

## THE HEROINES OF THE EASTERN STAR

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### ADAH

JEPHTHAH WAS AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD, BEING THE SON OF AN ARMAEAN HARLOT. WHEN HIS BROTHERS BECAME AWARE OF HIS IRREGULAR BIRTH, THEY FORCED HIM FROM THE HOME AND DENIED HIM HIS SHARE OF HIS FATHER'S INHERITANCE. HE FLED TOWARDS THE JORDAN AND BECAME AN OUTCAST. HE WAS A BORN ORGANIZER AND LEADER. HE LED A WILD LIFE, BECAME A SORT OF ROBBER, PLUNDERING CARAVANS, SURPRISING VILLAGES. HE GATHERED TOGETHER AN ARMY OF BROKEN MEN, THIEVES AND OUTLAWS, AND BROUGHT THEM UNDER THE STRICTEST DISCIPLINE.

THE ISRAELITES WERE IN DISTRESS; THEIR NATIONAL LIFE WAS AT STAKE AND THEY WERE WITHOUT A LEADER FOR THEIR ARMY. THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, SOME OF WHOM WERE JEPHTHAH'S OWN BROTHERS, BEGGED HIM TO BECOME THEIR LEADER. THIS WAS A BITTER PILL, BUT IN THE HOUR OF ABSOLUTE NECESSITY MANY PRINCIPLES HAD TO BE CONCEDED. THEIR OFFER WAS A SURPRISE TO JEPHTHAH, HE HAVING BEEN DRIVEN FROM HIS FATHER'S HOME AND SPURNED. AFTER MUCH PERSUASION HE AGREED TO TAKE COMMAND OF THE ARMIES AGAINST THE AMMONITES. THIS WAS CONTRARY TO JEWISH LAW, "THAT HE WHO WAS THE SONE OF A HARLOT MIGHT IN NO WISE RULE AMONG THEM." AN AGREEMENT WAS ENTERED INTO THAT, IF HE WERE VICTORIOUS, HE SHOULD BECOME THE LEADER OF THE NATION. JEPHTHAH BECAME IMBUDED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TRIED TO REFRAIN FROM WAR WITH THE AMMONITES, BUT THEY REMAINED OBDURATE AND HE LED HIS VAST ARMY AGAINST THEM.

THERE WAS A GREAT SLAUGHTER. THEY WERE PURSUED INTO THE VERY HEART OF THE COUNTRY. TWENTY CITIES WERE CONQUERED AND THE WHOLE COUNTRY SUBDUED. JEPHTHAH RETURNED TO MIZPAH, HIS FORMER HOME. THE LORD DWELT IN MIZPAH AND JEPHTHAH OPENED HIS HEART TO HIM AND HERE WAS FULFILLED ALL THAT HE HAD REQUIRED OF THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL IN RETURN FOR BECOMING THEIR LEADER.

JEPHTHAH'S VOW TO THE LORD, HIS ORIGIN IS A MATTER HE COULD NOT HELP. WE MUST THINK OF MEN AND EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE PERIOD TO WHICH THEY BELONG. HE HAD NOT THE INFLUENCE OF A LOVING AND TENDER MOTHER. HE, PERHAPS, MADE THE BEST OF A TRYING SITUATION. HE JOINED THE RANKS OF THE LORD AND REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THE END.



AFTER JEPHTHAH'S RETURN TO MIZPAH, HE WAS MADE THE HEAD OF THE ISRAELITISH NATION WHERE HE ESTABLISHED HIS FUTURE HOME. THERE IS NO MENTION OF HIS WIFE, BUT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE DAUGHTER WE ARE GIVEN A GLIMPSE OF HER CHARACTER. HE EMBRACED THE JEWISH RELIGION. IT WAS AT THE ALTAR HE MADE A SOLEMN VOW TO THE LORD WHEN HE SAID, "IF THOU WILT INDEED DELIVER THE CHILDREN OF AMMON INTO MY HAND, THEN IT SHALL BE THAT WHATEVER COMETH FORTH FROM THE DOORS OF MY HOUSE TO MEET ME, WHEN I RETURN IN PEACE FROM THE CHILDREN OF AMMON, IT SHALL BE JEHOVAH'S AND I WILL OFFER IT UP FOR A BURNT OFFERING."

