשה א ב

http://www.toratemetfreeware.com/online/f_01638.html#HtmpReportNum0000_L2

³²⁸⁷ Malachi 1:1-3

³²⁸⁸ Malachi 1:6-14

³²⁸⁹ Malachi 2:13-14

"Yahweh says He is tired of arguing with you.
You ask, 'What have we done to tire Him?'
I say, by accusing Yahweh of favoring the wicked
because they go unpunished,
or by claiming that, because the wicked prosper and the good suffer,
there is no justice.³²⁹⁰

"Yahweh says that since the days of our ancestors, you have broken His laws.
Yet if you return to His worship He will return to you.
You ask, 'How can we return?'
I say, by not robbing Yahweh of what is due to Him.
You ask, 'Of what have we robbed Him?'
I say, of tithes and donations.
In spite of all warnings, you continue to rob Him.³²⁹¹

"Yahweh says that you have spoken harsh words against Him.
You ask, 'What have we said?'
You said that there's no point in worshipping Yahweh,
because you will receive no reward for carrying out His laws,
or for showing remorse.³²⁹²

"Yahweh says, 'Those who remain loyal to Me, these I will remember.
On the day when I pass sentence, they will be my most treasured possession.
Just as any father rewards an obedient son,
I will treat them with compassion and mercy.
Then you will see the difference between those who serve Me
and those who don't.'³²⁹³

After spending all day long beseeching the people and the priests at the Temple gate, Malachi would return home exhausted, with a haggard expression on his face. Only after a hot meal did his spirits revive. I don't think anybody quite realized just how much we wives of holy men contributed to our husbands' willingness to get up the next morning, and face the hostile world again.

³²⁹⁰ Malachi 2:17 Rashi Commentary
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16220/jewish/Chapter-2.htm/showrashi/true#lt=primary

³²⁹¹ Malachi 3:6-9

³²⁹² Malachi 3:13-15

³²⁹³ Malachi 3:16-18

EPILOGUE

Malachi spent the rest of his days with his two friends, Haggai and Zechariah, helping Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, to translate the books of the prophets from Hebrew into Aramaic.³²⁹⁴

When they died, the three were buried together in a cave on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.³²⁹⁵ With their deaths, the age of prophecy and its soaring literature came to an end.³²⁹⁶

EPILOGUE

³²⁹⁴ Babylonian Talmud: Megilah 3a

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Megilah.pdf>

³²⁹⁵ מסע משולם מוולטרה 1481 עמוד 73 ירושלים

<https://beta.hebrewbooks.org/reader/reader.aspx?sfid=36831#p=70&fitMode=fitwidth&hlts=&ocr=%u05D7%u05D2%u05D9>

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מסעות ארץ ישראל מסעות ר' משה ירושלמי עמוד 448

מסעות בנימין בן אליהו הקראי מקרים עמוד 471

מסעות בנימין השני בארץ-ישראל עמוד 583

<https://hebrewbooks.org/36832>

³²⁹⁶ סדר עולם זוטא פרק ז א

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Seder_Olam_Zutta.8?lang=en

Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 11a

http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_11.html

Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 48b

http://www.halakhah.com/sotah/sotah_48.html

Part 22
The End

CHAPTER 78
THE IDEAL WIFE
The Book of Proverbs

A worried mother instructs her son in the virtues to look for in an ideal wife. Her advice includes material from Proverbs, Chapters 1-9 and 31.

A WORRIED MOTHER

Every mother worries about her children. In my case, it was my son who caused me the most concern for, in his youth, he consorted with non-Jewish women and whores.

I discovered this purely by accident. One evening, I happened to look out of the window to see my foolish son cross the street and make his way in the direction of the house of the neighborhood whore. Although it was already dark, the light of the moon enabled me to see her coming to meet him, half-naked as usual, full of herself and completely shameless. She was rarely at home, preferring to spend her time on street corners or in the city square - anywhere where she might pick up a customer.³²⁹⁷ I saw how she pulled him to her and kissed him fully on the lips.

