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Women of the Old Testament

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Good movies and plays have supporting actors and actresses as well as leading characters. Some of the most significant scenes even feature bit actors in cameo roles. The Bible narrative is no exception.

Scriptures are, in large measure, the story of the human race. The history of God's Old Testament people is told in simple and yet graphic language. The characters that grace its pages shine forth with their blemishes as well as their often heroic deeds. In this issue of THE HERALD we present several of these minor roles in an attempt to better understand the people and the times in which they lived.

One of the more dramatic stories in the book of Genesis deals with the marriage of Jacob to the two sisters, Leah and Rachel. Our opening article, *Leah, the Firstborn*, looks at the jealousies involved and how all was overruled by the Lord. Although Jacob clearly loved Rachel and had no interest in Leah, yet it was Leah who was buried in the field of Machpelah with her husband, not Rachel.

One of the products of the marriage of Jacob and Leah was the birth of a daughter named Dinah. In a verse by verse study in Genesis 34, entitled *Tragedy at Shechem*, the asking of her hand in marriage by a man named Shechem and the resulting massacre of the men of that city is detailed. It was because of what they did at Shechem that both Levi and Simeon were severely penalized by their father Jacob in his dying blessing.

The featured characters in the third article, *Jochebed, Amram, Shiphrah, Puah*, deal with two women who truly played cameo roles. Shiphrah and Puah were the midwives who served Jochebed in the delivering of her children, Aaron, Miriam, and Moses:

Deborah is hardly a minor character. Yet the space devoted to this faithful judge in Israel and the remarkable victory she achieved over the warlords from the north under their general Sisera does not occupy many chapters in Holy Writ. Yet it is clear God uses whomever he pleases, whenever it pleases him. Deborah speaks for God, and the people accept it even though it is an exception to the general rule that prophets were male.

Moses is again a featured player in the next drama, dealing with his wife Zipporah. The article *Patient in Trials* looks at three specific experiences in the life of this remarkable woman. Nothing in Scripture suggests she ever murmured or complained about her trials including the jealousy of Miriam as expressed in her criticism of Moses' Wife.

Some of the women in the Old Testament played roles that were so minor that even their names have been forgotten. Yet the roles they played were often vital to the carrying forth of the Bible narrative. The article *A Woman Not Remembered* deals with just such a faithful Israelite from the northern city of Abel Bethmaacah.

The prophetess Huldah was a contemporary with the better known prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah. Yet it was to her that good king Josiah was sent to receive a message from the Lord. Her message of judgment mixed with an exemption for the king on account of his faithfulness is recorded in the article, *A Hard Message for a Good King*.

The final article deals with another female whose role was not minor at all. In fact her story records one of the most remarkable deliverances of Israel in all history. *Esther and Our Times* shows prophetic parallels between that biblical account and events we have seen in our own twentieth century.

A study of these truly remarkable women should give us faith and courage to carry out whatever work the Lord has for us, no matter how small. It takes the bit parts to bring out the rich fabric of the Bible and its meaning to our lives. It does not matter if the part we play in the plan of God is great or small, the important thing is that we perform it well. Even the smallest acts, if performed with the proper intent, can be to the eternal glory of our heavenly Father.

Two Jealous Wives

LEAH

*"And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favored."
Genesis 29:16,17*

Leah was the firstborn daughter of Laban. The meaning of her name is "weary" and she is sometimes described as tender-eyed, meaning weak or dull eyed. This scriptural description of Leah indicates that she was "less beautiful" than her younger sister Rachel. A natural tendency for the sisters to compare and compete with each other seemed unavoidable.

Jacob first entered Leah's life when he arrived in Haran in search of his mother's brother Laban. Jacob showed no interest in Leah but immediately focused on her younger and more beautiful sister Rachel. Leah watched for seven years as Jacob willingly served Laban to earn Rachel's hand in marriage. Undoubtedly the attraction between Jacob and Rachel was obvious and a constant reminder to Leah that she could not compare to Rachel. Leah may have secretly hoped that Jacob would see her differently over time and recognize that she was the firstborn, worthy of higher regard. But when the seven year period was over, Jacob's determination to have Rachel as his wife had not waned.

The Deception

As the wedding feast was planned, Laban had a scheme that would successfully marry Jacob to Leah rather than Rachel. Laban probably intended to permit Rachel also to become Jacob's wife, but Leah, being the older daughter, must marry first according to tradition. Laban could not have fulfilled his scheme unless both daughters were cooperative in their roles. Loyalty to their father and their desire to obey would have weighed heavily on the conscience of both Leah and Rachel, and ultimately they cooperated with Laban. His plan was to trick Jacob into believing he was marrying Rachel. As the festivities served as a distraction, Leah was heavily veiled and took Rachel's place on the wedding night.

"And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her" (Genesis 29:23).

The deception was revealed to Jacob the next morning when he discovered Leah in place of Rachel. "In the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?" (Genesis 29:25). If Leah had any hope of gaining Jacob's affection, it was certainly lost when Jacob displayed obvious disappointment and an unrelenting desire for Rachel. The scriptures do not indicate that Jacob was aware of Leah's feelings, and the consequences of the episode must have been very painful for her. However, Jacob focused on Laban and was pitifully disappointed to realize that his new father-in-law had

deliberately taken advantage of him. The seeds of mistrust were planted deeply after this experience.

No possible remedies would change the events of the wedding night and Laban insisted on the tradition of the times, replying, "It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn" (Genesis 29:26). Jacob had served Laban for seven years and this was apparently the first time he had been informed of such a tradition! However, after Jacob's confrontation and protest, Laban agreed that Jacob could have Rachel also for an additional seven years of service. Unlike the seven years for Leah, Rachel became Jacob's wife at the beginning of the next seven years. As Jacob fulfilled his promise of service to Laban, Leah was constantly reminded that Jacob had not voluntarily chosen her as his wife and Jacob's devotions and affections were on Rachel.

Leah and Jacob were both victims of the law of the firstborn. That Leah was honored as the firstborn must have reminded Jacob of the very reason he was forced to escape from his home. He had deliberately tricked Isaac to gain the

blessing of the firstborn. Now Jacob's predicament echoed the same lesson—the right of the firstborn! As for Leah, she must have questioned the benefits of being a firstborn, for though her rights had been fulfilled in a twisted way, the love of her husband could not be bought.

In an article in Zion's Watch Tower titled "Rachel a Type of Zion," Pastor Russell observes some spiritual applications to Rachel and Leah: "Rachel seems to be a type of the Gospel church in many particulars; and her sister Leah would correspondingly represent fleshly Israel. Jacob served seven years for each of these, which might be understood as typifying the equality of the two ages Jewish and Gospel—which we have already found to be of equal measure . . . as Rachel was the one chiefly loved and first promised, so the Gospel covenant, the most desirable, was made before 'the Law' covenant (Galatians 3:8,17) . . . though the latter was first recognized, and the children of the flesh born first (Romans 9:8; 1 Corinthians 10:18)." (R184) As God's favor was withdrawn from Israel and given to the Gentiles, so Jacob's affections were directed primarily to Rachel.

Leah Loved Less

"And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated [or loved less], he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren" (Genesis 29:31).

Jacob neglected Leah, but in spite of not being able to win Jacob's favor, Leah was blessed with children. In fact, Leah probably conceived almost immediately after the marriage. Reuben was born, followed by Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon. Six sons and also a daughter, Dinah, were born within the first seven years of Leah's marriage. As Leah named her sons, she acknowledged God's hand and overruling in the privilege of bearing children for Jacob. The names Leah assigned to her sons reflected

her personal feelings, and her heartfelt void of Jacob's love. Leah's endless desire to win Jacob's affections could not be concealed.

When her first son Rueben (meaning behold a son) was born, Leah said: "Surely the LORD hath looked unto my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me" (Genesis 29:32).

With the birth of her second son Simeon (meaning hearing), Leah said: "Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon" (Genesis 29:33).

When Leah's third son Levi (meaning joining) was born, Leah said: "Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi" (Genesis 29:34).

When Leah had conceived and her fourth son Judah (meaning praise) was born, Leah said: "Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah" (Genesis 29:35).

Indeed, the blessing of her fourth son, Judah, revealed Leah's spiritual growth and her heart expression was praise to God. Leah had taken a large step in overcoming her self focus and she gave God the glory. Judah's name in Hebrew means "praise." Unknowingly, Leah had been blessed with the privilege of mothering the lineage from which the savior of the world, Jesus Christ, would come.

After the birth of four sons, the scriptures inform us that Leah temporarily stopped bearing. During the time Leah had produced four sons, Rachel produced none, which increased the rivalry between the two sisters. "When Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister" (Genesis 30:1). Jealousy also rose within Leah as she continued to observe her husband's preference for Rachel.

Desperation

The mutual elements jealousy, competition and envy continued. Since Rachel had not conceived and was desperate to bless her husband with a son, she offered her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob, which resulted in the birth of two sons, Dan and Naphtali. Rachel's heart sentiments were evident when she identified Leah, her sister, as her reason for wanting to succeed: "And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali (meaning wrestling)" (Genesis 30:8).

Even though Leah had mothered four sons already, the temptation to equal the efforts of her sister compelled her to offer her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob, and Gad was conceived. Zilpah also mothered a second son, and Leah named him Asher (meaning happy). But the attempt to follow Rachel's example and use her handmaid to gain Jacob's favor was to no avail. Perhaps this represents that God's favor would not return to Israel until the time was right.

Thus far Jacob had been blessed with eight sons, four mothered by Leah, two by Bilhah, and two by Zilpah. Rachel remained barren. Though the names carefully assigned each child by Leah and Rachel reflected their feelings of the moment, the fact that the meanings of the names are expressly referred to in the scriptures probably is an indication that there is a deeper meaning pertaining to God's plan.

The Mandrakes

The rivalry between the two sisters continued and was further demonstrated in the incident regarding the mandrakes. Reuben, a young boy desiring to please his mother, brought mandrakes to Leah. Mandrakes are an apple-like fruit, mentioned in the Old Testament only here (Genesis 30:14-16) and in Songs of Solomon 7:13, where they are associated with love. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary says on the latter scripture: "Hebrew, *audaim*, from a root meaning 'to love'; love-apples, supposed to exhilarate the spirits and excite love." Rachel wished to have the mandrakes, perhaps supposing they would help her produce a son for Jacob.

Leah was indignant with the request. "Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also?" (Genesis 30:15). But Rachel knew Leah's vulnerability, her desire to win Jacob's affection, and suggested a bargain. Rachel offered Leah access to Jacob for the evening, in exchange for the mandrakes. And Leah knew Rachel's vulnerability, her desire to conceive, both of them supposing the mandrakes would be helpful. So the trade satisfied both parties.

The episode reminds us a little of the bargain between Jacob and Esau, Jacob the younger valuing the promise attached to the birthright, to be a progenitor of the seed of blessing, just as Rachel the younger bargained for the items she considered helpful in producing seed. Indeed, a few verses later we read "God remembered Rachel . . . and she . . . bare a son" (Genesis 30:22-24). The son was Joseph, who pictured Christ, the seed of blessing.

Leah ("dull eyed") yielded the mandrakes to Rachel, just as Israel ("blinded") yielded to others the chief blessing of the Abrahamic promise. But as there was a residual blessing for Esau, an earthly blessing, so Leah secured something of value also. That evening she conceived her fifth son Issachar, and the subsequent verse says "Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth [and last] son" (Genesis 30:19). Leah's six sons, as Keturah's six sons, represent an earthly fruitage. But Rachel, like Sarah, after years of waiting, produced one who typified the spiritual seed, Christ.

After Jacob had served Laban for fourteen years and an additional six years to establish his own herds, Jacob yearned to return home. He had left his brother Esau in a state of anger and he wondered whether Esau would receive him in a brotherly fashion. Possibly the old wounds would be opened and lead to a dangerous confrontation. Jacob took no chances, and was particularly deliberate to protect Rachel. The handmaids and servants were placed first to meet any opposition or danger, next Leah and her sons, and finally Rachel and her son in the rear, in the safest position.

