

All of the Women of the Bible Study Guide

All of the Women of the Bible by Edith Deen

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Plot Summary

All of *The Women of The Bible* is edited and compiled by Edith Green. The author has made a leap forward for all in that she has compiled information about the women found in *The Bible* into a single volume. Herein, the women are looked at from a variety of angles and for the purposes of better understanding these Biblical figures as individuals and their roles within the religious contexts in which they appear. The author includes both the prominent and the nameless individuals. She provides encyclopedic listings of some their names and devotes entire chapters to others. The first woman in this tradition is Eve. The chapters proceed so that the last figure is Eunice "mother of Timothy". Following these, she takes on more women per chapter.

The author's work provides an overview which can be used for further analysis. Whether for Bible Studies, Women's Studies or history of Judaism or Christianity, this book makes a great source for reference material. Naturally, this work can be used as a supplement to Scriptures and other references. It also makes reasonably light reading for those who may simply be curious and are intrigued by the possibilities.

By the end of the book, readers have been introduced to and reminded of many women. There are examples of marvelous women and of incredibly wicked women. Many of the women now and in Biblical times are between these extremes of perfection and nightmares. There is a wonderful variety of ways showing how to be a high quality woman. The ways of women are embraced. Motherhood is touted the best possible means for a woman to be her best. There are also other means by which a woman can be great. In this sense, there is bound to be at least one healthy model of womanhood to suit the tastes of every reader. The bad news is that there are also a few models of evil women. Just to keep people on their toes, there are also sample cases of disreputable women doing great things, giving people an opportunity to reconsider what their own values are and how they make judgments of other people. The most evil woman presented in the book is the woman who gets her daughter and husband to have John the Baptist's head cut off.



Chapter 1, Eve

Chapter 1, Eve Summary and Analysis

There is a Preface, a complex Table of Contents, and a long listing of women's names. Next, there are chapters featuring individual women. The first woman given a titled chapter is Eve. In this Judaic version, the first woman comes from Adam's rib. This tells some truth: biologically, man and woman are more similar than different. Man and woman are "flesh of one another's flesh" and there is some direct connection. It also leaves out knowledge of how biological procreation works, and omits the obvious fact that every child born emerges from the womb of a woman. However, these truths are more directly revealed when the offspring of Eve and Adam are described.

Having entered into the chapter on Eve, Edith Green is quick to point out ways that this story shows the equality of the two. She emphasizes that man and woman are made for one another; these are two parts of one whole entity. Edith gives some account of what happened with respect to Adam and Eve's children. She recounts the jealous murder of Abel by Cain and the joy when, decades later, Eve gave birth to Seth. Seth is cited as being the lineage of Jesus Christ. Enoch who walked with God is one of Eve's grandchildren. The Book of Enoch is about him and his relationship with God. Unlike most books about Biblical figures, she keeps the discussion of males to a minimum and returns the focus to the women who appear in The Bible.

The next chapter is devoted to a woman called Sarah. She was somehow given the message by God that she was going to be a Mother of Nations. Her husband was the beginning of the House of Israel. Edith Green explains that much of Sarah's life was a set of trials and tribulations about her ability to keep her faith in this message despite the demoralizing conditions. It appeared when she was a young woman that she was barren - this just means that she did not get pregnant even though she had sex without using birth control. As she wanted and was expected to have children, especially a son, this was a serious issue or concern. Ultimately, she did mother a son as God had promised. By the time she finally did, the birth seemed to be a miracle. The moral of the story is that Sarah did receive the rewards of God's promise to her, but he made it a real challenge for her. She was supposedly past her child bearing years when she became a mother for the first time. She was rewarded with bearing the child for a line of prestigious offspring.



Chapter 2, The Pillar of Salt

Chapter 2, The Pillar of Salt Summary and Analysis

The woman known to posterity as Lot's wife is the next subject of book. The author writes that the main issue is one of letting go of the past. Lot and his wife were involved in a decision that caused them to have to abandon a great deal in order to make a new life for themselves. Of the two, Lot was the one more willing and able to accept this. His wife was advised to not look back as they left their old home for the next stage of their life's journey. The author then explains to readers how there is more to this story than metaphor.

In the region where the story of Lot's wife occurred there are actually conditions that can create weather features and events common in other parts of the world. It makes perfect sense that people who have no reason for believing something will be skeptical. As such, the author takes the trouble to show readers how it is that, during the time the story was created, it was possible in that location for occasional outbursts that cause the sky to 'rain' fire and brimstone and that giant pillars of salt were created. Under those severe weather conditions when something drastic like this occurs, evacuation was apparently in order. Unfortunately, people who traveled too slowly or who turned in the direction on an onrushing wave could be covered with this bizarre form of natural salt. Edith Green purports that this is what actually transpired.

Rebekah is the next woman. This lady is the mother of a set of twin boys: Esau and Jacob. A man is given the assignment of finding his boss's son a wife. He does this without even complaining about how it isn't in his job description. The family is in a bit of a hurry, so once he finds a young woman who's behavior indicates to him that she fits the bill, they pressure the family to make their good byes to her. In under two weeks of meeting, the family takes the young woman as Isaac's wife and off she goes into her new life. She is her husband's second cousin. This is close enough to disgust some people as being incest, whereas others will feel that this is sufficiently distantly related for such a relationship to be okay. Snatched up like fresh produce at the grocer's: Rebekah proceeds with her life. Rebekah is the first woman in Judaic record of having a monogamous marriage: one wife only; one husband only. It is assumed she was twenty years younger than her husband and did not bear her twins until twenty years into this wealthy and purportedly truly high quality marriage. Her sons are very different. She uses deceit to get her favorite blessed by his father in a way that had been meant for her other son. She is found out and must live with the fact that they know this.



