



# Mothers and Sons, Prophetesses and Deliverers

ABRAHAM AND HAGAR AS FOILS; SARAH'S PROMISE; DEBORAH  
AND SISERA; MANOAH'S WIFE AND SAMSON; HANNAH AND  
SAMUEL; HULDAH.

Genesis 16:1-16; 18:1-15; 21:1-21; Judges 4-5; 13-16; 1 Samuel 1:1-2:21; 2  
Kings 22:1-20

*Elspeth Young, "Is Anything Too Hard For The Lord"*

# “As Sisters in Zion” (hymn no. 309)

1. As sisters in Zion, we'll all work together;  
The blessings of God on our labors we'll seek.  
We'll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor;  
We'll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.

2. The errand of angels is given to women;  
And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:  
To do whatsoever is gentle and human,  
To cheer and to bless in humanity's name.

3. How vast is our purpose, how broad is  
our mission,  
If we but fulfill it in spirit and deed.  
Oh, naught but the Spirit's divinest  
tuition  
Can give us the wisdom to truly succeed.

# Sarah and Hagar as foils (Genesis 16:1–16)

- Foil: a literary device emphasizing contrasts *and* comparisons
- **Sarah, formerly Sarai**
  - Abraham's first wife
  - Barren into her old age
  - Represents the covenant, for Paul represents the higher law (Galatians 4:21–31)
- **Hagar (Hebrew, “flight”)**
  - An Egyptian servant whom Sarah “gives” to Abraham
  - Concubine: status varied from culture to culture, but here a legal wife but subordinate to the mistress
  - Represents deliverance from Egypt, the lesser law, Israel's travails in this life (again, Galatians 4:21–31)
  - *“Hagar directly communed with God, received inspired directions, and was promised eternal blessings (Olson, 29 = packet, 75)*

# Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:1–16)



- Strife between Sarah and Hagar leads to Hagar's expulsion
- Hagar's deliverance *and promises*
  - “And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, ***I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.*** And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; ***because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.***” (Genesis 16:9–11)
  - Her son will be called *Ishmael*, meaning “[God] hears”

*Elspeth Young, “God Liveth and Seeth Me”*

# Sarah and Isaac (Genesis 18:1–15; 21:1–)



- Abraham and his three holy visitors
- “Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age . . . . Therefore Sarah laughed within herself . . .” (Genesis 18:11–12)
  - *Yiṣḥāq*, “he will laugh” → *Sarah had first laughed in disbelief, then in joy!* (see 21:6)
  - “*Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.” (Hebrews 11:11–12)
- Isaac and the covenant
  - “. . . *or in Isaac shall thy seed be called.* And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.” (Genesis 21:12b–13)

# Family troubles . . .

- **Strife between Hagar (and Ishmael) and Sarah**
  - Difficult to reconstruct, but cultural considerations suggest concerns about wifely status, property rights, the safety of young Isaac
- **Hagar “expelled”**
  - Sarah’s options: send her away, brand her as a slave, punish her (Olson, 41 = packet, 82)
- **“As with each of us, neither Abraham nor Sarah nor Hagar was free from weakness or vulnerability” (Olson, 30 = packet, 76)**
  - Don’t freak out over patriarchs (or prophets) behaving badly at times! *God’s ability to forgive them and use them for great good is a powerful symbol of his grace!*
- **Hagar’s blessings**
  - The Lord delivered her and saved Ishmael, she was free, Ishmael received great blessings (Genesis 21:18, 20), she will eventually be exalted (D&C 132:37)

# Deborah, Sisera, and Barak (Judges 4–5; 13–16)

- Largely disunited Israel is oppressed by the Canaanite king of Hazor, Jabin, and his captain, **Sisera**
- **Deborah**, a **prophetess**, is the **judge** (*šōphēt*) of Israel
  - **Prophecy is a spiritual gift**, not a priesthood office, though it regularly comes with certain positions (e.g., members of the Twelve and First Presidency are prophets, seers, and revelators)
  - A judge was **the temporal, non-royal leader** exercising both executive and judicial functions (cf. Book of Mormon)
  - In the book of Judges they are primarily **deliverers**
    - Perhaps better to think of them as enforcing God's judgment, especially upon enemies
    - Frequently, but not always, enjoyed the spirit of prophecy and were divinely raised up and guided
- **Barak** (Hebrew, “lightning”), Deborah's military commander

# Israelite Victory

- Barak seeks prophetic guidance and support from Deborah
- The Lord **defeats Sisera** through a storm at Mount Tabor
- **Song of Deborah and Barak** (Judges 5:1–31)



*Artemisia Gentileschi, "Jael and Sisera" (about 1620)*

**I, even I, will sing unto the Lord;  
I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.**

The inhabitants of the villages ceased,  
they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose,  
that I arose, **a mother in Israel.**