Growing in Faith

The Scriptures express Leah's quickness to freely acknowledge God in her experiences and imply that she was faithful in prayer. She learned to accept and trust the overruling of God. Her faith would have given her strength when she lost her sister Rachel who died while giving birth. The irony of Rachel's death must have been confusing for Leah and certainly a time to grow spiritually closer to God. Bearing children to Jacob was the object of Rachel's desires and at the same time it was the cause of her death. Leah probably gave this set of circumstances prayerful consideration.

Though Leah no longer had to compete for her husband's attention, she undoubtedly missed her sister. She was faithful to Jacob for over fifty years after Rachel died. In the end, Leah and Jacob were buried in the land of Canaan in the family cave in the field of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, were buried (Genesis 49:30,31).

God favored Leah with a prominent role in the history of his people, as the mother of six of the sons of Israel, and her life experiences became part of the tapestry of types and shadows of God's plan. Though her role may be considered minor in comparison to other Bible characters, her name will be marked in the pages of eternity.

Dinah

Tragedy at Shechem

Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.—Genesis 49:5-7

Verse by verse study in Genesis 34

Because Jewish genealogies followed the male line of descent, the female children of a family were often not recorded. The mention of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, is an exception to this rule and does not imply that Jacob did not have other daughters by either of his wives or their handmaids.

The narrative itself is a rather unseemly one. It is a tale of intrigue and violence that does no credit to the house of Jacob. Our theme text may be suggestive of the thought that the account was inserted to explain the omission of land inheritance to the tribes of Simeon and Levi.

Illegitimate Love—Verses 1 through 4

And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.

Leah, the mother of Dinah, gave birth to her after producing her sixth son, Zebulun (Genesis 30:20,21). She was probably between 13 and 16 at the time of this incident. Jacob and his family had been living in the area of Shechem for some eleven years by this time. Although the command to be separate from the nations around them was not given until the days of Moses (1 Kings 8:53), nevertheless the command of circumcision (Genesis 17:11) implied this restriction.

The Hivites were of Canaanite descent (Genesis 10:17), and therefore one of the nations which were to be driven from the land. Though they were not listed among the ten tribes to be dispossessed by Israel in Genesis 15:19-21, the fact that they were from Canaan implied their inclusion in this list. In any case, they are mentioned in the list of tribes to be conquered west of the Jordan river (Joshua 3:10).

It should be noted that Shechem did not seek out Dinah. She went, of her own volition, from the family compound out to view "the daughters of the land." Josephus writes,

"Now as the Shechemites were keeping a festival Dinah, who was the only daughter of Jacob, went into the city to see the finery of the women of that country" (Ant., 1, 21, 1). If true, the implication is that Dinah wanted to observe, and probably copy, the custom of her neighbors. This is a lesson for all true followers of God. Any attempt to observe and perhaps copy the customs of the land leads the true Christian into danger. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). Samuel Butler has phrased it well, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, but the unreasonable man tries to adapt the world to him—therefore all progress depends upon the unreasonable man."

Although Shechem greatly erred in his sexual advances on Dinah, the narrative indicates that he developed a true affection for her. He shows honorable intentions in desiring to form a true marriage with her. God's law forbidding marriages with Gentiles had not yet been given and, as far as we know, her twelve brothers married Gentile wives as well. The Hebrew verb translated "clave" is the same used in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." It describes that true relationship which a husband and wife should properly feel for each other, desiring to be united to each other spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Reactions—Verses 5 through 7

And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come. And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

There is a marked contrast between Jacob's reaction and that of his sons. While their grief found vent in anger, Jacob held his peace. Maturity has the patience to consider a matter well before rashly planning revenge in a fit of anger.

The mention of "the sons of Jacob" without singling out Simeon and Levi suggests that all of the sons, or at least the majority of them, were involved with the plot for vengeance. In a similar vein, we find all of the brothers plotting against Joseph, though there were voices, such as Reuben's, which argued for restraint. Joseph's later choice of Simeon (Genesis 42:24) to be the one held prisoner suggests that he might have been the ringleader in the plot to kill Joseph (Genesis 37:20).

An interesting sidelight is that verse 7 is the first biblical reference to Israel as the name of a tribe, rather than just a personal name for Jacob. It indicates that it was only a few years after Jacob was renamed Israel (Genesis 32:28) that the newly-acquired name was taken as the tribal title. This also indicates that the brothers did not take the rape of Dinah as a personal sin against her, but one against the entire tribe.

The Marriage Proposal—Verses 8 to 12

And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.

Following the custom of that time, Hamor, the father of Shechem, sought to arrange the marriage. However, breaking with custom, Hamor makes the proposition to Dinah's brothers instead of to Jacob, her father. This is in marked contrast with verse six where he confesses the transgression of his son directly to Jacob. It was this decision that led to the tragedy which would follow. Anger, even righteous indignation, forms a poor base for rational decisions to reconcile crises.

Hamor's proposition contained five enticements: 1) intermingling of the two tribes through marital alliances; 2) a treaty of peaceful co-existence; 3) mutual trade agreements; 4) rights of land possession in his territory; and 5) a dowry of the amount to be set by Dinah's family.

Peaceful co-existence was already a reality and had been for many years. The city of Shechem was Abraham's first dwelling place in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). Jacob had probably lived here for nearly eleven years before the incident with Dinah. There is no indication of animosity between the two clans. Rights of ownership were also a reality. Jacob had already purchased a plot of ground from Hamor for his homestead and erected an altar dedicated to "El-elohe-israel," meaning The Lord, the God of Israel (Genesis 33:19,20). There is no conflict between this text and that in Acts 7:16 which states that it was Abraham who made the purchase. In that New Testament text, the name Abraham is used, as is that of Hamor, in an idiomatic sense, meaning the clan or tribe, of Abraham and Hamor (United Bible Societies Handbook on Acts 7:16). The recognition of the validity of this purchase is attested by the fact that it is uncontested hundreds of years later when the bones of Joseph are laid to rest in a tomb at this site (Joshua 24:32).

Mutual trade agreements were a rich incentive. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has this to say about the location of the city of Shechem: "It lay in the pass which cuts through Mts. Ephraim, Ebal and Gerizim, guarding it on the North and South respectively. Along this line runs the great road which from time immemorial has formed the easiest and the quickest means of communication between the East of the Jordan and the sea. It must have been a place of strength from antiquity." It must have therefore been an important stop for the great trade caravans between the Orient and both the Mediterranean seaports and prosperous Egypt.

The Hebrew words *mohar* (Strong's 4119, dowry) and *mattah* (Strong's 4976, gift) are distinct. The gift was given to the bride while the dowry was given to the family. The

dowry may have been related to the later custom to purchase wives (Exodus 22:16,17). In any case, the offer of Hamor was without limitation and to be determined by the family. He was not bargaining for the lowest price.

A Deceitful Answer—Verses 13 through 17

And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

As a personal decision, circumcision may have been merely a hygienic process; but as a required rite, it was a token of covenant relationship with God (Genesis 17:10,11). A resident alien in Israel was circumcised and thus received the benefits of Hebrew citizenship (Exodus 12:48). Circumcision was practiced in Egypt before it became a Jewish ritual (Microsoft Toolworks Encyclopedia). "Apparently circumcision in the case of the Hebrews was prohibited during the Egyptian period—circumcision being a distinctive mark of the ruling race" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). However, in the Bible it is treated in the Hebrew sense of a covenant relationship with God. In this narrative the requirement for circumcision was a tactic of deception to place the dwellers of Shechem in a weakened physical condition and thus easier to conquer in battle.

The insistence on the outward symbol of circumcision finds an analogy in the New Testament where the Judaizers in the newly-founded Christian church insisted on circumcision as a pre-condition for acceptance of the Gentiles into their midst. As forced circumcision weakened the Shechemites, so forced circumcision spiritually weakened the faith of the Gentiles in the early church, placing outward form above true conversion and circumcision of the heart.

The threat of the brothers to remove themselves from the land if the situation was not resolved, proved to be a true threat, for in the beginning of the next chapter we see God directing the family to move from Shechem to the area of Bethel, some 19 miles to the south.

Acceptance of the Terms—Verses 18 to 23

And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honorable than all the house of his father. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us

give them our daughters. Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.

The terms are acceptable to Shechem because "he was more honorable than all the house of his father." Now the problem remained to convince his clan members to accept these terms. He summons the men to the gate, where city decisions were made, and suggests four distinct advantages to the alliance. First, there would be a pact of peace between the traders of Shechem and the herdsman of Israel; second, it would assure a profitable trade arrangement; third, it would provide a larger pool for the selection of marital mates; and, finally, he suggests that in time the trade arrangements would cause the resources of Israel to fall into the hands of the Shechemites.

While the final bait was debatable, such an offer would make it more palatable for the male residents of the city to submit to the painful rites of adult circumcision. The argument is reminiscent of the one Haman made to King Ahasuerus in order to secure permission to kill all the Jews. After listing his logical arguments, he offers the prospect of financial enrichment. "If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries" (Esther 3:9).

Few temptations are as powerful as financial ones. One of the strongest desires of mankind is the feeling of security and power which comes from the possession of great wealth. Christians face this in the temptations to involve themselves with the affairs of business more than in the affairs of God. Yet Jesus' advice was simple and to the point, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). Truly, "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10, ASV).

Treachery—Verses 24 to 29

And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city. And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

The arguments of Hamor and Shechem were persuasive. The adult males consented to circumcision. Authorities state that adult circumcision leaves one in a weakened condition for up to three months, but that the fever tends to top out on the third day. Whereas the other brothers of Dinah seemed content to live with the agreement, Simeon

and Levi took advantage of the weakened condition of the city and slew Hamor and Shechem. It should be noted that, as in the case of Joseph, Reuben, the first-born son of Leah, was not a ringleader in the crime.

After all the males were killed, the other sons of Jacob joined in the looting that followed. Even though they may have held back from the slaughter, greed compelled them to take advantage of the situation and reap the rewards of victory.

The fact that Dinah was found in the house of Shechem implies that the agreement to the pact of circumcision was considered as a formal acceptance of the marriage. Oriental custom considers a marital contract to be binding from the time of engagement, though cohabitation was to await the final marriage ceremony.

The Aftermath—Verses 30 and 31

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

Jacob recognized the deed as shame-worthy. The Canaanites, as relatives of the slain Hivites, and the Perizzites, as neighbors, might well seek revenge as well as feel justified in considering the Israelites as potential threats to their well-being. Therefore a direct result of the tragedy at Shechem was the relocating of Jacob's family to Bethel (Genesis 35:1).

The two brothers, Simeon and Levi, were unrepentant. They maintained their contention that the slaughter was for the maintenance of the family honor.

Jacob, however, never forgot the incident and he penalized these two sons in his dying blessing of his children by depriving them of an inheritance in the promised land.

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:5-7).

Jacob's dying condemnation contains an enigmatic phrase, "in their self-will they digged down a wall." Following the better manuscripts, most versions indicate that the crime was not the destruction of a wall, but the hamstringing of an ox. This results from the textual reading of the Hebrew word for ox, *showr*, (Strong's 7794) instead of the similar word for wall, *shuwr* (Strong's 7791). However, even this seems inconsistent since Genesis 34:28 states that the Israelites took the cattle to themselves and would hardly want to harm animals which would contribute to their own wealth.

Adam Clarke suggests a plausible answer: "They murdered a prince—Hamor, the father of Shechem. Instead of *showr* (Heb. 7794), which we have translated a wall, and others an ox, I read *sar* (Heb. 8269), a prince, which makes a consistent sense (see Kennicott's first Dissertation, p. 66)."