Chapter 3, Rachel, Leah, Dinah

Chapter 3, Rachel, Leah, Dinah Summary and Analysis

Jacob is introduced. He observes an attractive woman and it is shown how this is a relative of his mother's. She is his mother's niece, so obviously they are related. He is interested; there is a story about how they drink from the same dipper at a watering hole and this unites them in spirit. Jacob is reported to have been the most dedicated and sincere lover in the entire Bible. He got like this prior to problems relating to her marriage. This young lady is Rachel. In fact, Jacob was deceived by his new father-in-law into marrying two of his daughters. He married the eldest first; this was Leah, and afterward was still permitted to unite with Rachel. Leah had an easier time getting pregnant and was apparently rather docile. Edith Green writes that she went unloved by her own husband, whereas Jacob continued to lavish Rachel with devoted affection. Rachel did not get pregnant. What happened was that they only conceived when they were of the same religion. Leah converted to Jacob's God from the beginning and tended to be less beautiful and more spiritually inclined. Rachel did not begin to have pregnancies until after she had given up her father's religion and taken up her husband's. She is the first woman known to have died in childbirth. Despite her late start, she had twelve sons, each of whom is the first ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The next story is about Dinah. She ran into a different, bizarre part of fortune. She was abducted, seduced and raped by a man in Shechem. The author makes it clear that there was some very real problem with this. The trouble may have been mitigated or worsened or both when it became clear that the man was actually interested in Dinah. Ultimately, she ended up marrying her perpetrator with the hope that he would somehow make it up to her and abandon his wrong doing towards her and still be able to love her and somehow restore her honor - which only he had damaged, and for which he was therefore responsible. It didn't end that way. While Jacob persuaded the groom-to-be and his father to get circumcised, to at least outwardly practice Judaism and they did the brothers of the injured woman took a different tack. Their sister married. Then, her brothers broke into their house and took her back, out of there. They proceeded to murder the perpetrator instead of leaving their sister as his wife. After that, they killed everyone in town. Edith Green writes that their father did not forgive them for slaughtering the town's inhabitants and sacking the place. The honor of their sister was very important. Here, the crime against her is vindicated. At the same time, the religious conditions suggest that there was more to this story. Not only is what Shechem did to their sister a problem but the social rules of the entire town made the problem worse.



Chapter 4, Tamar & Israeli Wives

Chapter 4, Tamar & Israeli Wives Summary and Analysis

Tamar wanted to have children. She was married. Her first husband died. The woman remarried her deceased husband's brother. This was the custom: to keep the wife with her in-laws. The brother-husband didn't get her pregnant either. According to Levite law, she had the right to become pregnant by her husband, and the accountability for this spread throughout the male relatives. During this time, she developed the view that she might have better luck with her father-in-law than with his younger son. Then she found a way to have a sexual liaison with him. She tricked him into it by taking advantage of the wantonness of his desires. She disguised herself. He went to her, and not recognizing her, attempted to seduce her. It worked. Later, he went looking for the prostitute of her village and discovered that they didn't have one. Only then did he find out that he had had a sexual liaison with his own daughter-in-law and that by doing so, had succeeded in impregnating her. Although her means were devious, her goal was in accordance with the Levite law. Everyone she involved in her plot was someone she had a right to use for their help in securing the results she wanted.

Potiphar's Wife is described as wicked, spoiled and devoted to the satisfaction of worldly pleasures. The author explains that she was probably dissatisfied with her own husband. There were many slaves in the family's estate. Among these included Joseph, a Hebrew. He was attractive, and Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. Not only does she attempt the seduction, but when it fails she has the slave punished. She has him sent to jail on false charges and never does admit that she had somehow done something wrong.

Jochebed mothered some important people. One of these was Aaron; she had a feeling about this kid. As a grown man he founded the priestly role in the Hebrew culture. The author is a little unclear here in that she explains that Moses was set aside for the priestly function, but also writes that he founded the role of priest. He is described as having been "set aside" within the family. Miriam is noted as having served the people as an inspiration: rather than holding a lot of power steadily sociologically, she just suddenly did something sometimes. Jochebed is described as having had great faith and trust in God. It was only her doubtlessness that allowed her to go ahead and deliver her son Moses to the Pharaoh for protection during his childhood. There is one point of horror worth noting. There actually were ritual murders of children - as religious sacrifices at times in this society. Also the king did have mass scale slaughters conducted. The whole reason Moses had to be hidden was because the king had decided to slaughter the newborn Jewish sons of that season and year.



Chapter 5, Daughters of Zelophad

Chapter 5, Daughters of Zelophad Summary and Analysis

This chapter actually covers a number of women. The first of these is a women's rights case. It was about daughters claiming their right to a share of the inheritance from their father. The Promised Land was actually a social and cultural contract among the Jews. The Promised Land was akin to the more recent arrangements for immigrants to obtain cheap land in exchange for immigrating to and settling difficult country. This case of the five daughters going to Mosaic law for the purposes of being recognized as holding the right of inheritance is the first known to history through the record of scriptures. They won their case and a recorded precedent was set.

The next true story is about a woman harlot. This woman Rahab was known for her promiscuity and her excellent location on the very walls of the city of Jericho. Israelite spies decide to make the most of this reality. However, what made this woman famous was that she was also dedicated to protecting her relatives. She had the courage to protect Israeli spies sent to her. As the Israeli military attack against Jericho was successful, it proved to have been instrumental in saving the lives of her entire family. Rahab is one of three women listed as ancestors of Jesus the Christ. Rahab's life took place after Abraham but prior to the establishment of the rule and line of succession of King David of the Jews.

Deborah is next. She proved to be a great military leader in conjunction with a powerful faith in God. This does happen, and while not as unheard as it is now; rather, it was rare for one of the girls to be like this. Edith Deen explains that she was just a temple lamp lighter with some humble "Nobody Husband". She developed a strong reputation during peacetime. People came to her for advice on a regular basis. Her people were being oppressed; this true story comes from the time in Jewish history when the leaders were called Judges. This is a specific political and religious structure. She rose to power because for some reason when the male leaders weren't up to the task, Deborah was somehow able to do it.

Ruth is also worth mentioning. She is renowned for her successful attachment to her in-laws. She and her mother-in-law stick together. It is for this that she is most famous.



Chapter 6, Esther & Others

Chapter 6, Esther & Others Summary and Analysis

Esther is another famous Biblical woman. She was beautiful and was able to become the Queen of Persia. However, it turned out that Esther had her mind on the common good of the people, particularly the welfare of the Hebrews. She was very courageous in a political way. Her husband king had no idea she was a Jewess and did not care. The Jews were living in severe oppression at the time. Luckily for them, Esther cared a lot. Her husband was not particularly intense, but Esther learned that one of his favorite advisers hated Jews and had a strong intention to destroy them. Her cousin Mordecai, obviously a Jew, ran into conflict with this Haman. Esther was very popular with the people. She dared to break with tradition and went to her king in a manner that was not normally allowed to women, not even queens. Her husband, whose affection for her was absolutely genuine and wholehearted, was un-offended and offered her whatever she wanted. She scheduled two feasts and invited their opponent to dine with them. As it turned out, Mordecai was more than Esther's relative; he had actually saved her husband's life during his childhood. The husband found this during a review of a palace book called memorable deeds. After the second feast, Esther cried to her husband and openly confessed to her distress at the plight of the local Jews. Haman had plans to slaughter them. The King of Persia, rather than being outraged by his wife, was entirely moved. Haman was literally legally murdered instead of Mordecai. Local laws were changed entirely, making it legal for the local Hebrews to defend themselves against attacks and even to kill their worst enemies.