- Side note

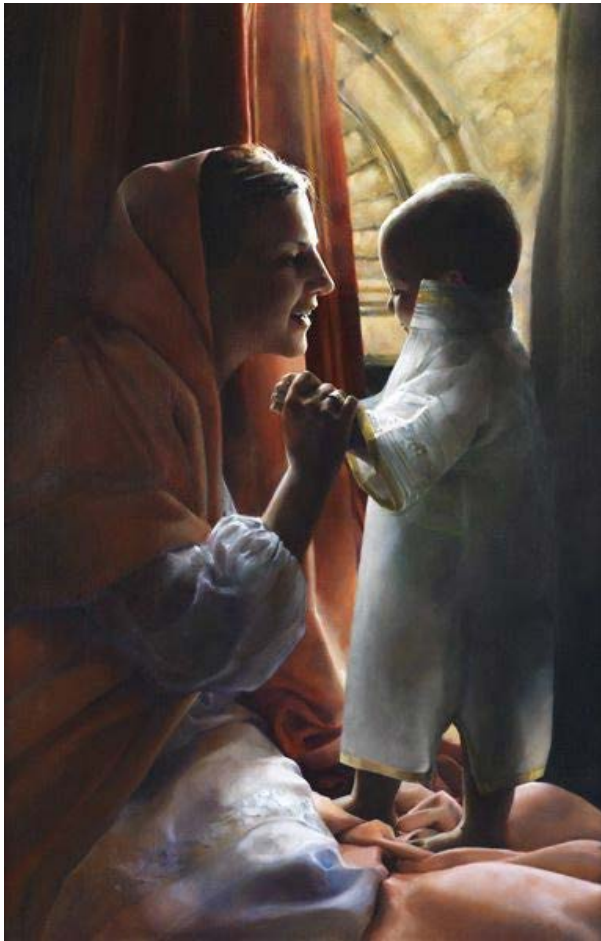
- Sisera killed by a woman!  
**Jael**, the wife of Heber the Kenite pretends to give the fugitive commander refuge and drives a tent peg through his temple as he sleeps!



# Being a Mother in Israel

- We do not know whether Deborah had children of her own (at least she is not defined by marriage and motherhood)
- **A Mother in Israel**
  - Loves those she serves as her own children
  - Nurtures, protects, and inspires faith in God
  - Leads one's charges to the source of salvation
  - **Sees beyond daily survival to the eternal source of salvation**
    - *She cannot save her "children" on her own, but she can bring them to their Savior*
- Restoration Mothers in Israel
  - **Lucy Mack Smith**, mother of prophets
  - **Eliza R. Snow**, childless but a "mother to mothers," poet, Relief Society leader, priestess

# Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1–2:21)



- **Elkanah, Hannah** and Peninnah
  - Elkanah is said to be an Ephraimite, but elsewhere (1 Chr) he is listed as a Levite (perhaps a later attempt to explain why he could sacrifice and act as a priest!)
  - Peninnah the “rival” the Hebrew term is interpreted as “second wife” or “co-wife” in later periods
- **Hannah’s** prayer
  - Hannah’s Oath “O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and ... give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will **give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.**” (1 Samuel 1:11)
  - Eli sees Hannah’s silent prayer and thinks her drunk
    - The author continuously alludes to Eli as an ineffective high priest, here and elsewhere, leading to his own downfall, and that of his high priesthood
- **Samuel** – “Name of God” or “I have asked him of the Lord” a play on the Hebrew *shemeel* “He who is from God”

*Elspeth Young, “For This Child I Prayed”*

# The Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10)

- A poetic expression of praise
  - Hannah's original words? A later author's poetic rendition of her feelings?
  - *Her inspired expression may be a manifestation of the gift of prophecy*
  - Not completely about the situation at hand but about **larger themes of deliverance and salvation**
  - *A model for Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46–55*

And Hannah prayed, and said,

My heart rejoiceth in the LORD,  
mine horn is exalted in the LORD :  
my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;  
because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as the LORD :  
for there is none beside thee:  
neither is there any rock like our God

The LORD killeth, and maketh alive:

he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich:  
he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth;  
and he shall give strength unto his king,  
and exalt the horn of his anointed.

# Huldah (2 Kings 22:1–20; parallel 2 Chronicles 34:1–28)



- At the beginning of the reign of King Josiah, during a renovation of the temple a scroll was “found” with the Law of the Lord—which the people of Judah had not been following
- Josiah sent his scribe and the high priest to seek the word of the Lord from **Huldah, a prophetess**
  - She was apparently **literate**, being able to read the scroll
  - Four times in her response she declared “**Thus saith the LORD!**”
  - **Boldly declared the fate of Judah**, which was destruction, though Josiah himself would not see it
  - *Why not Jeremiah or another prophet?*

Elspeth Young, “Treasure the Word”