As a result, Jacob prophesies they would receive no inheritance but be scattered in Israel. The destinies of these two tribes, however, were quite diverse. Levi became a dominant tribe, fathering the priesthood of Israel, while Simeon was relegated to selected cities in the tribal inheritance of Judah (Joshua 19:1). Since both brothers were equally guilty in the slaughter, there must be a reason for their different destinies. Whereas the tribal members of Simeon did nothing to atone for the crime of their father, the tribe of Levi, in singular loyalty, stood by Moses' side when the rest of Israel bowed to the golden calf. They responded to Moses' ringing inquiry, "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Exodus 32:26-28).

It has always been a truism that God hears the repentant heart, even to the third and fourth generation. What a final lesson for each of us! If we have, in rashness, done that which is wrong, or violent, or self-willed, a full return to the Lord will bring a compensating blessing. Let us each seek to be as the descendants of Levi, not as the descendants of Simeon.

Jochebed, Amram, Shiphrah, Puah

By faith Moses . . . was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.—Hebrews 11:23, ASV

Richard Evans

The writer of Hebrews assigned a place in faith's hall of fame for the parents of Moses: Jochebed and Amram. Amram, a son of Kohath, a grandson of Levi, was of the third generation to be in Egypt. Jochebed, a daughter of Levi, a sister to Kohath, was an aunt to Amram. Though of the second generation, it is recorded that she was born in Egypt (Numbers 26:59). Undoubtedly she was a late child and near the same age as Amram. She is one of the few women whose birth is noted in the Bible.

Though later prohibited by the Law of Moses, there was nothing at the time to prevent marriage between a couple so closely related. Their union brought forth three children—first a daughter, Miriam, then a number of years later a son, Aaron (Numbers 26:59), three years after Aaron's birth their second son, Moses.

To appreciate the inclusion of Moses' parents in the faith's honor roll the circumstances of their day must be understood. It was the time near the end of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. As indicated by the words of Joshua just before his death, Israel's faith in its God at that time had all but disappeared.

"Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah."—Joshua 24:14, ASV

While in Egyptian bondage, the Hebrews, collectively, served the gods of their masters.

The prophet Ezekiel also spoke of this national apostasy: "In that day I swear unto them, to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. And I said unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am Jehovah your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt."—Ezekiel 20:6-8, ASV

The words of Joshua and Ezekiel are damning! Israel, at the time of her deliverance, was in a state of unbelief. With but few exceptions, the Hebrews had forgotten God's promise of deliverance and they were serving the gods of Egypt!

Pharaoh's Fear

Before the promised deliverance, the faith of the few who continued to hold to the promises of their God was severely tested by the raising up of a new Pharaoh—one who had an inordinate fear of the Hebrews in spite of their apostasy.

"And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply."—Exodus 1:7-10, ASV

This fear of the king of Egypt is not peculiar to that time or place. It is the same fear experienced in the United States at the beginning of World War II. The U.S. government looked at the large population of Japanese-Americans and felt it needed to do something about them. It is the same fear felt by many toward an increasing population of Spanish speaking peoples in southern and southwestern states. Pharaoh's fear was not unique and can still be seen in today's world.

"And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them households."—Exodus 1:15-21, ASV

It is not clear whether Shiphrah and Puah were Hebrew or Egyptian. It is difficult to believe Pharaoh would entrust such a mission to Hebrew women. Also, the explanation of their failure seems to be more like the words of an Egyptian than a Hebrew. If they were Egyptian, then they were the precursors of other faithful proselytes such as Rahab and Ruth, and may have been among the "mixed multitude" that joined the Hebrews in the Exodus (Exodus 12:38). But whether Egyptian or Hebrew, they "feared God" and, consequently, did not obey the king of Egypt.

The word "households" in verse 21 has the meaning of extended family with many members, as when God through Nathan told David he would make him a "house" (2 Samuel 7:11). For their faithfulness God blessed Shiphrah and Puah by prospering their families. He looked with favor upon their "households."

Edict and Response

In his fear and frustration over his failure to contain the supernatural population explosion of the Hebrews, Pharaoh issued a shocking edict: "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."—Exodus 1:22, ASV

Some attempt to restrict the scope of this edict by adding the word "Hebrew" before "son." There is, however, no manuscript evidence for such a change. Jewish tradition, following the Scripture as it is, states that all male children, Egyptian as well as Hebrew, were cast into the river. This tradition is probably correct. Pharaoh, in his fear and anxiety, decreed the death of all newborn males, Hebrew and Egyptian. He was willing to sacrifice the few for what he perceived as the greater good.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr of record, in his discourse before the Sanhedrin, gave a thought on Pharaoh's edict that is not evident in the Exodus account: "But as the time of the promise drew nigh which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. The same dealt craftily with our race, and ill-treated our fathers, that they should cast out their babes to the end they might not live."—Acts 7:17-19, ASV

It is commonly believed the decree was given by Pharaoh as king, and was carried out by force of arms as was done in Bethlehem centuries later by King Herod. Stephen's account, however, suggests a different thought. The Greek word translated "craftily" means "cunningly" or "deceptively." The word rendered "ill-treated" (*kakoo*, #2559), on the other hand, can have the meaning "to affect evilly," as "to poison the mind." In Acts 14:2 it is used in this sense to describe the action of unbelieving Jews who made the minds of some Gentiles "evil affected" against Paul and Barnabas.

At the time of the edict, and as it was for thousands of years afterwards, church and state were one. Pharaoh was high priest as well as king. The words of Stephen seem to indicate Pharaoh, as Egypt's religious leader, ordered the sacrifice of all newborn males, rather than a violent act of genocide. His justification, if one was needed, would have been the appeasement of a wrathful god. So, the edict was probably religious in nature; the Hebrews who were serving the Egyptian gods had no choice but to comply. As Stephen declared, they were deceived and cunningly used. They were "evil entreated," their minds were poisoned, and they freely "cast out their young children" themselves. This may have been a forerunner of the human sacrifices Israel was to practice later in the promised land (Ezekiel 16:20,21; Psalm 106:37,38). Stephen's record helps explain Ezekiel's strong condemnation. Israel "committed whoredoms in Egypt" (Ezekiel 23:3).

Yet there were exceptions. Shiphrah and Puah, Jochebed and Amram, feared God more than Pharaoh. Given the circumstances at that time, their faith is noteworthy. They knew of and believed in the promise made to Abraham. They knew of and believed in the promise of Israel's deliverance in the fourth generation (Genesis 15:16)—the generation of children then being born. They understood the miraculous birthrate among their people

to be a preparation for that deliverance. No doubt Jochebed and Amram were also aware of the younger son blessing that had occurred so many times before—with Abel, Isaac, Jacob, and Ephraim.

Because they knew these things and believed them, these faithful ones trusted in their God, Jehovah, the God of Abraham. They did not serve the gods of Egypt. This, no doubt, brought down upon them not only the displeasure of the Egyptians, but also the scorn and resentment of those Hebrews who had turned from Jehovah. They were probably censured and reproved by kindred and strangers alike.

Such hostile circumstances make evident the need for his parents to hide Moses. Their failure to sacrifice him would greatly anger all who had willingly cast out their own sons. The child, and probably the family, would not be safe if he was seen or heard by anyone, Egyptian or Hebrew. The apostate Hebrews would believe Moses' existence would bring down upon them not only the wrath of Pharaoh, but the wrath of the Egyptian gods as well. Their reaction would have been the same as it was 40 years later when they rejected Moses, and betrayed him to Pharaoh.

The biblical account indicates his parents hid Moses for three months (Exodus 2:2), but does not give a reason for such a period. It may have been Pharaoh's daughter bathed in the river during a certain season only, and it was necessary to wait until that season arrived. Three months of hiding a new born babe must have been a very trying and harrowing experience.

Stephen added another important detail that gives additional insight into the motivation of Jochebed and Amram: "At which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair [margin: fair to God]; and he was nourished three months in his father's house."—Acts 7:20, ASV

The literal reading is given in the margin: Moses was "fair to God." This detail is usually given little thought and the notion commonly presented is that it refers to the physical beauty of the child. If such was the case, it would be difficult to understand its inclusion in the record. Such a mundane fact would not have been thought worthy of notice. What parent has not thought their child beautiful? The marginal reading, however, makes it significant. These faithful parents knew their son was "fair to God." He was the younger son in a God-fearing family. He was of the fourth generation. He was chosen of God.

As Shiphrah and Puah before them, Jochebed and Amram defied Pharaoh's edict. In spite of the great danger, they hid Moses, their child that was "fair to God" for three months. Then when the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to bathe, they pursued a course that would ensure the child's survival—not only survival, but his training and preparation for God's work, as well.

Though living in the midst of idolatry and unbelief this faithful group of four trusted God and held fast to the hope of deliverance. They lived and acted in accordance with their hope, just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before them. It was their acts of faith that made it

possible for God to later raise up Moses and bring about that promised deliverance. Their faith in God and in his promises are an important part of that great "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) that is so meaningful to all who live their lives out of faith (Hebrews 10:38).

A Picture of the Christian

On June 17, 1911, Bro. Benjamin Barton gave a discourse entitled "Lessons from the Life of Moses, Servant of God." He used Exodus 2:1-10 as his text and drew a wonderful parallel to Christian consecration. Letting Jochebed picture the Christian, he likened the baby Moses in the ark to the "all" that must be offered in response to God's call. The taking of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter represented God's acceptance of that offering. The return of Moses to Jochebed demonstrated the return of the offering to the called one, who, as a consequence, has been chosen to care for it. Because Moses had become a member of the royal house, Jochebed had little to say about what Moses ate, what he wore, his training, or his education. In like manner, the Christian can no longer use his "all" as he pleases. It belongs to the royal house and must be cared for in a way pleasing to his King. (See the excerpt at the bottom of page 11.)

A Prophet and a Judge

Deborah

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.—Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

Michael Nekora

Rahab and Sarah are the two women named as heroes of faith in Hebrews .chapter 11. If no women had been mentioned, some might argue that women had a less important role to play in the plan of God, or worse, that none of them had faith. Of course neither contention is true.

In Hebrews 11:32 we are told there isn't time to talk about Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. These all belong to the period following the death of Joshua, a period when the nation was ruled by judges. In nearly all cases a "judge" in the Book of Judges was a military figure, a deliverer.

"Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges . . . When the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers . . . They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways."—Judges 2:16,19 (NIV)

Great leaders lead; people follow. Great leaders die and... and what? Generally a power struggle takes place. The movement splinters and the vision is lost. People drift away and go back to doing what they were doing before, or perhaps what they always wanted to do.

Barak

Barak may be the least known of those named in Hebrews 11. It is interesting he is mentioned at all since when it comes to faith, his partner had more faith than he did. His partner was Deborah. The following account describes what happened at about the half-way point in the period of the judges:

"After Ehud died, the people of Israel sinned against the Lord again. So the Lord let them be conquered by Jabin, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera. Jabin had 900 iron chariots and he ruled with cruelty and violence for 20 years. Now Deborah was a prophet and she was serving as a judge for the Israelites at that time. One day she sent for Barak and said to him, The Lord has given you this command: Take ten thousand men and lead them to Mount Tabor. I will bring Sisera to fight you at the Kishon River and I will give you victory over him. Then Barak replied, I will go if you go with me, but if you don't go with me, I won't go either. She answered, All right, I will go with you, but you won't get any credit for the victory because the Lord will hand Sisera over to a

woman. [They gather for war.] Then Deborah said to Barak, Go! The Lord is leading you! Today he has given you victory over Sisera."—Judges 4:1-8,14 (Good News)

Sisera's entire army was defeated in the battle, probably because the Kishon River experienced a flash flood and mired the 900 chariots making them useless. Sisera flees on foot in an opposite direction while his army is slaughtered. He accepts an offer of hospitality from Jael, a Kenite woman whose husband is apparently away. He hides in her tent and tells her to say he is not there if anyone should ask. Jael kills him by driving a tent peg through his head while he is asleep (Judges 4:21,22). So Sisera was handed over to a woman as Deborah predicted, but it was not the woman Barak thought it would be. It was Jael.