The Virtuous Woman is next. Her interest in God is one virtue. A list of other virtues is supplied: "chastity, charity, diligence, efficiency, earnestness, love for husband and children, and business foresight," (p. 152) are also listed. The Book of Proverbs is the one that stars in this chapter. The author includes an English version of a listing for the perfect wife called an acrostic. This is a wonderful thing in Hebrew as for each letter of the alphabet there is a bit of good advice. The Virtuous Woman is more of an abstract ideal than being any individual woman in particular; either way it advances a code of conduct which makes great sense as a helpful guide for women and is a tip for men for how good it can be to be married. This concludes women of the Old Testament.

Mary, Mother of God as Mother of Jesus Christ is brought up by the author.



Chapter 7, Mary, Mother of Jesus & More

Chapter 7, Mary, Mother of Jesus & More Summary and Analysis

The author's Chapter 5 is Women in Christ's Time. First of these is Mary, Mother of Jesus. The author actually uses the title "Queen of Heaven" for Mary, Mother of Jesus. This is of great importance, since there is a Biblical description of a location with a religion based upon the female godhead who they call the Queen of Heaven. Edith Green may have done this intentionally. She may have done this by mistake. To call Mother Mary this is to simultaneously assert her divine role as God's wife or concubine and to show reconciliation of the Judaic male God with the feminine as manifested by the virgin mother Mary. In this Mary's culture, fatherhood was recognized. Readers may take this for granted today, but there were both cultures where this connection was well known and others - often matriarchal cultures where this connection was ignored. Mary's virgin conception comes with recognition that it is a miracle.

Mary had a vision and took it to her elder cousin in Judea. Her cousin was already 6 months pregnant with a baby who grew up to be John the Baptist. The young women spent three months together and then Mary returned to Nazareth to be married to a man named Joseph. When she returned she was pregnant with Jesus. Nevertheless, the humble Joseph provided for both Mary and Joseph. When Mary gave birth in Bethlehem, people turned up bearing presents and assuring her and her husband that the baby was going to be the Saviour of their people. While this may seem hard to believe for readers today, receiving these kinds of messages was known in such times. As far as is known, no one received such messages or responded to them. Normal Mosaic laws were followed by Mary and her son Jesus. That being said, the tiny family of three was urged to flee to Egypt to evade slaughter or other dangers from Herod, showing just how political the baby really was. Jesus strayed from his parents when he was 12, indicating an interest in priestly matters and in education. Edith Deen states that after this time, his earthly father is no longer mentioned. Jesus separated from his parents around this time, or is treated as if his path has diverged from theirs. He may have begun attending school, as when he reemerges into society he has been fully trained as a rabbi. Mary turns up a few times during his ministry. At times she was amongst the entourage traveling with her priestly son. She was present at his crucifixion and around praying at the time of his resurrection.

At this point in the text, the writing is rather clear. Visions, augury, and prophecy are all "cultural technologies" available in the societies written about. The author's writing is concise. The tone is uplifting. The messages are all rather clear.



Chapter 8, Elisabeth & Others

Chapter 8, Elisabeth & Others Summary and Analysis

Elisabeth is Mary's older cousin, and mother of John the Baptist. Elisabeth was also the first to be informed of the angelic messages that her cousin's baby was going to be a boy and a living Messiah. This woman was the wife of a priest in a family that had a tradition of having priests in it. An angel Gabriel had told her husband the priest that either he was stricken speechless or that he had better keep his mouth shut about what was coming to pass. Elisabeth had not grown pregnant from lying with her husband for years, but then finally did. This also explains why there was some confusion for people about whether or not that really was how and why they became pregnant. Elisabeth was much older than Mary even though they were pregnant at the same time. Once his son was named John as an angel had dictated instead of being given his father's name, John the Baptist's father was once again able to speak. The chapter concludes with Edith Deen quoting Jesus as having remarked upon his elder cousin, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born to women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist," (Matthew 11:11, pg. 172).

Anna is the next chapter. She is a prophetess and is known to have been one of the first to affirm that Jesus Christ actually is the Messiah when he had grown into this position. The author reminds readers that this transpired while the Roman Empire was flourishing. It was the largest Empire that that region of the world had ever known. Romans were a variety of types of pagans. Anna was well versed in Hebrew prophecies, making her qualified to perform this particular task. She was elderly at the time and was well known to have lived a spiritually oriented life. It is implied that she knew Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah due more to her knowledge of Hebrew prophecies than from her experience of him by itself.

Martha & Mary: Mary is still known for having brought out the good oil, and having used it to anoint Jesus prior to his having to bear his cross. This act of genuine care and sincere generosity has been immortalized. Martha is the first one Jesus is reported to have told that by believing in him as the Messiah and living son of God that she would be immortalized. Although Martha was dismayed when Mary listened to Jesus instead of helping in the kitchen, Jesus acknowledged the value of both and asked that Martha let Mary to do as her wont.



Chapter 9, Three Sick Women

Chapter 9, Three Sick Women Summary and Analysis

Here, one of Jesus Christ's healing patients was more than just healed in the usual sense. She also became a minister to her people after she had been healed of a fever by Jesus. Another woman obtained healing by touching one of his garments. This was miraculous especially as she had spent a great deal of money on this same effort and had visited with many doctors. In her case, the problem was that she had been bleeding for 12 years. It is not specified where but while it weakened her it did not prevent her from functioning. In her case, she received healing while the group was traveling rather than during a time specially set aside for Christ to perform healings. In fact, he was en route to an appointment he had made to give a healing. In her case, he really noticed that a large amount of power flowed from him to her. As was his normal remark, Jesus explained, "...thy faith has made thee whole," (p. 183). Yet another woman had suffered from having become literally bent. It is not clear what the real reason was. Jesus spoke to her authoritatively, and "...loosed her from her infirmity," (p. 184). Christ normally used touch as part of his healing method. He was physically affectionate with his friends and colleagues and understood how healing and nurturing human contact is.

Herodias comes after. In this case, she was a bad girl. This was a particularly frightening group, who the author highlights for their wickedness and evil ways. These people had a great deal of political power and were terrifying in a variety of ways. One Herod, for example had apparently murdered the only woman he ever really loved during a bout of unbridled rage. More than one incestuous relationship - that between people closer than first cousins is how this has been defined in this case, was another. Herodias is credited with having been the one to ensure that John the Baptist was decapitated and that Christ was in fact crucified. While this role was necessary for the prophecies to come true, this is obviously the villain role in these and other cases. Fear and an attitude that at lower social levels would be viewed as madness and rebellion at lower levels of society were a hallmark of this family. Edith Deen furthers this evil reputation by acknowledging that there were generations of ancestors who had these kinds of behavioral problems. While this was probably true, this isn't the kind of thinking that permits repentance or change over generations.



Chapter 10, Syro-Phoenician Woman

Chapter 10, Syro-Phoenician Woman Summary and Analysis

This book opens with a woman who brought a particularly difficult case to Jesus and he appeared to dismiss it. There is some confusion because there is contradictory information which reveals that there has been a lie or an error somewhere. It is written that Jesus did heal a daughter who is called "be-deviled". This is the only case written of in which Jesus simply refuses to heal someone, at least initially, using the excuse that he only handles Jews or something along those lines. Edith Deen both informs readers that she takes her daughter to Jesus and sets her before him. Then, later on, the author explains that the woman did not bring her daughter to Jesus live and in person. This results in some confusion about what took place.