HE RETURNED IN TRIUMPH FROM HIS MILITARY CAMPAIGN. WE CAN IMAGINE HIS ENTRY INTO MIZPAH, RIDING IN A BRAZEN CHARIOT, SURROUNDED BY HIS STEEL-CLAD WARRIORS, INTO THE STREETS FILLED WITH PEOPLE. WHEN THE PROCESSION REACHED HIS HOME, THE FIRST TO MEET HIM WAS HIS OWN BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER "WITH TIMBRELS AND WITH DANCES." "ALAS, MY DAUGHTER, THOU HAS BROUGHT ME VERY LOW, FOR I HAVE OPENED MY MOUTH UNTO JEHOVAH AND CANNOT GO BACK." HE KEPT HIS WORD, NOTWITHSTANDING THE GREAT SACRIFICE HE WAS CALLED UPON TO MAKE.

ADAH ROSE AT ONCE TO THE GRANDEUR OF THE SITUATION AND BADE HER FATHER KEEP HIS PROMISE. SHE MADE A HUMBLE REQUEST OF HER FATHER WHICH WAS GRANTED. "LET ME ALONE TWO MONTHS THAT I MAY DEPART AND GO DOWN UPON THE MOUNTAINS, I AND MY COMPANIONS, TO BEWAIL MY VIRGINITY." HEBREW WOMEN LOOKED WITH HORROR UPON THE THOUGHT OF A CHILDLESS DEATH, NO BRIDAL FESTIVITY, NO NUPTIAL TORCHES. THESE TWO MONTHS WERE OF SLOW BUT SURE DEATH. GOD AND SHE ALONE KNEW. AT THE END OF THE ALLOTTED TIME SHE RETURNED HOMeward. WE CAN SEE HER AND HER COMPANIONS WINDING THEIR WAY DOWN THE NARROW PASSES AND GORGES OF THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PLACE WHERE SHE WAS TO GIVE HER LIFE FOR THE FREEDOM OF HER COUNTRY.

THE DEED WAS CONSUMMATED AND JEPHTHAH "DID WITH HER ACCORDING TO HIS VOW." FOR YEARS AFTER, THE MAIDENS OF ISRAEL WENT YEARLY TO THE MOUNTAINS FOR FOUR DAYS TO COMMENORATE THE SACRIFICE OF JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

## RUTH

THE SCENE IS LAID IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA. DURING THE REIGN OF THE JUDGES A GRIEVOUS FAMINE SPREAD THROUGHOUT JUDEA. ELIMELECH, HIS WIFE, NAOMI, AND THEIR TWO SONS EMIGRATED INTO THE COUNTRY OF MOAB.

THE TWO SONS MARRIED DAUGHTERS OF MOAB. THE ELDEST SON MARRIED RUTH AND THE YOUNGEST ORPAH. BOTH WOMEN APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MODEL



WIVES. WITHIN TEN YEARS ELIMELECH AND HIS TWO SONS DIED AND WERE BURIED IN THE LAND OF MOAB. NAOMI WAS LEFT IN DESTITUTE CIRCUMSTANCES. HER HEART AND SPIRIT WERE BROKEN, AND SHE FELT THAT GOD HAD DESERTED HERE. NAOMI YEARNED FOR HER OLD HOME AND THE HOME FRIENDS AND RESOLVED TO RETURN TO BETHLEHEM AGAIN.

NAOMI HAD LEARNED THAT GOD HAD VISITED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL IN GIVING THEM BREAD. SHE SET OUT ON HER WAY TO JUDEA, WITH TWO DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW AS ESCORTS. IT WAS UNDER THE IMPULSE OF AFFECTION THAT THEY ACCOMPANIED HER. NAOMI'S HOME WAS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS. CARAVANS OF CAMELS WERE THE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION. WE CAN ALMOST SEE THEM SLOWLY WINDING THEIR WAY UP THE NARROW MOUNTAIN PATH UNTIL THE TOP IS REACHED.

AT LENGTH NAOMI TURNED TO RUTH AND ORPAH TO EXPRESS HER APPRECIATION OF THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO HER FAMILY AND TO HERSELF. THEN WAS ENACTED THE MOST DRAMATIC SCENE OF THE STORY. NAOMI, ADDRESSING HER TWO DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW. SAID, "GO, RETURN EACH TO HER MOTHER'S HOME; THE LORD DEAL KINDLY WITH YOU AS YE HAVE DEALT WITH THE DEAD AND ME." SHE CLASPS THEM IN A PARTING EMBRACE. BUT THEY LIFT UP THEIR VOICES, WEEPING, "WE WILL RETURN WITH THEE UNTO THY PEOPLE." A SECOND TIME SHE BADE THEM GO. ORPAH KISSED HER MOTHER-IN-LAW. BUT RUTH CLAVE TO HER. ORPAH RETRACES HER FOOTSTEPS, RUTH REFUSES TO LEAVE NAOMI. HER RESOLVE IS ONE OF THE MOST UNHESITATING CONFESSION OF LOVE IN LITERATURE. "ENTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE AND TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER THEE, FOR WHITHER THOU GOEST. I WILL GO; AND WHERE THOU LODGEST. I WILL LODGE; THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE; THY GOD, MY GOD. WHERE THOU DIEST. I WILL DIE AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED. JEHOVAH DO SO TO ME AND MORE ALSO IF AUGHT BUT DEATH PART THEE AND ME."