I could well imagine the conversation taking place between them. The whore was no doubt saying, "Today I offered up a sacrifice to my god so there's plenty of good food at home. I thought to myself, 'Why should I eat all alone? I'll find someone to share it with, someone who'll appreciate all I have to offer.' And who should I meet but you. Come home with me. Clean sheets are on my bed and perfume scents my room, so let's spend the night making love. My husband is away on a journey and won't be back for weeks, so we have plenty of time to enjoy one another."³²⁹⁸

It didn't take much, I'm sure, to persuade him to follow her home, just like a lamb being led to the slaughter.³²⁹⁹

CHAPTER 78 THE IDEAL WIFE

A WORRIED MOTHER

³²⁹⁷ Proverbs 7:5-12

³²⁹⁸ Proverbs 7:13-20

³²⁹⁹ Proverbs 7:21-23

How many times have I warned him to avoid such women ³³⁰⁰ and not be taken in by their smooth words or their good looks! For a man can be reduced to penury by consorting with such. He, who does so, is playing with fire. ³³⁰¹ Such women might seem attractive at first, but eventually they will cause a man's downfall. ³³⁰² Heaven forbid my son should marry such a one and his children, my grandchildren, grow up worshipping idols! ³³⁰³ In the end he'll look back, realize his folly and ask himself why he hadn't listened to me. ³³⁰⁴

My son's immoral behavior I attributed to his youth, hoping he would settle down after he was married. When it came to choosing a wife, this is what I told him: "You're my son, the son for whom I prayed, the son I carried in my womb. Therefore, take my advice. ³³⁰⁵ Content yourself with one wife, not a whole harem, so that you don't spend all your energy on lovemaking. ³³⁰⁶

"Beware of a complaining wife or an argumentative one. It's better to live in a garret or in the back of nowhere, than have such a wife. ³³⁰⁷ A poor home, in which there is peace and quiet, is preferable to a rich one, in which there is constant strife. ³³⁰⁸

³³⁰⁰ Proverbs 2:16-19
Proverbs 7:24-27

³³⁰¹ Proverbs 6:24-35

³³⁰² Proverbs 5:3-6

³³⁰³ Proverbs 5:7-10

³³⁰⁴ Proverbs 5:11-14

³³⁰⁵ Proverbs 31:2

³³⁰⁶ Proverbs 31:3

³³⁰⁷ Proverbs 19:13-14
Proverbs 21:9,19

³³⁰⁸ Proverbs 15:17
Proverbs 17:1

“A good woman is hard to find, so rare she’s priceless³³⁰⁹
“Beneficial to her husband all the days of her life,³³¹⁰
“Charitable towards those in need,³³¹¹
“Dexterous at sewing beautiful garments,³³¹²
“Enterprising as any merchant,³³¹³
“Fearless of what tomorrow may bring,³³¹⁴
“God-fearing,³³¹⁵
“Hardworking,³³¹⁶
“Industrious,³³¹⁷
“Judicious in her business decisions,³³¹⁸
“Knowledgeable on all manner of subjects,³³¹⁹
“Lucky is he who finds such a treasure, for she is fully³³²⁰
“Meritorious of her family’s praise.³³²¹

³³⁰⁹ Proverbs 31:11

³³¹⁰ Proverbs 31:12

³³¹¹ Proverbs 31:20

³³¹² Proverbs 31:22

³³¹³ Proverbs 31:14

³³¹⁴ Proverbs 31:25

³³¹⁵ Proverbs 31:30

³³¹⁶ Proverbs 31:15

³³¹⁷ Proverbs 31:13

³³¹⁸ Proverbs 31:16

³³¹⁹ Proverbs 31:26

³³²⁰ Proverbs 31:23

³³²¹ Proverbs 31:28

“Nimble at spinning, she is praised as ³³²²
 “Outstanding by her husband. ³³²³
 “Prudently she prepares for cold weather well in advance.
 Her family need have no fear of being cold. ³³²⁴
 “Quick at business, yet she doesn’t neglect her ³³²⁵
 “Responsibilities to her family. ³³²⁶
 “Shrewd at making a profit, yet so ³³²⁷
 “Trustworthy that her husband can rely on her to support them. ³³²⁸
 “Unsurpassed is such a woman, if given the chance to prove herself with only
 the ³³²⁹
 “Vigor of her own two hands.” ³³³⁰

My son did indeed marry a woman after my own heart though, after the initial attraction had worn off, he went back to chasing after married women and frequenting whores. I begged him to remain faithful to his wife, a lovely girl. What need did he have to run after other women, when he had such a wife?