Deborah

Deborah is a respected woman in Israel and she is a prophetess. She is not really a "judge" in the military sense of the word, not a deliverer. Barak is a "judge" in that sense. Deborah is assumed to be the author of Judges chapter five which contains a poem of unusual Hebrew beauty celebrating the victory God gave them that special day. This battle was so momentous that Barak's name appears in Hebrews 11. The battle is also mentioned in a psalm: "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon" (Psalm 83:9).

"And there was peace in the land for forty years"(Judges 5:31). If Israel had remained faithful to God, the peace would have been much longer than 40 years. But again they lost the vision of their forefathers and followed their own preferences. Invariably that got them into trouble. The last verse of the book of Judges offers a weak excuse for what they did: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Except for the words in Judges chapters 4 and 5 we read nothing more about Deborah in the Bible. How did she become so influential in Israel? Of all the people the nation could consult for judgment in Israel, Deborah appears to be the one they preferred. One day she sends for Barak, and what surely must be a testimony to her status in the nation, he comes. He wants to believe the Lord has a message for him, but his faith is not that strong. He wants Deborah at the battle too; only then will he go to war. She has such standing in Israel that her presence makes all the difference to him.

Deborah's position in Israel is even more impressive when we consider how patriarchal Israel was under the law. Those who served the tabernacle were all male. The kings were male in Israel though the land of Sheba did have a queen in the time of Solomon. Jewish men had the right to divorce a wife in whom they found no favor, but wives seemed to have no similar right. A woman's place was supposed to be in the home, raising the children.

God Does the Unexpected

In spite of the patriarchal arrangement, God picks a woman to speak for him. Deborah is recognized as a prophet in Israel. This is just like God. He does not do the expected thing. When we meet Gideon, the next judge, he says of himself: "My clan is the poorest in all Manasseh and in all my father's house none counts for so little as I" (Judges 6:15, Knox). When we meet Jephthah, we learn he was illegitimate (Judges 11:1). Although we know we should not judge a book by its cover, most of us do it anyway. God never does.

Our own society has long been patriarchal just like Jewish society. It was only in the beginning of this century that women gained the right to vote in U.S. elections. Only in recent years have women been allowed to hold certain jobs. Women only recently have received the same education as men. It has taken a long time but one may even say that some congregations of the Lord's people have learned that women are better at some jobs than men.

We see in Deborah a respected woman in Jewish society. Although no woman was called to wander with Jesus in the highways and byways of Israel as an apostle, women did freely converse with him. On the day of Pentecost when the holy spirit came upon the faithful ones, Peter explains what is happening by quoting from the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17).

Women had a valuable contribution to make in Old Testament times and they have a valuable contribution to make within the body of Christ. Let no one ever say to any member, male or female, "I have no need of you" (1Corinthians 12:21).

The history of Israel shows how quickly people forgot what God did for them. A new generation often walked differently than their parents.

Let it be a lesson for us. Let us resist the pressure to become like our heathen neighbors because we have forgotten what we have learned, or because the vision of the kingdom appears to tarry. It will not tarry. It will surely come.

Patient in Trials

Zipporah

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.—Romans 12:12

Tom Machacek

How often have we referred to prominent women of the Old Testament as beautiful pictures of faith and devotion? Imagine Rebecca dismounting her camel and running with joy to meet Isaac. A picture of love and service is shown in the character of Ruth. Examples of faith include Sarah and Rahab. Rachel is a picture of patience and tragedy. Often their joyful as well as their trying experiences illustrate the relationship between our Lord, the Bridegroom, and his Church, the Bride. However, there are less prominent women of the Old Testament who prefigure some experiences similar to those of the Church. One such person is Zipporah.

First introduced in Exodus Chapter 2, Zipporah was one of the seven daughters of Reuel, and the only one mentioned by name. Her trials are recounted in three incidents. The first was at the well while watering her father's sheep (Exodus 2:16-22). The second occurred at the beginning of Moses' journey to Egypt (Exodus 4:18-26). The third happened after Moses returned with the nation of Israel (Numbers 12:1-16).

The Scriptures reveal nothing about Zipporah before she met Moses. However, her father Reuel—also known by his honorary name, Jethro—was probably familiar with the example of faith of his forefather Abraham, being a descendant through the line of Keturah. It is likely that Reuel related to his family the promises of God to his ancestors. In his community, Reuel occupied a distinguished role; he was a Midianite priest and the head of a household. Considering her heritage and her family's position in the land of Midian, Zipporah could have been predisposed to honor God.

Zipporah at the Well

The first event occurred while Zipporah and her sisters were tending sheep. Typically, the father assigned shepherding to the youngest able-bodied son of the family. Reuel, having no sons, required all seven daughters to care for his flock. As the eldest, it was Zipporah's responsibility to attentively care for each sheep under her charge. As the midday sun baked the land, the welfare of the sheep was her constant concern. Especially important was providing water for the flock.

On this occasion, as Zipporah's sheep drank, other shepherds came to the same well and forced her flock from the troughs. Moses, fleeing Pharaoh via Sinai, arrived at the same well. He came to aid her, driving away the other shepherds. What a peculiar sight—an Egyptian prince alone in the desert! Moreover, this prince, accustomed to being served, drew water for Zipporah's flock. The rescue must have seemed like a miracle! After the

excitement of the encounter, the sisters took the flock home early, eager to relate the events to their father. Reuel, hearing the news, extended hospitality to Moses. Moses was content to dwell with Reuel. And Reuel gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses to be his wife.

How could this first event relate to God's great plan? It could depict the days of the faithful ones who preceded the Lord's first advent. These were pictured by Zipporah and her six sisters patiently living in the Sinai Desert—in a wilderness condition. They typified the meek and obedient ones known by the Heavenly Father, who was represented by Reuel. If they were familiar at all with the covenants made with Abraham by God, they knew that a blessing was promised.

The "other shepherds" picture many of the professing religious leaders throughout the Jewish Harvest and Gospel Age. These are the ones hoarding the water of life, God's Truth. Misusing their privileges and responsibilities, they have placed hardships and heavy burdens on the children of God. Jesus said to these religious leaders, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

For his first forty years, Moses benefited from the privileged life as Prince of Egypt. These years might picture the Logos dwelling with the Father in the spiritual realm. During this time, the Logos increasingly appreciated the Father's great plan of salvation. Moses spent the next forty years tending the sheep of his father-in-law, becoming familiar with the wilderness and developing qualities necessary to become a great leader. These second forty years in the wilderness could depict our Lord's condition as a man, no longer by his Father's side. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38) How valuable were the experiences of our Lord who came to shepherd the lost sheep of Israel. He nurtured his little flock, giving freely of the water of life.

The Journey to Egypt

The second event occurred after Moses lived for forty years in the wilderness. God called him to return to Egypt to set Israel free. As Moses was traveling back across the Sinai with Zipporah and their two sons, he became seriously ill. To save his life, Zipporah circumcised her son and threw the foreskin at the feet of Moses, saying: "Surely, a bridegroom by rites of blood art thou to me!" (Exodus 4:25, Rotherham) By this act Moses was restored to health. Alone he continued his journey to Egypt; Zipporah and her sons returned to her father's home to await Moses' return.

This second event could picture the requirement for the church to enter into a covenant of sacrifice (Psalm 50:5). Part of the vow is to cut off, to cast away, to separate from the flesh its hopes, aims, desires, all self-will that God's good will may be learned. Our consecration must cost us something: our consecration is unto death. Colossians 2:11 states, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in

putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." This is pictured by Zipporah—in this case representing the Bride—performing the circumcision: this act portrayed the willingness of the Church to be circumcised in their hearts. God has a part in the covenant relationship as well. It is his acceptance of the consecration. This could be pictured by Moses' restoration to health. The healing of Moses subsequent to the circumcision could demonstrate God's acceptance of Zipporah's act of sacrifice.

After the circumcision, Zipporah spoke of the "blood of rite." Consider the Atonement Day sacrifices of the bullock and of the Lord's goat, both of whose blood was sprinkled in the Most Holy. Both imply that earthly life-rights are sacrificed with the hope of a spiritual birth. Just as Zipporah—who was determined to do that which was necessary to assist Moses—demonstrated faithfulness and commitment to her husband, so the Church, by means of the rite of blood, manifests her faithfulness to the Lord—unto death. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Moses and Zipporah separated that he alone might accomplish the work which God set before him. Applying the picture to our Lord, Jesus had a work which only he could perform—provide the ransom for Adam and all mankind. "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Timothy 2:6) Neither our Lord nor Moses had the company of a helpmate as he journeyed solitarily to serve God. However, the Bridegroom and his Bride would eventually be united. "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." (John 13:36)

Zipporah remained in her father's home, awaiting Moses' return. During his long absence, Reuel probably encouraged his daughter, reminding her that God is greater than Pharaoh, and that God is faithful to his promises. Throughout the long night of the Gospel Age, the Church has waited for the Bridegroom. Hope has been kept alive by the guidance of the holy spirit (John 14:26-28), and by encouragement and warnings from the seven messengers to the Church throughout the various stages of her development. Perhaps the seven daughters of Reuel pictured the seven churches, willing to do the bidding of the Father. These gifts have aided the Church to faithfully wait and to drink from the well of living water. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3)

Jealousy of Zipporah

The third event took place after Moses returned with the nation of Israel. Upon greeting his son-in-law, Jethro recognized Moses as a victorious leader and rejoiced in his accomplishment. Similarly, there was probably joy in Zipporah's heart.

Yet the trials of Zipporah were to continue. Numbers chapter 12 reports that Miriam and Aaron despised the "Ethiopian woman"—a mistranslation for a "woman of Cush." (Cushan is the area of the Sinai where Jethro lived, see Habakkuk 3:7.) Zipporah, as Moses' wife, was now in a position of prominence. Probably their concern was that Zipporah's sons eventually would replace Moses as Israel's leader and then God would

speak to Moses' sons. Their jealousy prompted Aaron and Miriam to ask, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" (Numbers 12:2) The contentious spirit angered God. He commanded Moses, Aaron and Miriam to stand before him. God made it clear that he entrusted Moses with all his household, with the care of his people. God plainly expressed his choice of Moses as his chief spokesperson, his chief prophet. Then God executed judgment upon Miriam, apparently the instigator of the matter. She was stricken with leprosy and she was shut up for seven days outside the camp.

This event shows that the saints remaining on this side of the veil are still being tested. Throughout the Gospel Age, many of the religious leaders, presuming to possess wisdom—as depicted by Aaron and Miriam—have held prominent positions and claim to speak for God. Yet personal ambition has led them to hate those whom they esteem "unwise" for their faithfulness to the high calling and their position of favor with the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:17-31) Since our Lord's return, God's judgment has been executed against the professing Christians, the nominal church—Babylon. "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Revelation 18:2). Babylon fell from favor. The leprosy of destruction slowly consumes the Babylonish institutions. God has called his people to come out of her that they should not be recognized with her nor take part of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4)

Zipporah is not mentioned again. Having been joined with Moses, once again they were a family, representing the unity of the body. Zipporah's examples of patience through hardship and final testing are valuable lessons for the remaining saints. Nothing recorded in the Scriptures suggests that Zipporah murmured or complained. The true Church still experiences trials to test her faithfulness because she is not of the world but still in it. The abiding lesson of patient endurance is that it continues to develop character: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Romans 2:7). The Bride, having learned her lessons through her trials and experiences, will joyfully sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. (Revelation 15:3)

A Woman Not Remembered

Carl Hagensick

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.—Ecclesiastes 9:14,15

Chaos reigned supreme in Israel after the forces of David squelched the rebellion of his son Absalom. There was dissension in the military. Joab, the son of David's sister Zeruiah, had been the commanding general since David assumed the throne. However, Joab had fallen into David's disfavor. The king appointed another nephew, Amasa, the son of his sister Abigail, to Joab's former position (2 Samuel 19:13). The choice of Amasa may also have been partly a diplomatic move to heal the country since Amasa had been commander of the forces of Absalom (2 Samuel 17:25).