RUTH NOW OCCUPIES THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF THE STORY. MOAB IS LEFT BEHIND, THE JORDAN CROSSED AND ARM IN ARM THE TWO WORLD-FAMOUS FRIENDS REACHED BETHLEHEM.

IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE HARVEST TIME AND NECESSARY THAT RUTH SEEK EMPLOYMENT. SHE SUGGESTED TO NAOMI THAT SHE BECOME A GLEANER AFTER THE REAPERS, GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS. THIS WAS A VERY LONELY TASK, THE HUMBLE PLACE OF THE WIDOW, THE ORPHAN AND THE VERY POOR. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE JEWISH LAW, THE POOR HAD A RIGHT TO GLEAN IN ANYONE'S FIELDS. THE OWNER OF THE FIELD MUST NOT GATHER ALL OF THE WHEAT AND BARLEY. RUTH WAS TOO PROUD TO BEG, BUT NOT TOO PROUD TO EARN A LIVELIHOOD BY HONEST WORK. SHE CAME TO THE FIELDS OF BOAZ, A MAN OF WEALTH AND INFLUENCE. WHEN HE CAME TO THE FIELD TO GREET THE



REAPERS, HE WAS ATTRACTED BY THE YOUNG WOMAN AND SAID, "WHOSE DAMSEL IS THIS?" HE WAS TOLD SHE HAD COME OUT OF THE LAND OF MOAB WITH NAOMI. BOAZ WAS PERFECTLY AWARE OF ALL THAT SHE HAD BEEN TO NAOMI, AS WELL AS IN HER BELIEF IN THE GOD OF ISRAEL, AND HE TREATED HER WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT AND COURTESY. HE HAD HER REMAIN AT HIS FIELD AMONG HIS MAIDENS AND REFRESH HERSELF AT HIS FEASTS. RUTH WAS ASTONISHED AT THE OFFER OF THESE RESIDENCERS. HE BROUGHT TO HER PROTECTIVE KINDNESS AND SAW TO IT THAT HIS REAPERS LEFT PLENTY OF BARLEY GLEANINGS. HOW PLEASED WAS NAOMI WHEN RUTH MENTIONED THAT IT WAS IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ THAT SHE HAD GLEANED. RUTH CONTINUED TO GLEAN IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ UNTIL THE END OF THE HARVEST. NAOMI WAS GREATLY PLEASED AND IMPRESSED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY FAVOR SHOWN RUTH BY BOAZ. SHE LAID A PLOT TO BRING ABOUT THEIR MARRIAGE, BUT THERE WERE SEEMINGLY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME.

A DEEP PRINCIPLE PERVADE THE CONSTITUTION OF ISRAEL WAS TO CARE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FAMILIES. IF A HUSBAND HAD DIED, THE NEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW MIGHT BE CALLED UPON BY THE WIDOW TO PERFORM FOR HER ALL THE DUTIES OF A HUSBAND. HERE THERE IS NO BROTHER-IN-LAW AVAILABLE; THEN THE NEAREST KIN HAD THIS DUTY TO PERFORM.