The next chapter focuses on Salome, Mother of James and John. She is written of in two of the gospels of the New Testament. In the gospel of Matthew and that of Mark. Scholars have determined that there is a substantial quantity of missing information about this case. Two of her sons were disciples. She is very unlike Jesus' mother Mary, who just kept quiet about everything and let events unfold. Although supportive, Mary is repeatedly said to have simply, "...pondered in her heart" all matters concerning her son as a Messiah or other prominent figure. This woman Salome was more like what readers would know as "a stage mother" in that she was strongly in favor of the ambitions of her sons. In fact, she went to Jesus seeking ways to either get them promoted or to be assured of their prestige in the afterlife in relation to their work with Him while incarnate. This really brings the whole mystic perception of Jesus Christ back down to Earth.

Woman of Samaria is next. There is a heading that goes with the chapter. This is "God is a Spirit". It is about the travels of a nameless woman. This was a breakthrough for this woman since she had been very into carnal pleasures. She went to a well that had been closely associated with Jacob. While there, she met a holy man. She was a Samaritan. A brief exchange reveals that he has some insight into the history of her sexual behavior. When it becomes clear that they are going to have a substantial, lengthy conversation, the man invites her to bring her husband. This is customary as a means of the man showing that his intentions are not sexual. At the same time he is affirming that the conversation may be viewed as public and private knowledge. This is also a nod to the jealous suspicions of men. Soon thereafter she reveals that she has heard of Jesus and the holy man reveals that he is Jesus Christ.



Chapter 11, Mary Magdalene & Claudia - Pilate's Wife

Chapter 11, Mary Magdalene & Claudia - Pilate's Wife Summary and Analysis

At the beginning of each chapter in the book there is a short note in italics. In this case, the author has chosen to include information to the effect that Mary Magdalene was troubled and partially possessed by demons. When Jesus met her, he healed her by exorcising those demons. Once they were cast out of her and she was her real self, she became one of his greatest followers.

Next, Edith Deen shares that Mary Magdalene was the first one on the scene of Jesus's resurrection. She went and fetched the male disciples who, like herself, had trouble believing this until they saw for themselves that his body was not in the tomb. She also witnesses two angels in the tomb. Then she interacts with Jesus again directly, in his immortal, imperishable body. She is so shocked by this miracle that at first she does not recognize him. Finally, the fact that she has been crying and that the day is dawning further explains how she might have been a little confused. There is a little more discussion of demon possession. The author notes at least one other culture she is aware of that has taken the trouble to differentiate between characteristics that are symptomatic of demon possession from symptoms of mental illnesses or other troubles that might cause mild or even drastic fluctuations in the behavior of one individual. It is possible to tell these problems apart. The author does not presume to know enough to deny the existence of demons however, she does not press the point. People did not have eyeglasses at that time.

The next chapter is Pilate's wife, Claudia. This one has a canonization. She has been recognized as a Saint by the portion of the Christian Church - the Greek Orthodox. This is the arm of the Christian church that sprang up in the Eastern Roman Empire. Most of the readers coming from the Western part of it and beyond, may not be familiar with it. So, that was regional. Saint Claudia had a dream the night that Jesus was arrested. She dreamed an actual event that had taken place at a different location. The next morning she sent a message to Pontius Pilate: "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him," (Matt. 27:19, p.206). Thanks to this, Pilate knew to avoid condemning Jesus Christ unjustly. Edith Deen reports that later, Pilate was transferred to Southern France and his life ended by suicide.



Chapter 12, Women of the Early Church

Chapter 12, Women of the Early Church Summary and Analysis

The author writes about the women named Mary of The Bible. She clarifies that Miriam is the old form of the name Mary, which means "love and faithfulness", (p. 210). Miriam is the only Mary of the Old Testament. She then presents the Marys of the New Testament and their main functions in society. The first of these is Mother Mary, who gave birth to Jesus during the Roman census at Bethlehem. In a case of irony, once they were counted, they fled to Egypt to avoid being slaughtered because they were pesky and prominent Jews. This Mary is revered to this day as the one woman who lived without sin her entire life as well as having conceived her son by the Judaic God while visiting her cousin who was pregnant with John the Baptist at the time.

The next Mary referred to is Mary of Bethany. This is a woman who listened to Christ teach. Her presence was accepted but the story is written as if her action was a real "gender bend". Later, after the teachings, she brought out the best oil and anointed Christ. He was moved by her sincerity and generosity, noting that there were many others people would have expected to be more generous with him but were not.

The third Mary, and the last to be covered by the summary but not by the book, is Mary of Magdalene. Her town was used as her surname. This woman, who everyone still knows worked as a prostitute prior to becoming Jesus Christ's only female disciple was also the first human to discover his resurrection. Once her teacher - whom she called Rabboni, had cast out 7 demons from her, her ability to make a life and to have education and male contact as a single woman became actual for her. While there is little direct account of what exactly this woman learned, and while she was never officially granted apostle status everyone knew she was one of his students. Why this is still an issue for people today speaks of just how severe the prejudices against her still are in fact because she's a girl and because she had worked as a prostitute. At this point Mary the Magdalene is probably less the problem than those who read of her. As already mentioned she was present for Christ's crucifixion, together with his mother, and was first to discover his resurrection. As it happens, while dying on the cross, Jesus specifically asked his mother and father to take Mary in - to protect her and help her that she might not be abandoned once again after years of loyal service. She is a perfect example of a genuine "penitent".



Chapter 13, Alphabetical Listing of Named Women

Chapter 13, Alphabetical Listing of Named Women Summary and Analysis

As the book progresses, the number of women covered by a chapter of the text grows. It is well known that women in the Bible have tended to be background characters. This can be upsetting. However, Edith Deen takes the trouble to show that even when cast in such roles, the stories of these women are valuable. The number of women per chapter of the book has increased. The most prominent women have been put first, with the others included later.

At this point, the book changes. The author cites the remainder of the text as being Section II - Alphabetical Listing of Named Women. There are 189 of these listings. Each has a quotation from The Bible - in an English version, so that readers know precisely where this information came from. The reports on these range in length from a few paragraphs to one or two sentences. Examples of these are Abiah. She is a member of the family the descendants of which included Jesus Christ. Edith Deen writes that she was not politically prominent. Anna has been mentioned earlier as an old scholarly woman who was the first to recognize the adult rabbi Jesus Christ as the living Messiah.