Politically, the union of the two-tribe southern kingdom and ten-tribe northern area which David had striven so hard to achieve, was threatening to fall apart. The northerners were upset because the tribe of Judah had not consulted them concerning arrangements for David's triumphal return to Jerusalem. Judah based their claim to the right to make these arrangements on their kinship to the returning king. Israel argued that they, by the mere fact of numbers, had a ten-fold interest in the king (2 Samuel 19:41-43).

Meanwhile, Sheba of Benjamin, possibly in a desire to restore the throne to the Benjaminite house of Saul, was drumming up support for a coup to oust David from the kingship. Taking advantage of the jealousies between the ten tribes and Judah, he began seeking support in the north.

David moved decisively to put down the secession cause of Sheba. He gave Amasa three days to assemble an army to pursue the Benjaminite. When the newly appointed commander was unable to accomplish this task in the allotted time, David turned the job over to Abishai and Joab. Joab enlisted mercenaries from the Canaanite Cherithites and the Philistine Pelethites and began the pursuit of Sheba.

Along the way he met Amasa who had by now gathered the troops David had requisitioned. Grabbing Amasa's beard in pretended friendship, Joab killed his cousin and rival (2 Samuel 20:10). Adding those who proclaimed fealty to David to his own band, Joab proceeded in his pursuit of Sheba.

Abel-Bethmaacah

The pursuing army caught up with their prey in the far northern city of Abel Bethmaacah, some 12 miles due north of the Sea of Galilee. Sheba and the "Berites" had come here to enlist recruits for his campaign against David. Since there is no discovered area for these "Berites," it is probable that the Latin Vulgate correctly translates the word "choice young men"—the recruits Sheba had already chosen for his ragtag army.

Abel-Bethmaacah was no mean town. Originally called Abelmaim [meadow of waters] it was renamed in honor of Maacah, the king of neighboring Geshur who probably controlled the region for a time (2 Samuel 3:3). It was the capital city and a site of large grain storage in the tribe of Naphtali (2 Chronicles 16:4). The town was noted for its learning and wisdom. In the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Willis Beecher writes: "The adjacent region is rich agriculturally, and the scenery and the water supply are especially fine. Abel-maim, 'meadow of water,' is not an inapt designation for it."

When the Hebrew army arrived, they began an immediate assault. First they laid siege by stopping all traffic from coming or going. Then they began preparations to take the city. Today's English Version perhaps best conveys the methods used: "They built ramps of earth against the outer wall, and also began to dig under the wall to make it fall down" (2 Samuel 20:15).

A Wise Woman

This background brings us to a consideration of a woman who was not remembered. The account is found in 2 Samuel 20:15-22.

"And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-ma'achah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down. Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee. And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear. Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king."

First we note the bravery of this woman. Since the city was under siege, it is impossible to imagine that the gates would be open for her to call out for Joab. Considering the amount of noise that was going on in the construction of the ramparts and the continuous slamming of the battering rams, it is inconceivable that she could make her voice heard from within the city walls. She must have either ascended the walls, putting her in plain view of the attackers, or, like Rahab in Jericho, lived in a place that had a window through the outside walls. Most likely she climbed the walls and called from there.

Joab was sufficiently impressed with her boldness and bravery to give her a private audience and came close enough that they could hold a conference. Her words were well composed. Her voice showed no fear. She systematically outlined her argument against the army's attack of her city. "The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools" (Ecclesiastes 9:17). As the prophet wrote, "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

She bolstered her plea for the city with four arguments:

1. The counselors and sages in Abel were so well noted that their decisions in a dispute "ended the matter." It was almost as though the counsel of Abel was considered as the supreme court of the region.
2. She and, presumably, the city for which she pleaded, were both peaceable and faithful to Jewish law and custom. The very tone of voice which her words imply was both calm and peaceable, designed more to reason than to support her position.
2. There is an implied rebuke in this argument, for the Jewish law did not permit the attack of even an enemy city without first making an offer of peaceful settlement. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it" (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). If this were true of a Canaanite city, how much more would it be true against a city of their own nation and religion.
3. The city was "a mother in Israel." This phrase was a Hebrew idiom indicating a recognized administrative capital (see Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament).
4. The city was not Joab's to take but was part of the "inheritance of the Lord." In other words, the city was not part of Judah's tribal lot but was given by the Lord to the people of Naphtali.

A term we often hear in military attacks is "collateral damage." Joab would have been guilty of immense collateral damage if he had attacked Abel Bethmaacah to bring Sheba and his few followers to justice. This appears to be the main thrust of the woman's argument.

Impressed with her words, Joab virtually apologized and laid down one pre-condition for lifting the siege—the surrender of Sheba. It is noteworthy that he does not request that Sheba's followers also be delivered, perhaps feeling that if the leader of the revolt were gone, the rebellion would be successfully quenched.

There is no indication that this woman had any particular standing amongst the judges of the city. Yet, she persists in her attempt to secure peace, persuading the town fathers to execute Sheba and throw his head over the wall. The city judges are persuaded and the siege is lifted. So the woman saved the city of Abel Bethmaacah by her wisdom.

Solomon's Comments

Less than a half-century later Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, the third of his biblical works.

"This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good."—Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

It is debatable whether Solomon had this instance in mind when he wrote these words. He could have been giving a generic parable or referring to another incident in a nearby country. But he could have been referencing the incident at Abel Bethmaacah, the account being so unremembered that even her gender was forgotten. The tale of the wise woman happened within a generation of the time Solomon wrote these words.

In any case, the story of Abel-Bethmaacah well illustrates the principles Solomon is enunciating. How often words of wisdom, though heeded at the time, go unremembered! How frequently well-known quotes of wisdom are marked "Anonymous." True wisdom seeks not fame, but for the logic of its reasoning to be noted and appreciated. True men of God often come from the humbler walks of life and the sagacity of their thinking will long outlive the remembrance of their name.

Certainly in the case under study in this article, the words of the wise woman were better than the strength of Joab's mighty army. Her wisdom repelled all the siege weapons of war because she did not, by her wisdom, permit one sinner (Sheba) to destroy much good.

A Final Lesson

The nineteenth century theologian Wangemann suggests a personal application: "The beleaguered city is the life of the individual; the great king who lays siege to it is death and the judgment of the Lord." In this illustration, the obvious application of the poor wise woman is to the principle of wisdom itself, as it is personalized in Proverbs chapters 7 to 9. It is only the application of divine wisdom, as found in God's holy book, that a Christian can find the answer to the condemnation of death and the knowledge of it working in his members.

While we may not be privileged to ever know the name of the "wise woman," let us each be ever mindful to apply her counsel in our hearts and lives.

Huldah

A Hard Message for a Good King

And she said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read.—2Kings 22:15,16

The Old Testament prophetess Huldah was the wife of Shallum. He was a man of dignity and from an eminent family, being the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (royal garments). Huldah reportedly lived in Jerusalem in the college (KJV) or school district. According to McClintock and Strong, "There is no ground to conclude that any school or college of the prophets is to be understood."¹ The name of the section was Mishneh, meaning second part or district and was a suburb between the inner and outer walls of the city.

This Old Testament woman is mentioned in only two places in the Scriptures: 2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chronicles 34:22. Both recount the prophecy made concerning the lost book of the law.

Huldah lived during the reign of Josiah who ascended to the throne as king of Judah after Manasseh's son Amon was assassinated in his own house at the age of 24. Amon's short reign of two years was filled with wickedness and an attempt to re-establish idolatry. His son Josiah was just eight years old when he became king.

As a servant of God, Josiah became one of the greatest reform kings in Israel. He was born during the period of Manasseh's reformation movement, and his name means "Jehovah will support." His mother and maternal grandmother were apparently of godly parentage. Josiah's mother was Jedidiah, a name meaning "the beloved of Jehovah." His maternal grandmother was Adiah, a name meaning "the honored of Jehovah."

It is reasonable to infer that Josiah was tutored by his mother and grandmother. According to 2 Chronicles 34:3, in the eighth year of his reign at the age of 16, "he began to seek after the God of David, his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images."

From the time Josiah was 20 until he was 26 years of age, he used his influence and power to overthrow idolatry throughout the kingdom. He worked to eliminate such wickedness both in Jerusalem and throughout Judah and extended his influence over a large portion of the territory once ruled by the ten-tribe kingdom. Thus he pushed the work of reformation and the destruction of idols as far as Naphtali on the sea of Galilee. Apparently there was a certain amount of opposition to his reform work, and the king's

presence seems to have been required through his servants to insure thorough destruction of the symbols of idolatry which were abundant in every district.

After King Josiah had cleansed the land of its idols, he returned to Jerusalem. As he looked for the next step to take in his service to God, he decided to repair the temple. Although his grandfather Hezekiah had cleansed the temple, it had been subsequently neglected. Many of the rafters were broken, and considerable repair was needed. As a result, Josiah collected donations for its repair and the work was completed.

During the temple's repair, the priest Hilkiah "found a book of the law of the LORD given by the hand of Moses" (2 Chronicles 34:14). Bible scholars have connected this book with the fifth book of the Hebrew Bible. Presumably this was the copy of the law which Moses wrote with his own hand. In her 1993 bestseller entitled *A History of God*, Karen Armstrong wrote: "It is almost certain that the "Book of the Law" discovered by Hilkiah was the core of the text that we now know as Deuteronomy."²

When this treasure was found, Hilkiah took it to the king's secretary Shaphan who read it to King Josiah. When Josiah heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes to show his dismay. What had been taught by the priests by word of mouth was very different from what was in the manuscript written by Moses. Josiah was greatly troubled when he realized how far short Israel had come and learned of the punishments that were prescribed for failing to keep the law. Although there had been occasional reformations, idolatry had flourished for over 300 years. During that time the people had not supported the priests and Levites who tried to remain faithful to the Lord.

Josiah sent the high priest Hilkiah and several of his court officers to inquire of the Lord about whether Israel might escape the punishment which he realized justly belonged to the nation under the conditions of the Law Covenant.

Although the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah were living and prophesying at that time, the messengers went to Huldah, the daughter-in-law of one of Josiah's court officers. We can only speculate why the king passed up two prominent prophets in favor of Huldah, a prophetess who is otherwise unknown to us in the Scriptures. According to McClintock and Strong, "The place of Huldah's residence is mentioned probably to show why she, being at hand, was resorted to on this urgent occasion and not Jeremiah who was then probably away."

In his article "The Lost Book Found" (R3490) Pastor Russell suggested four reasons why Huldah was consulted:

1. The king might have hoped to receive a softer and more peaceful message from a woman than from a man, especially since Huldah through her father-in-law was connected with Josiah's court, and would therefore be disposed to give as kind a message as possible.

2. It may have been that Jeremiah and Zephaniah were on preaching tours away from Jerusalem and not readily available for communication.

3. Perhaps Josiah already knew what the other two prophets' answer would be because they may have been publicly prophesying and foretelling the coming judgment of the Lord. Josiah could have considered their prophecies to be extreme, considering the reforms which he had inaugurated.

4. Josiah may have wanted to obtain an outside testimony instead of a response from someone related to the king or the high priest. Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, the high priest, and Zephaniah was Josiah's own cousin.

McClintock and Strong add: "There were gates of the temple in the middle of the southern wall called 'the gates of Huldah' which, if they were so named from any connection with the prophetess, may indicate her residence on Ophel."

It is evident that the Lord replied through Huldah in a very direct manner, confirming all that had been declared by both Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The writings of Josephus confirm that Huldah reported that God had already given a sentence against them to destroy the people, cast them out of their country, and deprive them of all the happiness they enjoyed. This sentence could not be set aside by any prayers of theirs since it was passed because of their transgressions of the laws and of their not having repented in so long a time. In the meantime the prophets had exhorted them to make amends and had foretold the punishments that would come because of their practices. God would certainly execute these upon them so they would be persuaded that he is God and had not deceived them in any respect as to what he had told them through his prophets.