³³²² Proverbs 31:19

³³²³ Proverbs 31:29

³³²⁴ Proverbs 31:21

³³²⁵ Proverbs 31:24

³³²⁶ Proverbs 31:27

³³²⁷ Proverbs 31:18

³³²⁸ Proverbs 31:11

³³²⁹ Proverbs 31:31

³³³⁰ Proverbs 31:17

CHAPTER 79
LADY WISDOM AND MISTRESS FOLLY

The Book of Proverbs

The Book of Job

In this chapter, wisdom and folly are personified as two women, one who offers her guests a long life and another who cuts it short.

In existence before the creation, aiding Yahweh in His work, Wisdom was eventually given to the Israelites in the form of the Law. Enchanting King Solomon with her beauty, she has been sought, ever since, by those who would make her their own.

The texts on which this chapter is based are Proverbs Chapters 1-9 and Job Chapter 28, plus the *Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Shabbath, Folio 89a).

LADY WISDOM

WHERE DO I COME FROM?

Yahweh created me before He created the world, before there were deep seas or gushing springs, before there were high mountains or undulating hills, before there was land, fields, earth or dust. I was present when Yahweh created the heavens and separated the skies above from the seas below, establishing foundations for the land and boundaries to the sea. Constantly at His side, my laughing filled Yahweh with delight. The whole world was my playground and His creation the source of all my joy.³³³¹

WHO AM I?

When Yahweh defined the nature of everything he created, then did He appraise how much I was worth. After putting it to the test, he decreed that I am the fear of Him and the hatred of evil.³³³²

CHAPTER 79 LADY WISDOM AND MISTRESS FOLLY

LADY WISDOM

³³³¹ Proverbs 8:22-31

³³³² Job 28:25-28 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16430/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#t=primary

WHERE CAN I BE FOUND?

No-one living knows where I dwell, for I cannot be found in the land of the living.
Nor can I be found in the depths of the sea.³³³³ Death and destruction have been
unable to find me, so where can I be found?³³³⁴

Only Yahweh knows where to find me and where I dwell, for only Yahweh can see to
the ends of the earth and all that exists under the sun.³³³⁵

TO WHOM DO I BELONG?

In the beginning no-one knew where to find me - until I was given to Moses.
Satan asked Yahweh, "Where is the Law?"
Answered Yahweh, "I gave it to the earth."
Satan asked the earth, "Where is the Law?"
Answered the earth, "Only Yahweh knows."
Satan asked the sea, "Where is the Law?"
Answered the sea, "Not with me."
Said Satan to Yahweh, "I cannot find it."
Said Yahweh, "Ask Moses."
Satan asked Moses, "Where is the Law?"
Answered Moses, "Would Yahweh give the Law to such as me?"
Said Yahweh to Moses, "Are you now a liar?"
Answered Moses, "Surely, You did not mean me to keep it for myself?
I shared it with others!"
Said Yahweh,
"Because of your humility it shall be known as the Law of Moses."³³³⁶

³³³³ Job 28:12-14 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16430/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#It=primary

³³³⁴ Job 28:22 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16430/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#It=primary

³³³⁵ Job 28:24 Rashi Commentary

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16430/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-28.htm#It=primary

³³³⁶ Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath 89a

http://www.halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_89.html

LADY WISDOM

My house is built on seven pillars and can survive all weathers. Every day I prepare a feast and invite anyone who wants to eat. My feast consists not of food and drink but of good advice. ³³³⁷

MISTRESS FOLLY

My house can be found at a crossroads on the crest of a hill. Built on shaky foundations, at any moment it could collapse. ³³³⁸ People accuse me of being a public nuisance, simple-minded and ignorant because I pester them all the time. ³³³⁹