Herodias: this is an infamous woman of The Bible who was responsible for getting John the Baptist beheaded. She was Herod's wife. She asked her daughter for "his head". John the Baptist told her adolescent daughter that her parents' marriage to one another went against divine law. When the justifiably upset daughter was asked by her elders what she might do to retaliate she asked that the offender, John the Baptist have his head cut off. Her prominent social position made this happen, as per her mother's wishes. Herodias was the mother in this case.

Naamah was not one of the villains of The Bible. She suffered from being merely one of Solomon's wives, rather than the one and only wife of Solomon. Nevertheless, however much or little this troubled her, it remained a prestigious position. She was not of the same religion as her husband; she was not a Jew. The Israelites hated her. She mothered a boy who grew up to be King Rehoboam. Her son was the last King of a united Hebrew lineage of David and Solomon.



Chapter 14, Nameless Women

Chapter 14, Nameless Women Summary and Analysis

Here, the remainder of the book is devoted to women who are not mentioned by name. This provides greater opportunities for insight and for edification. Truths of life can be portrayed through anonymous figures. Their roles are explored and are shown. The first of these is the daughter. Edith Deen writes that "daughter" is mentioned two hundred times in The Bible. It is normally used specifically in the same way it is used today. There are times when it means the females in general with respect to the religion, or nation or culture of a people. Ethical standards for sexual behavior are mentioned and discussed. The most strict punishment for promiscuous women is in the case that she is the daughter of a priest. When she behaves that way, despite being a Jewish priest's daughter, then the Biblical penalty is that she be burned. Enoch's Daughters are listed as a group and are cited the eighth generation from the originator Adam. Two generations later were Lamech's daughters, and these girls had boys such as Noah among their brethren.

Culture comes into the picture again. On page 315, the author writes about "Foreign Daughters." Here is a case where the chief priest Ezra shows public dismay about the consequences of Jewish men having intermarried with nonHebrews. He cites this behavior as having been a breach of religious law. Later on there is mentioned the daughter of a king, and after her is described a daughter of Jairus, who was resurrected by Jesus Christ. Jesus advised that this story be kept secret, but that is not what happened. Instead, the news thrived as a testimony to religious faith.

Wives are next. Cain's wife receives first mention. She was not given a medal of honor for being able to keep as a husband a man who had murdered his only brother in a jealous rage, but this is worth observing. The unfortunate Lot's Wife is also included, still famed for having been turned to salt during an evacuation. Manoah's wife is famous because she was twice visited by an angel. She perceived the angel and the message clearly. She accepted this and followed their instructions. She informed her husband, who had a harder time with the news than she had; he feared they were going to be killed. She gets to be listed as a woman who had trusting faith and it went well because she did.



Characters

God

This is the official author of the sourcebook from which the information about all the women in the book came. God is the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient creator, maintainer and destroyer of the entire cosmos including humanity and all the other lifeforms and nonliving forms found in the guise of Nature. While there is more to God than Mother Nature, and although the two are treated normally as distinct entities, everything Mother Nature does falls within the dominion of God, as presently understood.

God is referred to in various locations about the book. His role as the creator of humanity is found at the beginning during a discussion of Adam and Eve and the garden of paradise where it seems that all human conduct was performed in innocence. After the forbidden fruit was consumed, the best consequence seems to have been the knowledge of good and evil and therefore the ability to make ethical decisions and to perceive in ethical terms. However, there was all manner of consequences of this; from this perspective, much of Jesus Christ's work involved the healing of reconciling people to themselves and to one another even given the effects of this knowledge of good and evil.

Even when not directly stated, the relationship of God to each of the women in the book is significant and is often discussed.

Eve

Eve is the first human woman ever to have walked the Earth according to this story of origins. She is prominent in the first chapter of the book dedicated to individual women. She is said to have emerged from the rib of the man who is her main lover.

She is known to have had more than one lover. One of these is Adam; the message is that Adam is her proper mate and partner. She is known to have been seduced by the Devil in the form of a serpent. What happened is not ever exactly explained. Somehow, the story is sometimes told that she had this other as a lover and that she ate fruit from the tree of knowledge. In other versions, there was nothing sexual about the seduction of Even by the Devil. Serpents were a popular symbol in that era and culture. So, the sign of serpent would have had many meanings.

Sarah

This woman is "the mother of nations". She is the first generation of people known in connection with the "House of Israel" as a religion and as a tribe. Her issue was that early on in her life she learned of this destiny. Then as she went along, she had to cope



with the obvious - it wasn't happening. Here is where doubt was given more than an ample opportunity to infect her, according to the author. Then, after enduring a great deal that made it seem as if she would not actually experience what God has assured her of, it did come to pass. Edith Deen describes the situation as having made much of Sarah's life a kind of spiritual trial simply because she had this knowledge of her own destiny hanging around waiting to be fulfilled. Everyone knows the saying, "The watched pot never boils." How Sarah coped is significant.

Sarah's husband Abraham had received a divine order from God. It is a message that would have confounded most today. God told him to just leave everything he knew, and go into the unknown and trust that God was going to lead him into a situation where he was going to become the head of an entire nation. Abraham went ahead and did this. This may not seem to be such a miracle, but when seen through a modern lens, Abraham might have visited a mental health professional and bitten down his own fingernails and heeded the counter advice to just keep his stable job in his own country together with his relatives. Meanwhile, God is maybe getting irritated and impatient. So, Abraham obeyed God and won - daring to trust this spiritual voice.

Healed Woman on the Road

This woman is not named in The Bible. She suffered from "an issue of blood for 12 years." There is no further description of her ailment. Whether this had to do with her menstruation or with a minor chronic injury incurred from her sexual practices, or if it was an entirely different problem such as an inflamed dental infection is not made clear. What is known is that she had sought medical help and it had rather worsened the situation instead of making it better. People sometimes react to things this way. This woman was healed by touching Christ's garment. She had to be pretty proactive to do this. This occurred while he was en route to deliver a healing, which he always did with human touch as part of the method. The other consistent part of the healing as it comes down to people today is something he told people once they were healed. This bears accepting for readers today, "Your faith has made you whole," [(Mark 5: 34) (p. 183)]. Here, he reminds the healed and everyone else, ourselves included that this power is ever present and available - having faith completely permits these kinds of effects.

Herodias

This woman has the villain role in The Bible. She was Herod's wife. Her husband was a tetrarch. While she was prominent, it is implied that she was not content with the ways in which her access to power was thwarted by the gender relations within her society. Her marriages were to people who were viewed by many elements in the society as being so close that it was considered incest. In many cases, these problems are clear. However, there are many cultural climates wherein first cousins are not viewed as so close that marriages between them would be incestuous, whereas there are and have been cultures where anyone closer than a fourth or fifth cousin would be viewed as too



closely related to marry. Herodias suffered directly from being married to men, seen by many as obviously incestuously closely related to her.