AFTER THE HARVEST SEASON WAS OVER, A HARVEST FESTIVAL WAS HELD. IT WAS A JOYOUS OCCASION. EACH REVELER WOULD SEEM TO HAVE LAIN DOWN NEARBY TO SLEEP IN THE OPEN AIR. RUTH DID AS NAOMI DIRECTED. THROUGH THE DARKNESS SHE WENT TO THE PLACE OF THE FESTIVAL AND, AFTER ALL WAS QUIET, AND BOAZ HAD FALLEN ASLEEP AT THE END OF THE MEAL OF GRAIN, SHE UNCOVERED HIS FEET AND LAID HER DOWN. HE AWOKE AND WAS STARTLED AND SAID, "WHO ART THOU?" "I AM RUTH, THY HANDMAID, FOR THOU ART A NEAR KINSMAN; SPREAD THY SKIRTS OVER THY HANDMAID." COVERING A WOMAN WITH ONE'S MANTLE MEANT HE WOULD BE HER PROTECTOR, THAT IS, HE WOULD MARRY HER. THIS WAS A SORT OF PROPOSAL. BOAZ SAID TO HER, "FEAR NOT. I WILL DO ALL THOU SAYEST. FOR ALL THE CITY OF MY PEOPLE DO THOU ART A WORTHY WOMAN; AND NOW IT IS TRUE I AM A NEAR KINSMAN." RUTH RELATED THE WHOLE CONVERSATION TO NAOMI, WHO WAS GREATLY PLEASED.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING AT THE GATE OF BETHLEHEM, WHERE A GREAT DEAL OF THE BUSINESS OF THE CITY WAS CARRIED ON, AND LEGAL DECISIONS WERE RENDERED BY THE ELDERS, BOAZ ARRIVED AND WAITED FOR THE NEAREST KINSMAN TO ARRIVE, AND, IN THE PRESENCE OF TEN ELDERS, MADE KNOWN HIS BUSINESS. THE TWO GREAT PROBLEMS UNSOLVED WERE THE INHERITANCE OF LAND OF ELIMELECH AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF RUTH AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FAMILY OF ELIMELECH. THE NEAREST KIN WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT THE



INHERITANCE. THE KIN DREW OFF HIS SHOE FROM HIS FOOT AND HANDED IT TO BOAZ, WHICH WAS THE ACCEPTED SYMBOL OF CLOSING THE BARGAIN, AND BADE BOAZ REDEEM THE LAND.

BOAZ MARRIED RUTH. WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THE UNION WAS A HAPPY ONE, ALTHOUGH BOAZ WAS TWICE HER AGE. THERE WAS BORN TO THEM A SON, CALLED OBED, AND RUTH BECAME THE ANCESTRESS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. NAOMI BECAME THE NURSE AND GREAT JOY PREVAILED IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

THE STORY IS THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF TRUE AND TRIED FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN TWO WOMEN. IT IS THE LOVE OF A GIRL FOR HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.

### ESTHER

THE SCENE IS LAID SOME 250 MILES EAST OF THE CITY OF BABYLON, NEAR THE TIGRIS RIVER, AND NORTH OF THE PERSIAN GULF. THE KING OF PERSIA REIGNED OVER 127 PROVINCES, EXTENDING FROM INDIA TO ETHIOPIA; THE TIME: FOUR CENTURIES BEFORE CHRIST. THE HEROINE OF THE STORY IS ESTHER, ONE OF THE JEWISH EXILES WHO ROSE FROM THE HUMBLE WALKS OF LIFE TO BECOME A QUEEN, AND THEREBY RESCUES HER PEOPLE FROM DESTRUCTION THAT WAS PLANNED BY HAMAN, A FAVORITE OF THE KING. ONE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE CONDITIONS OF HER LIFE.

THE KING, IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HIS REIGN, HELD A BANQUET FOR A PERIOD OF 180 DAYS FOR THE CHIEF PERSONAGES OF HIS KINGDOM, THEN FOLLOWED SEVEN DAYS OF ADDITIONAL FEAST OPEN TO ALL PEOPLE. THE QUEEN INVITED THE WOMEN TO A SIMILAR BANQUET IN THE ROYAL HOME. ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST THE KING COMMANDED THE QUEEN, VASHTI, TO BE BROUGHT TO THE FEAST. BIDDING HER TO DISPLAY HER CHARMS TO THE PERSIAN COURTIER'S AROUND HIM. SHE REFUSED TO OBEY THE ORDER OF THE KING. THE KING INSULTED THE QUEEN. IT WAS THE RIGID LAWS OF THE PERSIANS NOT TO LOOK UPON WIVES WITH FACES UNCOVERED.

SHE WAS SENT FOR THE SECOND TIME, BUT REFUSED TO OBEY THE KING'S COMMAND, WHICH WAS GIVEN IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIGNITARIES OF THE EMPIRE. HE DEPOSES VASHTI FROM THE RANK OF QUEEN, PUBLISHING THE EDICT THAT EVERY MAN SHOULD BE MASTER OF HIS OWN HOME.