LADY WISDOM

³³³⁷ Proverbs 9:1-5

MISTRESS FOLLY

³³³⁸ Proverbs 14:1

³³³⁹ Proverbs 9:13

LADY WISDOM

"Listen well to my words. Many come to learn from me - kings, rulers, princes and nobles. I give them good advice, sound judgment, understanding and power. With my help they reign wisely, legislate justly and govern fairly. ³³⁴⁰

Goodness, justice, prudence, knowledge and discretion - these you should pursue. ³³⁴¹
Pride, arrogance, wicked behavior and perverse speech - these you should avoid. ³³⁴²

"Don't reprove those who scoff.
They will simply insult you.
"Don't rebuke the wicked,
for they will contaminate you with their wickedness.
"Don't reprove those who mock you,
lest they hate you too.
"Reprove only the man of understanding,
and he will love you.
"Teach only the wise,
and they will become wiser.
"Teach only the righteous,
and they will increase in understanding. ³³⁴³

MISTRESS FOLLY

All day long, I sit at the entrance to my house, importuning strangers on their way home. As they pass, I grab their arms and call out,
"Why don't you stop a while?
Go on. You know you want to.
Haven't you heard the saying:
'Forbidden fruit is sweetest?'"

Those who hearken to my words soon regret it. Poor fools! Little do they realize that my house is filled with the ghosts of previous guests, who now lie in their graves. ³³⁴⁴

LADY WISDOM

³³⁴⁰ Proverbs 8:14-16

³³⁴¹ Proverbs 8:14

³³⁴² Proverbs 8:13

³³⁴³ Proverbs 9:6-9

MISTRESS FOLLY

³³⁴⁴ Proverbs 9:14-18

LADY WISDOM

Why waste your strength on other women, when you have a perfectly good one at home? Why be infatuated with the wife of another? Why have affairs with strangers? May your wife satisfy you as long as you live. May your love for her last all life long.
³³⁴⁵

Only a fool commits adultery. When it leads to his downfall, as it surely must, he has only himself to blame. His fleeting pleasure will result only in blows and everlasting shame, for a cuckolded husband will be determined to take his revenge. No amount of money will placate him. ³³⁴⁶

Therefore, treat me, Wisdom, as your sister, and Understanding as a close relative. ³³⁴⁷ Both of us will keep you safe from loose and adulterous women, who would seduce you with their words. ³³⁴⁸

MISTRESS FOLLY

I broke my marriage vows long ago, when I left my husband for another man. Ever since then, I have used seductive words to tempt men into committing adultery. Entering my house is the first step leading down the slippery slope to death. He who does so is doomed, never to return. ³³⁴⁹

Parents warn their sons about me, telling them to beware of my smooth words, good looks and painted eyelids. Dealings with prostitutes and affairs with married women can bring a man to the edge of ruin. He who commits adultery with me is simply playing with fire. ³³⁵⁰

They say that, although my lips drip honey and my speech is smoother than oil, in the end my kisses taste as bitter as gall. They blame me for leading my lovers down the path straight to their graves, and tell their sons to keep well away from my door. ³³⁵¹

LADY WISDOM

³³⁴⁵ Proverbs 5:15-20

³³⁴⁶ Proverbs 6:32-35

³³⁴⁷ Proverbs 7:4

³³⁴⁸ Proverbs 2:16

MISTRESS FOLLY

³³⁴⁹ Proverbs 2:16-19

³³⁵⁰ Proverbs 6:23-29

³³⁵¹ Proverbs 5:1-9

LADY WISDOM

I shout out aloud on the open roads and raise my voice in the public squares. I call out in the noisy streets and make speeches at the city gates. ³³⁵²

"O how long will the ignorant love their ignorance,
the mockers love to mock, the foolish love their foolish ways? "
"Those who ignore my advice will find themselves alone.
"Those who follow my advice will be safe from harm.
"Those who are loyal to me, those I will protect.
"Those who love me, those I will keep safe.
"Those who search me out, those I will raise high.
"Those who embrace me, those I will honor.
"By whoever seeks me, by him will I be found.
"Whoever finds me, will be rewarded with honor, wealth and prosperity.
"Whoever finds me, finds life and Yahweh's favor.
"Whoever fails to find me, does himself great harm.
"Those who hate me, invite their own deaths." ³³⁵³