When John the Baptist brought this up to her husband and daughter, her feelings were hostile. Her loving adolescent daughter asked her mother what she could do for her, and Herodias requested her daughter's assistance in getting rid of their enemy John the Baptist Jew. Her wish was granted. When John was before a kind of court and brought up to the girl that his belief that her parents should not be together and therefore by implication she was condemned automatically, the girl wanted revenge. Herod offered her any recourse and the girl asked for what her mother wanted - to have that man's head. She got it, much to the horror of the Jews.

Samaritan Woman

This is the story of a woman who becomes "penitent"; that is, she tended to commit a certain type of sin but after meeting with Jesus repented. She is introduced as a young woman who felt some new intuition to go to a well of Jacob to fetch water and to parch her thirst. While she is there she begins to exchange a few words with a stranger. It quickly becomes apparent that they have more to say to one another than merely a few words.

The man asks her to fetch her husband so that she and he can have a long conversation without impropriety. Having her husband present would prevent any misunderstanding about the situation. She admits to having a lover but he is not her husband. Somehow this leads to her repenting with respect to her sexual behavior.

Claudia, wife of Pontius Pilate

Claudia is a Saint. However, her status as a saint has been created and limited to the Greek Orthodox Christian Church; this is the Christian Church of the East Roman Empire. This part of the Empire often flourished long after it had weakened in the West. Claudia had an accurate dream of Jesus Christ's arrest near to end, when he was betrayed by his dear friend Judas Iscariot into the hands of the opposition.

She made sure to inform her husband of this. Through doing so, Pilate knew to avoid unjustly condemning this man Jesus Christ who he clearly marked as the king of the Jews of an outlying Roman Province. Claudia is viewed as having been a Jewish and Christian sympathizer. Her husband and she were relocated to France afterwards and something happened that caused her husband to commit suicide. Perhaps his actions were viewed as the 'death of Rome' as an Empire, or that his clemency led to the 'death of the Roman gods'. It is at least as likely that something entirely unconnected with these events caused him to suffer in the way that triggered his suicide.



Lydia

This woman has her own portion of the book in her name. She indicates that there were some options available to women at the time and in the place she lived. This is pointed out by describing her as having been a business woman. She made at least a little money marketing purple fabric. As such, she shows that there were work opportunities for at least some of the women. Her name was simply that of her location. The culture she was surrounded by was mainly Grecian and Roman.

This woman of Philippi was the first woman to convert to Christianity in all of Europe. Not only that, but once converted she organized a small group of worshipers. The group was able to get the apostle Paul to come and see them. He was very impressed.

Lydia also gave refuge to Paul and Silas when they spent time in prison. They had taken the trouble to free a young woman from exploitation and in doing so had ruined the livelihood of a couple of other men, who had been making their money by exploiting her. They served time behind bars for this. When they were released, they went to Lydia who took them into her home graciously and appropriately.

Anna

This is a woman who had an especial role. She met Jesus personally. At the time she was elderly, or at least ripe in middle age. She was a bit of Hebrew scholar in that she was well versed in the prophecies of the people. Given that, at some point, she was the first to openly declare recognition of Jesus as the Christ - the Messiah as had been prophesied. She is mentioned twice in the book.

Jedidah

She is described as having had an evil husband. However wicked, her husband was a real king and therefore she was clearly "upper crust". Her husband was murdered. Her son was put onto the throne at the tender age of eight, meaning that as his mother as guardian, she was either one of a group of powerful advisers or else she actually ran the kingdom through her son's position until he grew up to be "the real king". She is cited as having succeeded in being a good influence upon her son, as well as a protector. He was a Jew, or a worshiper of "the one true God," and was able to create an atmosphere of reform, which is really the kind of thing that staves off many a political assassination. She is credited with having uplifted the quality of the leadership, including the moral or ethical quality of their behavior.

Daughter of Jairus

This woman was actually deceased briefly prior to meeting Jesus Christ in person. While this constituted merely a fleeting moment in their lives, it proved to be important.



She had been ill for some time, for how long is not specified in the book. She appeared to have died. People were called in who began to perform the funeral rites by the time Jesus arrived with his healing companions. He dispelled her ailment, urging her to rise once he arrived.



Objects/Places

Judea

This is a land governed and populated largely by Jews during part of the story. It is one of the many important locations of the work. It is mentioned repeatedly throughout the entire book. It is viewed as the closest thing to the nation of Israel that could be found on Earth during the era in which the book was written.

Bethlehem

This is the town where the Roman census was taken. Hebrews flocked to this town from outlying areas in order to participate. It was during this time that the couple Mary and Joseph had their baby in a manger. They left Bethlehem and headed to Egypt based on information provided by another angel.

Egypt

This is the still famous nation. However, during the millennium that the Scriptures span, this nation was one of the dominant in the region. Maybe it still is, but for Americans it is not easy to have the proper perspective. Egypt and the ruling Pharaohs are viewed in relation to the Hebrews during this book. There are times when Jews go to Egypt because it is safer there. At other times, Jews flee Egypt because of how dangerous it is there. Who is governing Egypt and what the laws are like relative to Hebrews are evidently pertinent.

Galilee

This is another major location of the book. It is near enough to the Mediterranean Sea to have been relevant to Biblical personnel. This is the province where Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion. It is mentioned in multiple parts of the book, as it directly pertains to women in the story. It is viewed as a place that is not all that safe for Jews under Herod.

Endor

This is a place brought up around page 100 of the book. It is introduced in the chapter title since the woman who is featured is intimately associated with her location rather than being known by her name. Endor was known to have a witch; in this case it was a woman with mediumistic powers, which only one of many possible strange skills. King Saul went and had a meeting with this Woman of Endor the day before he was assassinated by Philistines.



Jerusalem

This city is the star of many a Hebrew drama. One of the chapters in which it appears is when King Solomon judges a case involving one dead baby and one live one. The mothers were housemates. They were single women. The babies had been born within three days of one another. One of the babies had died during the night. The city stars in this and other dramas during the course of the book. The city of Jerusalem is also in the heart of Jesus Christ, and he views this location as "his bride".

Church

In this case, there are two main meanings of the term. One is the Hebrew religious organization taken as a whole. The other meaning arrives later in book, with the onset of Jesus Christ as the Christian Church. The Church in one or the other of these forms appears throughout the book. During the chapter on Mary, the boy Jesus, as a twelve-year-old, heads to the Church. He is found by his parents but the author then shows that at or near to this time Jesus turned his life over to the Church and was educated for the role of Rabbi.

Canaan

This is one of the lands populated by a somewhat flexible Hebrew people. There were times when Canaan was more of a home to the Jews and other times when Hebrews would clear away from the area for the reason that the political leaders were out to get them, or would neglect them. Canaan is mentioned in a variety of locations throughout the book.

Samaria

This is another of the lands in the book that has a chapter in which there is a woman and the location. Woman of Samaria is the title of the chapter. It is located near the second third of the book. Here, readers meet a Samaritan. Jesus is visiting Samaria at the time which is why this happens.