In 2 Chronicles 34:24,25, it is written, "Thus saith the *LORD*, Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched."

However, the last part of prophecy has some comforting words. In verses 26-28 we read: "And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the *LORD*, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the *LORD* God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the *LORD*. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same."

Josephus wrote that because Josiah was a righteous man, God would delay those calamities, but upon his death God would send on the people the miseries he had determined for the nation of Israel.³

Who was the real force behind the religious reform: King Josiah or the Prophetess Huldah? Shlomith Yaron, at The Open University of Israel in Tel Aviv, writes: "Most scholars believe that the role of women in the ancient Middle East centered around their homes and families only. Men dominated and ruled empires, made war, and legislated laws. On closer examination, however, we see that while this was usually the case, there were occasions when a woman was the moving force in initiating a war or in introducing or enforcing religious reforms: commander Barak refused to lead the Israelite campaign against the northern Canaanites without the participation of the prophetess Deborah; and had the prophetess Huldah not interpreted the ancient book found in the Temple, King Josiah might not have succeeded (or perhaps even tried) to enforce religious and cultic reforms and thus change the religious behavior of the Judaeans and Israelites at the end of the 7th century BC."

As we read in subsequent chapters, King Josiah did accomplish many reforms during his reign, including:

The abolition of idolatry and all that was associated with it (2 Kings 23:4-20,24; 2Chronicles 34:3-7).

A national observation of the Passover (2Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19).

Repair of the house of God (2 Kings 22:3-7; 2 Chronicles 34:8).

Reversing 57 years of ungodliness (Amon, his father, reigned 2 years, 2 Kings 21:19; Manasseh, his grandfather, reigned 55 years, 2 Kings 21:1).

Some of the reasons for Josiah's success were:

1. He remembered God in his youth.
2. He overcame the ungodly heritage of his father Amon and his grandfather Manasseh.
3. He was surrounded with good advisors and listened to their advice (Deuteronomy 32:7; Job 8:8-10). In addition to the high priest Hilkiah and the scribe Shaphan, he heeded the words of the prophetess Huldah.
4. He respected God's word (2 Kings 22:8-13), hating what God hated and loving what God loved.

The lesson is that we should listen for God's direction no matter where it may come from. Huldah was a tool in God's hands, and King Josiah listened to the words of the Lord as given through her message. Sisters in Christ should be ready to be used of God when circumstances, experiences, and talents provide such an opportunity. "God, who is no respecter of persons, requires faithfulness on the part of female as well as male stewards in the use of all their talents" (R1549).

NOTES:

1. McClintock & Strong. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Reprinted 1981, Volume IV, pp. 398-399.
2. Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
3. *Works of Josephus, Volume III (Antiquities of the Jews Books IX-XVII)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974, pp. 60-62.

Beauty More Than Skin Deep

Esther and Our Times

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?—Esther 4:13,14

Donald Holliday

Esther is first mentioned in chapter 2 verse 7, where her name is given as Hadassah, meaning "myrtle." There is often an aptness in Old Testament names, and the name Myrtle reminds us at once of the opening vision granted to Zechariah some years before. There he saw a vision of the invisibly present Lord riding upon a red horse: "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom (the shady valley)" (Zechariah 1:8), a place of lowness and disesteem. This well represented the position of the Jews at that time. They were a chastised people, slow to recover from their self-brought captive state, and lowly regarded in the eyes of the world. Yet there, invisible to natural sight, in their midst stands the Lord, "the messenger or angel of Jehovah," of verse 11 being undoubtedly the Lord Jesus himself. This vision of an invisible Lord in the midst applies in parallel to this day in which we live. He sits upon a red horse, symbol of blood, of vengeance, of judgment, and of war. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro continuously assessing the situation throughout the earth, and they note with displeasure the nations at ease, or indifferent to the plight of his people. The vision is given to encourage, and they certainly needed encouragement at that time.

The Feast of Xerxes

The story opens with a sumptuous banquet given by the Persian king Xerxes in the palace at Shushan. This grand building, or what remains, has been excavated, and its marble pillar and pavements restored to view. We are not in Israel in this account but among Jews outside the land, still dwelling among the Gentiles. Background history is enlightening as to the probable cause of the banquet. The king is planning to extend his domain by an expedition into Greece. He now has in view the idea of taking Europe! However a similar attempt by his predecessor one generation before had resulted in total defeat and disaster. That had been called the battle of marathons, and its magnitude in terms of arms and men make it one of the outstanding wars of all time, like the Great War in our times which preceded Hitler's later designs on Europe.

Xerxes gathered together all his generals and military advisors in what turned out to be a six-month convocation, and to boost morale a most sumptuous feast concluded the preparations. Here it was, however, that something happened which was to alter history

for the Jews of that time. At first it appeared to be just a domestic upset. Everyone was enjoying the feast and the king's heart was merry with wine. In this drunken condition he rashly sent his chamberlain to bring Vashti, the queen, his wife, with instructions to wear her royal apparel, crown and tiara, and to unveil her beauty before this half-drunken all-male party. Sensing the situation, Vashti's dignity was offended and she declined the invitation. This put the king on the spot, for he was a despotic ruler and no one could disobey any whim of his without the gravest consequences. Furthermore, this was a very public occasion and the slight was quickly seen by some present as an open invitation to other wives to assert their preferences over their husbands, thus leading to a very unhappy state of affairs throughout the empire. Counsel was therefore given to the king that he should dismiss his wife and forbid her ever again entering the king's presence. This the king did, and the decree was made.

Of course, when the hang-over had passed after this event the king began to think twice about what he had done and began missing his queen, but there was nothing he could do about getting her back for the decree was made and remained inviolate according to Persian law. It was therefore decided that a beauty contest should be organized with a view to finding a suitable replacement for the very beautiful queen Vashti. The winner would take her place at the side of the king with the royal estate of his queen. The rest of the story we know, how one of the men who had a post about the palace decided to put his cousin in for the contest. This man was Mordecai, and the young woman was his charge, for he had looked after her since the death of her parents. The beauty of Esther was such that she won the heart of the king and was made queen in place of Vashti. A great Persian king to marry a Jewess? Well, somehow Esther failed to mention that she was a Jewess! Thus the stage was set for a situation that, while it had not yet arisen, was clearly known beforehand by the Lord. What a lesson of providence!

We might well ask, could not the Lord simply have overruled what was to follow and avoided the whole ugly situation developing? Equally we may ask today, could he not have prevented Hitler ever rising to power, or Saddam Hussein, or any other evil man? Certainly if the Lord so wished he could have prevented Haman ever gaining the king's confidence in the way that he did, rising to a position where he could cause a decree to go forth to exterminate the whole Jewish race. Why does God permit evil? Never because he cannot help it! Always because he has a wise and loving purpose in mind.

Haman, the Amalekite

Not long after Esther became queen Haman became appointed as prime minister. Haman was not an ordinary man. He was, in fact, an Amalekite, and descended from a former king of that nation, Agag. King Saul had an encounter with an Agag. In 1 Samuel 15 Saul was commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites. Why? Because Amalek was a ruthless tribe which came up against the Israelites in the wilderness. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Samuel 15:2,3) In Exodus 17:1-7 we are told of a particular

trial which came upon the Israelites. They were in the desert, and they could find no water. Israel today is also desperately in need of water, both the natural substance of life and the spiritual counterpart! The situation at that time seemed quite hopeless, faith collapsed, and they were found murmuring against Moses saying, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" And they began to pick up stones to stone Moses. The Lord provided the water. He was going to anyway, but he does it now not as a response to faith but in spite of unbelief and lack of trust. Yet in his mercy he saved them. The people had failed in the fight with the enemy within, the enemy of doubt. Now they find themselves confronted with the enemy without, for there Amalek lies in wait. Thus is established a link between anti-Semitism and lack of faith by the natural people of God. The great object lesson was then taught, for in the battle with Amalek that ensued it was clearly demonstrated that the Israelites prevailed not by force of arms, but by the maintenance of the outstretched arms of Moses reaching towards heaven. When Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. With the help of Aaron and Hur victory was thus achieved for Israel (as indeed it will be shortly with the help of the church and ancient worthies). Moses built there an altar, and called it Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord my Banner." "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:16) So did the antagonism between Israel and Amalek become as a running sore.

In 1 Samuel 15 Israel's first king, Saul, a Benjamite, son of Kish, is directed by the Lord to go and smite Amalek, for, said the Lord, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. For Amalek read "doubt"! This was the beginning of a new stage of Israel's history, the kingdom with a visible king! How important to get things straight so far as Amalek was concerned, for Amalek represents one of the greatest enemies of the Lord's people, the close-girding sin of Israel. He must be wiped out from the start. Not one scrap of this enemy nor anything pertaining to him must be allowed to cohabit. All to do with Amalek must be destroyed in the most deliberate and final manner! Victory over doubt must be conclusive.

We all know what happened, and Saul's hesitancy in obeying this command was to cost him the kingdom. Saul failed to slay Agag, king of the Amalekites, and he failed also to dispose of all the things of Agag, the sheep, cattle, and all he considered worth keeping. In dismay and disgust Samuel turned away from Saul and refused to accompany him any further. Saul had forfeited the help and ministry of the Lord's priest and prophet, and this was their last meeting until Samuel's death. Doubt and disobedience, how ruthlessly must the Lord's anointed deal with these enemies of the soul to maintain a walk with the Lord. As Samuel turned to leave, Saul, in great consternation, seized his robe to stop him, and the robe tore in his hands. "So" said Samuel "hath the Lord rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and has given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou." That neighbor turned out to be David.

Was David any better than Saul? Has the David class of this age learned well the things written in men's lives for their admonition? The end of the book of Samuel describes how David went after Amalek who had made great spoil of the city of Ziklag and carried

away the wives and children captive before burning down the houses. "And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all." (1 Samuel 30:17-19) Oh brethren, the victory of faith, for David went in the Name of the God of Israel.

This gives us a glimpse of the implication in the book of Esther when it states that Haman was an Amalekite of the line of a king Agag, and that Mordecai was a Benjamite of the line of Kish, the name reminding us of the lineage of Saul, although this "Kish" was probably a more recent ancestor.

Beauty More Than Skin Deep

The beauty of Esther was more than skin deep. It would lie in her readiness, when put to test, to lay down her own life in the interests of her people. It was not an easy task that lay before her. When the plot was laid to wipe out the entire race of Jews throughout the Persian world, Esther was urged by Mordecai to use her influence upon the king. This involved three great elements of genuine risk. First she had to gain the king's attention by entering his presence without his prior invitation, something unheard of and which might rouse his great anger at such an affront to his dignity. This alone could cost Esther her life. On top of this affront she would have to reveal that she, the queen, was a Jewess, a matter thus far concealed from her husband. What would be his shocked reaction at this news? Finally, her requirement would seem to flout the unalterable nature of Persian Law. How could the king be asked to go back on his word? Oh what great faith was required of Esther!

Because of the hatred he had developed for Mordecai, Haman, by his mischievous influence on the king, had caused the slaughter of Jews throughout the realm to be set for a certain day. The lord who overruled the whole matter, was now to demonstrate his "way of escape." (This expression in 1 Corinthians 10:13, is literally "a way through.") But why was the whole situation allowed to arise? The old enemy, Amalek, had reared his head again in Israel. With the coming of Cyrus the decree went forth and the signal was given to the people of God to leave Babylon, leave the world, and set their faces towards Zion, go back to the land of promise. They were to depart from all that Babylon meant, and in cleanness of heart were to bear the vessels of the Lord, the instruments of divine service and worship, back to their rightful place. The failure of so many Jews to return revealed that same old pull of flesh for tangible comforts, the demand for visible blessing, something immediate being preferred to the hope, a mess of pottage satisfying desire more than birthright.