LADY WISDOM

³³⁵² Proverbs 1:20-21

³³⁵³ Proverbs 1:20-33

CHAPTER 80 THE LAST ACT

In the last chapter, Eve, Plonit and Lilith, Adam's three wives, conclude their stories. Eve's account is taken from an apocryphal work entitled *The Apocalypse of Moses*, Plonit's from the *Great Commentary on Genesis* and Lilith's from the major Kabbalist text, the *Zohar*.

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

The rest of my story is soon told.

In old age ³³⁵⁴ Adam began to suffer from the seventy-four ailments with which Father had cursed him. Adam begged Seth and me to ask Father for some oil from the Tree of Life, to alleviate his pain. ³³⁵⁵

So Seth and I set out for the garden. When we arrived, we were told that it was no use asking for the oil for, in three days, Adam would be dead and the oil would be needed for his resurrection. With no choice, we returned empty-handed. ³³⁵⁶

Three days later, Adam died. When his corpse could not be found, I was frantic with worry. Had my husband been buried without me? Just as we had been born together and had committed our crime together, so I wanted us to be buried together. ³³⁵⁷

Seth assured me that Adam's corpse was safe in Father's hands. He was looking after it until such time that the rib, taken from Adam to make me, was returned, for Adam would need it when he was resurrected. ³³⁵⁸

Horrified to hear that I was holding up the burial arrangements, I prayed to Father to take my soul into His keeping, return the rib to its rightful place and bury me next to Adam. ³³⁵⁹

CHAPTER 80 THE LAST ACT

EVE, ADAM'S THIRD WIFE

³³⁵⁴ Book of the Bee Chapter 18

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bb/bb18.htm>

³³⁵⁵ Apocalypse Mosis 8-10

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

³³⁵⁶ Apocalypse Mosis 13

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

³³⁵⁷ Apocalypse Mosis 42

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

³³⁵⁸ Apocalypse Mosis 41-42

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

³³⁵⁹ Apocalypse Mosis 42

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/apcmose.htm>

I must admit that it did cross my mind, what would happen when we were resurrected? Lacking the rib that had been used to create me, did this mean that I would no longer have a body in which to be resurrected?

PLONIT, ADAM'S SECOND WIFE

No doubt you are wondering what became of me.

It's true that I didn't remain alive for long, unlike my two sisters, Lilith and Eve. However, I lived long enough to cause just as much havoc! Lilith tempted men into committing adultery. Eve tempted Adam into eating the forbidden fruit. What did I do? The fact is, I did nothing - except to be born very beautiful.

The very beauty that Adam had spurned proved to be the undoing of his two sons, Cain and Abel. In the fight over which of them would possess me, Cain committed the first murder by killing his brother, Abel. In consequence Father turned me back into dust so that my beauty could do no more harm.³³⁶⁰

Some think that I was lucky to have my life curtailed so soon. After all, I was free of the curse that Father had laid upon Eve for tasting the forbidden fruit. I did not suffer the pain and misery that are variously every woman's lot – menstruation, pregnancy, miscarriages, and bearing children. only to bury them.³³⁶¹

On the other hand, I never knew the bliss of the love of a man, the joy of children or the delight of grandchildren.

PLONIT, ADAM'S SECOND WIFE

³³⁶⁰ Great Commentary on Genesis 22:7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

³³⁶¹ Genesis 3:16 Rashi Commentary

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8167/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true

Great Commentary on Genesis 20:6-7

https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp_djvu.txt

Babylonian Talmud: Eiruvim 100b

<http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvim.pdf>

Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer 14

https://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuft/pirkderabbieli00frieuft_djvu.txt

MOTHER LILITH, ADAM'S FIRST WIFE

I look back over my long life with a great deal of satisfaction.

Who else can claim to be the first female in the world, Adam's first wife, Samael's demon queen and, finally, Yahweh's consort? With the Matronit, Mother of the Jews, still in exile, I continue to act as Father's consort, carrying out His orders to punish men for their promiscuity and children for their fathers' sins.