Holy Land

In this case, the author is referring to the city of Jerusalem and surrounding environs. It is mentioned on page 210 of the book, in the chapter Mary, Mother of James and Josés.

Temple

This is a term that can mean the same thing as Church, but indicates pre-Christian or alternate religion. Most of the time it is mentioned in the book it means the Jewish

Church prior to the life of Jesus Christ. The other meaning of temple in the book is what could also be called the sanctuary or shrine or the room that has an altar or altars in it.

Macedonia

This is a small nation that shares one border with Greece. It appears multiple times during the course of the book. The role it has is normally minor.

Rome

Here, the word has two meanings, or three. There is the city of Rome. During the book, Rome is the seat of the Roman Empire. As such, Rome sometimes means the entire Empire rather than just the city. It is brought up many times during the book. In most cases, Rome involves some essential administrative task or need. The Roman census is one example of how Rome is involved in the story. Rome is responsible for Herod and Pontius Pilate being in office in regions that Jesus Christ inhabits during his lifetime.

Themes

Virtuous Women

One purpose of women in The Bible is to show through stories what a good woman is like. For women, it gives evidence of a number of qualities which can be cultivated by individuals. Such characteristics can also be nurtured and appreciated in others. Honesty is one trait normally approved of in women in The Bible. Another ideal is chastity. The virtuous woman, however, does not appear to be expected to be celibate, but rather to be married and to have some healthy kind of sexual life with her husband. Motherhood is another of the virtues of womanhood. Here, the responsible and tender nurturing of young is part and parcel of the needed character of woman.

There is another virtue of women. This is their spiritual function. Women are encouraged to be a good influence upon their husbands and are warned that they will often have the power to either help or hinder the development of their partner. Women are presented in both positions of leadership and also as followers within the context of the book. As many people function as both in real life, this is a helpful element of realism. Anna, Esther and Beth-Sheba are all cases of public female leadership. Mother Mary, Claudia, while Pilates' wife, are two examples of women who provided leadership in a much quieter manner. Neither performed great public feats, but through their support of loved ones, showed the importance of their influences which is a form of leadership in itself.

Marriage and motherhood are treated as situations that involve following and leading. The leadership is often most overt with respect to the children. Husbands are people who may be leaders themselves, and the role of the woman as wife may be more supportive than directive. However, it is clearly pointed out in this book that women should expect to be a point of powerful influence with their husband. This is done in an effort to encourage a sense of responsibility in women towards their husbands - it is important to be a benevolent and good influence upon their husband. Women are warned to not underrate their own role nor the damage they could do if they make themselves an evil influence upon their men.

Spiritual Women

There are a number of spiritually active women in this book. This quality shows itself in a number of ways. One way is by marriage into priestly families. In some cases women married priests, or rabbis as they were called. There were also cases where a family tended to produce priests. Jesus Christ and John the Baptist heralded from a clan which often produced members who went into the clergy. Tending such people was just one way of cultivating the spiritual.



One of the women mentioned is Anna. This woman indicates another spiritual path that Hebrew women could follow. She learned a great deal about the Jewish religion. Because she did this, and fraternized with people in the temple/synagogue/church, when Jesus had grown to manhood and completed his training she was able to discern that he was the Christ - the Messiah foretold by the prophecies. She is the first individual to explicitly state before Jesus and others that he was the living Christ of their people.

There were also women such as Miriam. Her service to God and to her people was a bit different. When still a child, she helped her family by sending her brother Moses into the protection of people who would otherwise be their very enemies. This enabled him to be spared from a slaughter. Later, as a grown woman, she was granted two valuable gifts. One was prophecy and the other was singing. She is reported to have led a song and dance when her people were crossing the Sea of Reeds: this was the Passover incident, when the onrushing waters collapsed upon the enemy but spared the fleeing Jews.

Mother Mary was granted other profound spiritual gifts. One of these was her ability to remain free from sin throughout her entire life. The other was her ability to quietly hold and absorb events rather than to be outspoken regarding any opinions or judgments about her son. The author acknowledges the significance that she, like her cousin who bore John the Baptist, would live to give birth, to raise their sons, to see their boys grow up to be great men and then would bear witness to them being destroyed as enemies of their own kind. Could they have endured it if they had seen this coming? How are they supposed to feel about something like this? Were they better prepared to bear it due to other types of hardship that were commonplace among the people of their region at that time? Mary went through her life as her son's mother. She is reported to mainly have told others that she pondered events in her heart. This self-containment turned out to be quite profound in itself.

History

One role of this book is to serve as a work of history. The author takes readers through two millennium of human history by covering this material. She has begun with the Hebrew traditional story of the creation of humanity on Earth. This is an act of preservation of tradition. Then she shows through the women of history, the Biblical generations. The general tenor of the book is that it follows the same chronology as The Bible in order to minimize any confusion. The accounts of the women, after the rather questionable creation myth transformed into a factual account of lineage. Readers are shown many aspects of the culture of the Hebrews and attributes of the time and place by the events that transpire. There are cases that show patterns of marriage, of legal rights and social roles. There are stories which give information about the kinds of opportunities that were available to women in a given region at a given time. It is revealed, for example, that there were situations where women did work. This may come as a surprise. There were types of paying work that tended to be performed more by women than by men. These often included practices that were more readily



performed while children were around. This was simply to go with the flow of nature and divine law as far as anyone can figure it to be. This type of thing, upon inspection, has been found to occur in matriarchal, egalitarian and patriarchal cultures strongly suggesting that this is some kind of truth that is as unavoidable as the rotation of the planet. As such, it is best accepted than struggled against.

There are many political changes shown in the book. The work is very obviously from the Jewish perspective, as it is all about them. Other cultures, other nations and all the relevant politics surround them. The subjectivity is not that of one individual but is that of the Hebrew people; the author of this book is Edith Deen, but the official author of The Bible is God. In the ancient, pagan world this was given as God of the Jews. In other cases, it was more universally argued that this is the one true God as opposed to all of the false ones worshiped in other locations and as part of other religions. Often, the false god is the Moon or Sun or another one of the planets. For modern readers, the context is quite different. However, part of the history of the book is to show some of the changes of how Jews were helped, oppressed, and how their God and religion were perceived by others. The history also makes many of the Hebrew values quite clear.

Lastly, another feature of the book is that it shows where the Jews lived. There was Judea, which was often a Hebrew country. However, there was more a history of migration and externally forced relocation for these people throughout history. While this kind of thing actually did occur among other nations and tribes in Continental Europe, many of the peoples of the Mediterranean Sea had become adept at staying put. For this reason, Greece and Egypt, for example, have had "a people" and "a nation" for thousands of years. Britain, by way of contrast, can be shown to have been the home of a wide variety of invading "white tribes" for generations with periods of relative stability caused by the dominance of one group or another.