Israel's faith was not up to the challenge of a desolate land surrounded by enemies, nor ready to make the effort and sacrifice involved in its recovery. Much to be preferred were their present comforts so they stayed where they were, as do many Jews in this day. Their

very life as a covenant people of God was at stake. Would they now merge into their surroundings adopting more and more of the ways of those around them? Already they were talking like the people of Babylon. So did the grim specter arise of the old enemy, Amalek. The visible and physical threat now brought home the deeper spiritual crisis. Amalek had to be defeated, all that this enemy represented, lack of faith, mistrust of the Lord and his ability to achieve his purpose in his people. His miraculous power lies latent for those who fully believe. The "measure" is "according to your faith." (Matthew 9:29)

Complete Submission

Esther, by throwing herself completely on the Lord in full submission and total resignation to whatever the consequences might be, demonstrated the attitude of faith essential to salvation. Natural reasoning would say to her, "Why should I? I am comfortable. I am alright. Why risk so much?" It should be noted that getting the message through to her was no easy task for Mordecai. It is your life that is at stake! The lesson remains for this day. It applies to all covenant people of God. This is the victory that overcometh the world.

When the signal was given at this end of the age for the Jews to return to the land of promise, there was very little stirring throughout the world. Only the most zealous were ready to be uprooted from their homes and businesses and life in Gentile lands. The majority were comfortable where they were and felt no compulsion to leave all those comforts for an arduous existence in a desolate land. The Lord sent hunters to hunt them out. The real enemy was depicted by Amalek, that lack of reverential fear of the Lord, and indifference towards that covenant relationship with him.

There are noble exceptions, but in large the conscience is satisfied by donation, or general good-will towards those who have returned, rather than personal involvement, personal return to the land marked out for them by the Lord. As in the days of Esther, so it is now. There is meaning behind the ugly threat of anti-Semitism throughout so many lands today. It is not just an accident, but, as with the rise of Amalek in the past, it is a reminder to a covenant people of God of the blessed privileges of this hour in Israel's history, privileges designed to demand a true and living faith in the Lord. The enemy within must be fought of which that enemy without is but a symbol.

The Lord rewarded Esther's faith. He overruled the matter so that the king responded favorably to her request. The attack on the Jews could not be cancelled, but the Jews would be allowed to fight back against their enemies. And so it is today! The rise of anti-Semitism headed by the Amalekite Haman of this end of the age, Adolph Hitler, is but an outward tangible witness to the enemy within, the Amalek spirit of lack of reverential fear of the Lord, lack of trust in the God of Jacob, who said, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Genesis 28:15) This enemy of doubt each Jew must fight. That is the battle. It is a most personal battle for each one, and on its conquest will depend the fulfillment of the great

promises and privileges belonging to the natural people of God. The Lord brings about the circumstances that will achieve this result.

Upon receiving the new decree of the king that the Jews might defend themselves against their enemy it was arranged for riders to go forth throughout the whole realm proclaiming that the Jews everywhere "stand for their life" and make complete destruction of every vestige of enemy power and goods, that is, of all influenced by this spirit of Haman, or of the Amalekite against them. The thoroughness of the victory is a message both of stimulation and cheer to the Jews of our day. Seventy five thousand of the enemy fell that day. To make sure of full extermination a further day was granted at Esther's request. This may seem to have been rather vindictive on her part, but the fact that three hundred more of the enemy were then slain shows her fears were well-grounded, that the Amalek spirit may have survived the first battle. The conquest is most significant. Here lay the root of the downfall of Saul's reign and the whole kingdom of Israel, as predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24. The root of unbelief has to be eradicated from the hearts of all his people.

We have not mentioned yet what happened to Haman, and the story is not unfamiliar to Bible students, the end being that the very gallows he had prepared for the hated Mordecai were used for his own execution. "The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." (Psalm 9:16) Furthermore, his ten sons were also slain, thus eradicating further threat. This is an important aspect, indicating the finality of the battle. In the process Mordecai was made prime minister in Haman's place. By a wonderful turn of events, before his death Haman was made to take the king's apparel that he thought he was going to wear and put it upon Mordecai, setting the royal crown upon his head, and bringing him in triumphal procession on the king's horse through the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall be done to the man the king delights to honor." How beautifully significant! This is a theme worthy of your private meditation. So far as the Jew is concerned, there will be a complete reversal of his position in the world when he fulfils the Lord's requirements of him. No longer will he be the tail but the head. It all hangs upon this battle with the enemy within. This grand reversal will be when the battle with Amalek is decisive and he is shamed forever beneath the feet of the people of God.

In Esther 9:16, we read "But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey (i.e., the spoil they did not touch)." Nothing was to be preserved of Amalek in their lives, not even one little keepsake. All to do with that ancient enemy was to be forever detested and forbidden. Only deep true faith in God will make the present-day Jew victorious and clean vessels for the Lord's use in the kingdom age before us. The enemy is not without but within, nevertheless the outer enemy, anti-Semitism, is permitted to bring home the true nature of the problem and to define the battle. What witness this will be to all mankind! The book of Esther is most relevant to this very day in which we have a part. Like the first Purim, this day will be memorialized forever in the new heart of his chosen

people. Through the ages to come will men talk of this our day and the Lord's victory in a weak-willed and irresolute people.

In Esther 4:16, we read her proclamation before her ordeal, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." A period of denial of self and its interests and earnest prayer to the Lord, how important this was to the whole issue, the upwards-reaching of both arms towards the Lord. It was there, in communion with the Lord, that the battle was won. The result could not be more wonderful for the Jew. "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." (Esther 8:15-17)

This, we note, was even before the battle was fought, for indeed, in fasting and prayer was the battle already won. In a collection of tablets from this period and subsequent days more than a hundred Jewish names occur in connection with important positions in the realm, including the position of governors of administrative districts. The ancient people of God, once endowed with the faith of the people of God, thus become part of the divine arrangement of world government in association with those worthy ones of old whose faith was so attested. The material is there for the princes of this earth. Thus we find here depicted the further stages of more tangible kingdom blessings of all families of earth, through the Jew.

Orpah—A Lesser Love

"Even if I should this night . . . bear sons, would ye shut yourselves up and wait till they were grown?"—Ruth 1:12,13

When both of Naomi's sons died in Moab, she had to tell her daughters-in-law that no man in Israel would marry them because they were foreigners. The lot of a widow would be hard. By staying in Moab, they could remarry and find the protection and honor of being a wife, so necessary in those days.

Orpah had a hunger for a resting place, security. She dreaded having to "shut herself up." Although she loved Naomi, she counted the cost and it was too much for her. She represented a class whose love for truth and righteousness is not enough to suffer much. They turn back into the world, as Orpah turned back to Moab.

—Condensed from Notes on the Bible by John A. Meggison

Jochebed Surrenders Moses

When the mother of Moses gave the child up, she got him right back again. He was restored to her right away. You could have gone into her home after the day that she laid the child in the ark of bulrushes, and you would have seen the child there. It was still there. She still had the child even though she had given him up. And so, dear friends, with us. You and I when we consecrated ourselves to the Lord gave it all to him, but we have it yet. We gave him our hands and feet, but we have them yet. We gave him our sight and hearing, but we have them yet; we gave the Lord our mind, but we have it yet; we gave the Lord our tongues and lips, but we have them yet; we gave the Lord our money, but we have some of it yet; we gave the Lord our loved ones, but we have them yet; we gave the Lord all that we had, but we still have it.

But notice, when the mother of Moses got her child back, he was not her own any longer; he was royal property; he was a royal possession. So when you and I after consecration receive back all that we surrendered, as it were, it was not ours any longer, it was royal property, it was a royal possession—not the property of Pharaoh or his daughter, but the property of the great King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Just like the mother of Moses, from that day onward she could look at that child and say, "This child was mine once, but he is not mine now; this child now belongs to Pharaoh's daughter; he belongs to the royal family, and I am merely a stewardess, I am merely intrusted with him"—so with us: we look at all we had and we say, like the mother of Moses said, "Well there was a time that these hands used to be mine, but now they belong to the King; there was a time when this money was mine, but now it belongs to the King; there was a time when these feet were mine, but now then they belong to the King; there was a time when my mind, my sight, my hearing, my tongue, were mine, but now all of these things belong to him." We have given them all to him, and we are merely a steward entrusted with those things.

—Excerpted from "Lessons from the Life of Moses"
in *Pilgrim Echoes* by Benjamin Barton

Pharaoh's Daughter

Down to the water's brink she tread,
Attending maidens at her side,
To bathe in Nile's waters wide
Not knowing that which lie ahead.

She dipped into the waters fresh,
Where the stately ibis feeds,
And paused among the sheltering reeds,
To lift her soul and cleanse her flesh.

And as she paused her eyes espied
A basket close to nearby shore.
She nearer drew to see some more,
And note what object was inside.

She saw the basket was well made,
With woven reeds to make it light,
But daubed with mud and water-tight,
As though a treasure it conveyed.

She peered inside and gave a gasp,
As wrapped in swaddling clothes, a child
Asleep so peacefully and mild,
Lay there within her grasp.

Her heart did leap for hidden joy,
For she had oft desired a son
To raise and watch his childhood fun,
And here was this abandoned boy.

She bid him brought for her to hold,
But when his Jewishness she saw,
And knew he'd die by Pharaoh's law,
She made a plan, courageous, bold.

She'd claim this infant as her own,
Who even Pharaoh dare not kill,
Whose baby's cries he could not still,
But she would raise in palace home.

A nurse to raise the child she'd need
To keep the infant in secret place

Her eyes alit on Miriam's face
Hiding 'mongst the shoreline reeds.

The princess did her help implore,
And Miriam did her mother bring,
To nurture him as royal king,
Prepare him for his life in store.

Delivered from his watery grave,
As Moses, he'd deliverer be,
To set the Jewish captives free,
And by God's power his race he'd save.

—Carl Hagensick

News & Views

News & Views is edited by Len Griehs. Items of interest may be sent to him via e-mail (irwhiz@aol.com) or through the Institute's secretary at 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades CA 90272.

PBI News

Newly Reprinted Booklet

The booklet "The Resurrection of the Dead" has just been reprinted in a fresh new format with a fourcolor cover. We have enclosed a copy in this issue of The Herald. Please contact us if you want to obtain this booklet in quantity for your witness activities. We have also reprinted "Israel and the Middle East" in this new format. We will not be sending a copy of it in a future issue of The Herald because the olderstyle booklet was sent to all subscribers with the 1998 May-June issue. Orders for "Israel and the Middle East" will be filled with the new format.

Many thanks for the booklets which I continue to enjoy very much. I find your material very stimulating, inspiring, challenging and timely. As one who is young in physical years (going on 24) and young in the Truth, I greatly value the insight which your booklets and articles offer.

A subscriber in Italy

Around the World

After a weeklong tour of the country, a UN assessment team is calculating how many Angolans may starve to death if help is not provided. Six months after the resumption of the civil war between the Angolan government and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA rebels, the Angolan people are suffering as they have not suffered before, even in 25 years of fighting. For the first time, hunger is being used as a weapon of war. Rebel soldiers are forcing peasant farmers to leave their farms empty-handed, killing them horribly if they try to stay. Almost 1 million people, about 10% of the total population, have been driven off their land. The rebels' aim is to starve the population into rebelling against the government. Within a few months, an alarmingly large proportion of Angola's

more than 11 million people will be almost entirely dependent on food aid. Since the government is pumping all of its considerable oil earnings into fighting the war, the job of feeding Angolans falls to aid donors. The question is being asked why more is not being done to bring an end to the war. The Angolan government has vowed never to negotiate with Mr. Savimbi again, citing the fact that he has broken every peace promise

he has ever made. The rebels have proved surprisingly strong on the battlefield, defeating the government's forces, in both conventional and guerilla warfare. Angolans, meanwhile, will be facing starvation.