Every night, dressed like a whore, I stand on a street corner awaiting my victim. The moment any fool approaches, I grab hold of him, kiss him on the lips and ply him with enough wine to dull his senses. Only then do I lead him to my room, lie down on my bed and beckon him to join me on sheets of the finest linen. How can any man resist me, with my long, red hair, my pink and white face, my red lips slightly parted and my body barely concealed by a transparent red robe?

I offer him more wine until he is fully aroused and I have him at my mercy. Once we have finished, I leave him snoring in my bed and report to those above what he has done. Having obtained permission to punish him, I return to bed and wait for him to awake.

When he finally opens his eyes and seeks me again, instead of the beautiful, seductive woman of the previous evening, he sees a terrifying figure enveloped in flames. As he lies transfixed by my horrific stare, I plunge my poison-tipped sword into his chest and send him off to Hell.³³⁶²

My second role - punishing children for the sins of their fathers - is no less demanding. It, too, has to be performed under cover of darkness. Every night I am required to present myself at heaven's gates, to receive my orders from the flaming sword that bars its entrance. One edge of the sword decrees 'innocent', the other 'guilty'. When the 'guilty' edge is pointed towards me, I set off to punish the child by infecting it with one of the many dreadful diseases I have at my disposal.³³⁶³

MOTHER LILITH, ADAM'S FIRST WIFE

³³⁶² זוהר לעם פרשת ויצא חלק א' ס"מ ואשת זנונים 23-27

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/93663?heb/content/view/full/93663&main>

The Zohar I 148a-148b, Sitrei Torah Jewish Christian Literature

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/lilith.html>

The Zohar I 148a-148b, Sitre Torah The Hebrew Goddess Chapter 7

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

³³⁶³ זוהר פרשת בראשית א חלק ב יהי מארת 101

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/101968?heb/content/view/full/101968&main>

The Zohar 1:19b Jewish and Christian Literature

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/lilith.html>

To protect their children, parents resort to all sorts of superstitions. Some are designed to protect their offspring during childbirth, others after childbirth and yet others during infancy. They are particularly worried if a child smiles in his sleep or laughs when he is alone, because this is a sign that I am playing with him. In such cases, parents tap their children on the nose and chant, "Go away whoever you are! You don't belong here!"³³⁶⁴

The only way to ensure that a child is completely safe from my attentions is before conception. First, the husband has to remove all impious thoughts from his mind, wrap himself up in a sheet and say:

"Flee, flee, neither come nor go!
"She does not belong to you and your kind.
"Return, return to where the sea is stormy and the waves call you.
"I cling to the Holy One.
"I am wrapped in the sanctity of the King."

Then the husband has to sprinkle clean water round his bed, and cover his head and that of his wife with a sheet for at least an hour. Only then can they have intercourse - if they still feel the urge!³³⁶⁵

By now, you must be wondering why I am still around, busy as ever, seducing men and killing their children. The answer is that my services are still needed. However, I can only continue to carry out my duties for as long as Father permits. Eventually He will cast me off and take back into his bed the Matronit, the Mother of the Jews. Till then, I will continue to perform my duties with all the zeal I can muster, strengthened by the knowledge that I am carrying out Father's will.

³³⁶⁴ Emeq haMelekh 84b, 84c, 84d Jewish Christian Literature

<http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/lilith.html>

מראה הילדים

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=40456&st=&pgnum=1&hilite>

Mar'e Hayeladim The Hebrew Goddess Chapter 7

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

³³⁶⁵ הזוהר פרשת ויקרא לילית שהייתה נמצאת בתחילה אצל אדם 321 שכא

<http://www.kab.co.il/heb/content/view/frame/93280?/heb/content/view/full/93280&main>

The Zohar 3.19a Jewish Christian Literature

http://jewishchristianlit.com/Topics/Lilith/seductress.html#EMEQ_19

The Zohar 3.19a The Hebrew Goddess Chapter 7

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=VfAX_wkMM4IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hebrew+goddess&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false