Style

Perspective

The perspective of the author is that of a woman. She is a contemporary lady. The work was published in 1955. She was a married woman at the time the work was published. She acknowledges the help of her husband during this time. He was actually supportive of her effort in contrast to the fear that he might not really want her to succeed. She is an American. By the time this work comes out she is an established writer and author.

According to the back of the book she is a guild and league member and an author. The married twentieth century woman is most probably also a Christian. The author does not mention whether or not she has any children. However, the way that the maternal role is eulogized in throughout the text suggests that she probably would be if she could be. This type of thing is a bone of contention for women who were planning on remaining childless. It may also be a question: what would make a woman fear motherhood? and how can these fears be realistically countered?

It is implied that the author is not a young woman. She gives the impression that she is also not an old woman. This would make her middle-aged. She does not indicate explicitly whether or not she has children. There are a few biases that show in her work. She is either Christian or Jewish. She likes women. She is an advocate of female equality, and takes pains to show cases where women's rights have improved through Biblical stories, although she does not emphasize Christ's direct teachings on this subject. She is an advocate of stable families and of marriage.

Tone

The tone of the work is a mixture of informative and inspiring. The whole work can be viewed as a form of female advocacy. This gives readers a new reference book. Here, whether grown women or children, people can grab this book when seeking advice for women. Edith Deen must have learned a great deal when she culled The Bible for these true stories. Readers face a blend of paraphrasing with clearly cited quotations. Because she has compiled information that had not been put into this type of composite form before, her work is unique. If anyone has done this before, their work has been lost and therefore it had to be done again.

This book is educational. Men and women can use it. For girls and women it shows them clearly what a good example is, and indicates a variety of ways they can nurture their own ability to be a good woman. It also includes admonitions - warnings about bad behavior. Social standards and judgments are also made evident. There are also examples provided of bad women. While there are fewer of these, it still makes the overall situation clear.



One element is clear: there is apparently only so much sexual promiscuity that any given individual can take, and women who were the most promiscuous were generally shunned and viewed as evil. It may be worth noting, that the reason this behavior is so frowned upon is never explained. Within this context it is also true that many cases of male sexual behavior are presented. Drama and strife surrounding nonmonogamous men are also shown. Often, the promiscuous men portrayed were socially prominent and often had multiple wives as well as concubines. The majority of promiscuous women shown were single women and often lower class people. On either side of the equation monogamous marriage with children is recommended throughout the Bible as the best course of action.

The book is extensive in its scope. Through reading this book women can learn a great deal about how Biblical women made headway in their own lives. There is some diversity with respect to methods for handling situations. The cultural context and the familial and political conditions are all taken into account. The tone is helpful. It is reasonably light - hearted; the book is clearly meant to be enjoyed. People can read this book if they wish to learn more about women. They can also read it as a Biblical study. It will also prove valuable if they wish to learn more about regional history.

Structure

The structure of the book is fairly unusual. It is ordinary in that there is a Preface, Table of Contents and chapters. It is less ordinary in a number of other ways. There is more than one table of contents. One of these is concise and general. Later, there is another one which gives more details. The second of them includes a table for sections of the book as a whole. There are other differentiating features of the overall work.

The book is divided into three sections. The first of these is dedicated to chapters of women. The most prominent cases have their own chapter. Following these are chapters that include multiple women, often only two or three. Then there is a shift. This transition to a more inclusive practice leads up to the second section. In the book's Section 2 there is a lengthy alphabetical listing of 189 women by name. To each there is a brief space, often including a direct citation of The Bible making easy reference.

Section 3 of the book is called: Chronological Listings of Nameless Women in the Background. She has organized these according to major social categories. There are: Daughters, Wives, Mothers, Widows and Other Unnamed Women. This permits yet another vantage point through which some of the same women and many others can be perceived. It shows how much social roles are used as accurate descriptions but also as forced forms. These can be truths which help women to feel comfortable with their own place in life. Each individual is free to function within a multiplicity of social roles. At the same time, these can be frightening. There can be fear that one doesn't fit neatly into the shape at which one is aimed. This is a fear of destruction caused by efforts to conform to an unsuitable role.

All of these parts of the book work together. While it does make the impression that there are starring roles and less prominent ones, this does to some extent fit the facts. Women can enjoy leafing through the book depending upon mood. The sense of anonymity which accompanies everyone now and again in life can provide a great lens through which to view these stories. The book is well organized and there is a fine bibliography and even an index following the main text.



Quotes

"As Isaac reached manhood, Sarah was to come face to face with their beloved Son of Promise to sacrifice him upon an altar. As Sarah sorrowfully watched her husband and son depart for the mountains in the land of Moriah, we can imagine her anguish of heart." p. 15

"With the help of her daughter Miriam, she laid her baby amid the flowering flags near the river's bank and left this young girl near by to watch over her little brother," p. 52

"She prayed for those who stumbled, but were girded with strength, those who had been hungry, but were fed, those also who were barren, as she had been barren. She sang also to the Lord who bringeth low and lifteth up, who raiseth up the poor out of the dust and lifeth up the beggar from the dung hill, to set among princes." p. 91

"Another reason for Miriam's conflict with her brother Moses had arisen. He had married again. His first wife Zipporah, a Midianite, had died. His second wife was a Cushite (Ethiopian), a dark-skinned woman from the African country bordering on Egypt....It is probable that Miriam...expressed herself quite freely against her brother's wife." p. 60

"She no longer doubted that she was being visited by the king of Israel. But when she was assured by Saul that she must not be afraid, she made her predictions, telling him that she saw gods ascending out of the earth." p. 108

"Maybe this woman had sensed more than she even dared to tell King Saul. She possessed a peculiar power, but suppose she had sought to use that power to lead King Saul and others on to a knowledge of God rather than in the mysteries of wizardry. What great things might this woman have achieved!" p. 109

"When she was presented to the king, he loved her above all the women that had been brought before him, and he set the royal crown upon her head. After she became queen, her name was changed from Hadassah, meaning 'myrtle', to Esther, meaning 'star'." p. 148



Topics for Discussion

Which are your favorite women of the Bible? Please keep your choices down to three. Explain why if you can.

List the most important functions of women in the book.

Do you think that being a mother today in your culture is more, less, or equally as important as it was during the times referred to in this book? Support your answer.

Give your opinion about the existence of slavery or something an awful lot like it in the book: are you against it, in favor of it, or have other feelings/beliefs about it?

What was the worst event that happened to a woman in this book? Is your dislike a personal bias or is there some other reason you find it so offensive?

What is the happiest thing that happened to a woman in this book? Is this your personal favorite or is there another reason why you give this answer?

List the main virtues for women advocated throughout The Bible.

Why is so important that five sisters were able to receive inheritance monies from their father?

What does Esther tell us about the power of her being pretty? How does she use being good looking to save the Jews?