-The Economist, 5/29/99

The number of people in the United States who have seen their 100' birthday has nearly doubled over the past nine years and could hit 834,000 by the middle of the next century, the U.S. National Institute of Health reported. The report said that four out of five centenarians are women. "The growing numbers of extremely old people give us the opportunity to examine their lives in more detail," said Richard Suzman, associate director for behavioral and social research at the aging institute. "By doing so, we will be able to discover the genetic, medical, social, and behavioral factors contributing to longevity and robustness in very advanced age."

-Washington News Service, 6/16/99

An immediate and universal ban on the worst forms of child labor is expected at the annual International Labor Organization conference in Geneva. "The nightmarish vision of boys and girls toiling in mines, sold for prostitution and pornography, enslaved and trafficked like chattels or exposed to hazardous work has pushed child labor to the top of the international agenda," says Juan Somavia, the ILO's new director general. The ILO estimates there are 250 million children aged between 5 and 14 at work in developing countries alone, half of them working full time. The ILO is giving high priority to banning the worst forms of child labor, specifically child slavery, prostitution, pornography, and exposing children to illicit activities such as drug trafficking or to hazardous work that endangers their health, safety or morals.

But the biggest issue concerns child soldiers. "There are instances where children even as young as 12 are conscripted by force and when caught while escaping are severely punished," said the government of Sri Lanka.

-Financial Times, 6/8/99

Israel

An opinion poll conducted by the Shechem-based Palestinian Studies and Research Center finds that 71% of Palestinians believe that there is widespread corruption throughout the Palestinian Authority institutions; 67% said they believe the chief means of getting a job in the PA is through favoritism, nepotism, and bribery; and 75% believe that they cannot freely criticize the PA.

Arutz-7, 6/16/99

According to Alfred Abu Rabou, in his address to the Israeli Society for Ecology and Environmental Quality Sciences, much of the water supply found in towns located in PLO Authority autonomous areas is dangerously polluted and poses a health hazard. The data is based on a recent study conducted by Bethlehem University. No less than 60 percent of water samples tested contained unsafe levels of bacteria, caused by sewage contamination. In addition, many of the samples also contained nitrates and other organic and industrial impurities known to be hazardous to human health. A Palestinian representative said that the PA is aware of the situation, and is currently developing a strategic solution in cooperation with the Netherlands. Israel, by contrast, can continue drinking from the tap to their hearts' content. A study by Dr. Susan Richardson showed Israeli drinking water to be less toxic than that in the U.S., due to superior purification techniques.

-HaAretz, 6/16/99

Minutes after Ehud Barak was declared prime minister of Israel, a group of Orthodox Jews swayed to the beat of traditional evening prayers at his party's headquarters. They were members of Meimad, a small centrist religious movement brought in Mr. Barak's Labor-led coalition this year to launch reconciliation between secular and religious Jews after three years of growing divisions. Secular Jews expect Mr. Barak to reduce funding of yeshivas, or religious seminaries. Furthermore, they want the government to dismantle the Orthodox monopoly over marriage, divorce, conversion and citizenship. Analysts say Mr. Barak will seek a coalition that would marginalize the ultra-Orthodox. It would include Shinui, a new ultra-secular party that won six seats in the Knesset.

-Financial Times, 5/18/99

Islam

Thirteen Jews arrested in Iran have been charged with espionage activities on behalf of Israel and the United States. The 13 Iranian Jews were arrested in the provincial capital of Shiraz. Israel has asked Pope John Paul II and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to contact Iran on behalf of the detainees. According to the Iranian Jewish Society there are about 35,000 Jews in Iran. They are free to leave the country but are not allowed to go to Israel. Iran is principally opposed to the Middle East peace talks and has strongly condemned the recent agreement signed between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

-Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA), 6/9/99

Christendom

Having a leisurely Sunday brunch is more important to many Germans than going to church, according to a new poll published in Germany. The poll of 1,038 Germans for *Neue Revue* magazine showed over 40 percent of the respondents stay away from church services because the sermons are "too boring" or "too long." Although nearly 90 percent of all Germans are registered on tax rolls as members of either the Lutheran or Roman Catholic churches, 37 percent of male respondents in the poll said they do not go to church because they do not believe in God. Only 8 percent of female respondents called themselves non-believers. 38 percent of the women said sleeping in late and having brunch was preferable to Sunday church services.

-DPA, 5/24/99

The common link between the Ukrainians and Russians is the Orthodox religious tradition. It is a tie that cements the alliance between Orthodox Serbia and Orthodox Russia and which cuts across the lines that today divide Serbia from Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece. This shared culture, which normally has little political importance, has been highlighted by the passions roused by the Kosovo war. The cultural divide dates back to the ancient split between western and eastern Christendom. It mattered little in the cold war, but the collapse of communism has allowed east Europeans to rediscover lost identities and to follow divergent paths. Athanassios Papandropoulos, European editor at *Oikonomikos Tachydromos*, Greece's leading economic weekly says: "There's a bitter struggle going on between Greeks who are pro-European and Greeks who are still living in the Byzantine Empire." Orthodox solidarity carries some weight. When the NATO bombing began, Patriarch Alexii of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox church, and Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens both called for support for Serbia, although they were not joined by Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the *primus inter pares* of Orthodox leaders. Over time, the national cultures of the Orthodox Balkans and to a lesser extent of Russia, have evolved in opposition to the west and to Islam.

-Financial Times, 5/17/99

The Mormon Church's 10 million members now reside in 192 nations. The number of members is projected to explode to 267 million by the year 2080 in what University of Washington sociologist Rodney Stark has declared is the rare emergence of a new worldwide religion. In its aggressive global outreach, the church has doubled its missionary corps to 60,000 and the number of local temples to 112. (Fulltime Protestant missionaries number about **45,000** according to Stark.)

-Los Angeles Times, 6/8/99

§ Economics

Nobody really knows how much oil and natural gas lies offshore in Ukraine's section of the Black Sea, but it would potentially go a long way to helping the country become energy self-sufficient. The Black Sea is thought to be the next important source of domestic energy for Ukraine. Both countries have disputed Snake Island, off the coast of Romania and Ukraine, where much of the hydrocarbon deposits are thought to be located, since Ukraine's independence. But Romania gave it to Ukraine when it sought to settle all outstanding border disputes. Energy is the key to controlling Ukraine's massive barter economy, since most barter transactions start with energy goods such as coal or gas. Last year, over half of the transactions in agriculture and industry were transacted in barter terms. This shadowy world is run by a few trading companies with powerful political connections.

-Financial Times, 6/10/99

When the globe clicks over to "00" no one knows for sure what will happen. The predictions range from nothing more than a few minor disruptions to worldwide chaos. The behavior of individuals, business firms and governments is being affected by Y2K considerations. People are behaving differently than

they otherwise would, and that change in behavior will have an effect on the global financial system that neither the Federal Reserve Board nor any other central bank is equipped to handle. All of these changes in behavior have a common effect. There has been a considerable increase in the demand for dollar liquidity around the world, in part caused by Y2K considerations. Economists of every stripe understand that the modern world is held together electronically by trillions of bookkeeping entries. Highpowered computers are needed to manage the daily adjustments in electronic debits and credits. In today's world of floating currencies, computers enable the world's banks to manage chaos. As the year 2000 approaches, we could see extraordinary swings in the demand for dollars, causing a worldwide shortage.

-Investors' Business Daily, 6/21/99

Europe's single currency remains on a downward trend. The dismal performance has put an uncomfortably bright spotlight on the world's newest central bank. With governments battling over budget deficits and power within the system, little attention is being paid to restoring confidence in the euro. To Europe's business community, a stable euro is the backbone of the Continent's ambitious experiment with monetary and economic integration. Many worry the euro will soon reach parity with the dollar. It could come to symbolize politicians' failures to deliver strong international currency they'd promised-one that would rival the dollar internationally. The European Central Bank's hopes of speaking with one, unified voice when communicating views on the euro-zone economy and its currency have been frustrated by differing priorities among the 11 national central banks. From the very beginning, the single currency was meant to be the glue that binds a unified Europe. And since the euro isn't backed by gold or any other

asset, says ECB spokesman Manfred Koerber, its fortunes are tied not only to economic trends on the Continent but also to the ECB's credibility. The ECB "has the power but apparently not yet the slightest idea of what to do."

-Barron 's, 6/14/99

Q Science

Strong concerns over the serious health risks discovered in animal cloning have raised new moral and ethical questions about human cloning. Researchers at the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center have consistently found that cloned animals, and often mothers pregnant with the clones, die during gestation or just weeks after birth, due in part to a lack of needed DNA normally provided by the male and female parents of offspring. Gerald Schatten, head of the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center's cloning lab recently admitted to "a lot of fetal and neonatal deaths along the way." When asked how the new research affects the moral and ethical feasibility of human cloning, American Bio-Ethics Advisory Commission Chairman Fr. Joseph Howard responded by saying, "Oregon researchers have pointed out exactly what is at stake in the process of learning whether or not an animal can be successfully cloned without the destruction of countless numbers of clones. This must give pause to those who argue in favor of cloning human beings." Causes of death in clones include placental abnormalities, abnormal swelling, three to four times the normal rate of umbilical cord problems and severe immunological deficiencies.

-PR Newswire, 5/10/99

IID

Book Review

A Passion For Souls, Lyle W. Dorsett. Moody Press, 1997. 488 pages

Speaking of D. L. Moody and his co-evangelists, Sankey, Whittle, and Bliss, Pastor C. T. Russell wrote, "It is our thought that the Lord used these men, and through their ministry the fore-ordained number was completed at the fore-ordained time, 1881" (R4303; see also R5168).

In his biography of Moody, Dorsett gives ample documentation for this conclusion. The opening paragraph of the dust jacket conveys the inspiration the author received from his study of this remarkable man: " `The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully-consecrated to him.' These words, spoken to D. L. Moody by a fellow evangelist, fired his imagination and gave him a vision for living allout to the glory of God. `By God's help, I aim to be that man,' Moody said."

A Passion for Souls paints a vivid picture of the Great Awakening that shaped the religious environment of the mid-nineteenth century. From a humble beginning in

Boston, Massachusetts, to vast crowds in both England and America, this movement had a profound affect in a world that was turning from humanism to a Bible-based religion. Perhaps no single individual was more instrumental in bringing this change about than Moody.

As William Miller provided the prophetic foundation for the development of what Bible Students refer

to as "present truth," so Moody touched the hearts of the people to provide a climate of complete dedication to God which was so essential in the encouragement of individual Bible study.

The lives of Moody and Russell followed parallel tracks-Moody preceding Russell in both birth and death by seventeen years. Neither Moody nor Russell were personally ordained by a seminary; both disdained such ordination as a qualification for the ministry of God's word. Both men refused to be personally financed by collections from their audience, though Moody was an aggressive fund-raiser for his causes. The emphasis of both was on the necessity for more than a "Jesus saves" conversion, but the complete consecrated devotion of the believer to the service of God. Both men aggressively urged their hearers to seek the ways and means to leave their earthly careers behind and spend their full time in the spreading of God's word. Both had an active interest in the development of Israel and both were influenced by and personally acquainted with the converted Russian Rabbi, Joseph Rabinowicz.

Another trait shared by both men was their interest in follow-through with those who responded to their message. Moody introduced the "inquiry room" where new converts would be instructed in their personal responsibilities as Christians. These new converts were there encouraged to divorce themselves more and more from earthly pursuits and spend their time in evangelizing others. Noticing the affect Russell was having with his colporteur activities and publication of free tracts and low-cost books, Moody persuaded his brother-in-law and publisher, Fleming Revell, to do the same.

There were also great differences between them. Although Moody was born into a non-Trinitarian family (and his mother held those beliefs until her death), he became a strong advocate of the trinity. In later life, he was strongly influenced with the belief of the power of the holy spirit to the extent that he was sympathetic to the cause of divine healing. Although technically holding to a belief in hell, Moody kept that view in the background, as noted by Pastor Russell (see Reprints page 856).

Those who are interested in gaining a better understanding of the religious world in which Pastor Russell began his ministry will find *A Passion for Souls* an interesting, historic document.

-Carl Hagensick