THE KING'S WEAKNESS IS DESPICABLE, HIS CONDUCT INSULTING. IT WAS A DRUNKEN ORDER, BUT THE WORDS ONCE DECREED WERE IRREVOCABLE: IT COULD NOT BE ALTERED, AND VASHTI COULD COME NO MORE INTO THE KING'S PRESENCE. THE KING LOVED VASHTI TENDERLY AND LAMENTED HER LOSS. THE WORST EFFECT OF THE VICE OF DRUNKENNESS IS IN ITS DEGRADING INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF PEOPLE. WHEN THE WRATH OF THE KING HAD SUBSIDED, HE FELT THE LOSS OF VASHTI DEEPLY. HIS COURTIER'S ADVISED HIM TO ASSEMBLE



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS FROM ALL THE PROVINCES THAT HE MIGHT SELECT ANOTHER QUEEN. THE MAIDENS WERE ASSEMBLED, AMONG WHOM WAS ESTHER, AN ORPHAN, WHO HAD BEEN REARED BY HER COUSIN, MORDECAI. AFTER TWELVE MONTHS OF BEAUTIFICATION, ALL THE MAIDENS WERE BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING. HE CHOSE ESTHER AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ALL, AND THE KING LOVED ESTHER ABOVE ALL WOMEN. IN DUE TIME ESTHER WAS CROWNED QUEEN WITH ROYAL CEREMONIES, THIS BEING FOUR YEARS AFTER VASHTI HAD BEEN DETHRONED. ESTHER IS ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING HEROINES OF THE BIBLE, STRONG, BRAVE, CAPABLE. PATRIOTIC AND HONORABLE. THE SPLENDOR AND BEAUTY OF HER LIFE IS THAT SHE DID NOT SUCCUMB TO THE LUXURY AND TEMPTATIONS OF HER SURROUNDINGS AND WAS NOT SPOILED BY BEING QUEEN. SHE WAS A WOMAN OF THE HIGHEST INTEGRITY AND PRINCIPLE, A SHINING EXAMPLE OF FEMININE VIRTUE. THE KING WAS A GOOD HUSBAND TO HER, HIGHLY VALUED HER VIRTUES AND YIELDED TO HER INFLUENCE AND EXAMPLE--GENTLE, ELEGANT AND BEAUTIFUL.

THE HISTORY OF MORDECAI SHOWS HIM TO HAVE BEEN A GOOD AND VIRTUOUS MAN, WITH A TRUE PARENTAL, ZEALOUS AND ABIDING INTEREST IN THE WELFARE AND SUCCESS OF HIS COUSIN, ESTHER. HE WAS A JEW OF THE CAPTIVITY. IT IS RECORDED THAT HE SAT DAILY AT THE KING'S GATE MAKING INQUIRY CONCERNING ESTHER, THAT HE MIGHT RENDER HER ANY ASSISTANCE POSSIBLE. IT WAS MORDECAI WHO DISCOVERED A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE LIFE OF THE KING. HE MADE KNOWN THE SAME TO ESTHER, WHO, IN TURN, TOLD THE KING. THE CONSPIRATORS WERE HANGED TO A TREE AND MORDECAI, ALTHOUGH CONTENT TO HAVE DONE HIS DUTY, WENT UNREWARDED.

THE NEXT LINK OF THE STORY IS THE PROMOTION OF HAMAN TO BE CHIEF OVER ALL THE NOBLES. HE WAS AN ENEMY TO THE JEWS. HE WAS A MAN OF VANITY, HAVING NO SYMPATHY WITH SUFFERERS AND READY TO TRAMPLE ANYONE UNDERFOOT ON THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION.

MORDECAI WOULD DO NO HOMAGE TO HAMAN AS HE PASSED IN AND OUT OF THE KING'S GATE. HAMAN'S PRIDE WAS OFFENDED, SO HE LAID A PLOT TO DESTROY ALL THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE KINGDOM, WHOM HE DESCRIBED TO THE KING AS A DANGEROUS PEOPLE. HE BRIBED THE KING TO GAIN CONSENT TO HIS DEADLY DESIGN. THE KING GRANTED HAMAN A FREE HAND TO DESTROY, TO SLAY AND TO CAUSE PERISH ALL JEWS. HAMAN FELL INTO HIS OWN PIT. MORDECAI LEARNED OF THE PLOT AND CALLED UPON ESTHER TO GO BEFORE THE KING, TO INTERVENE AND SAVE HER PEOPLE. SHE REPLIED THAT HER OWN LIFE WOULD BE AT STAKE IF SHE APPEARED BEFORE THE KING UNSUMMONED. SHE FINALLY DECIDED TO DO AS MORDECAI DIRECTED. AFTER THREE DAYS' FASTING, SHE PUT ON HER ROYAL APPAREL. "I'LL GO," SAID ESTHER, "IF I PERISH, I PERISH." THESE WORDS ARE A FLAVOR OF FINE COINAGE. THE KING, SEATED



ON HIS ROYAL THRONE, GRACIOUSLY RECEIVES ESTHER AND EXTENDS TO HER THE SCEPTER. "WHAT WILT THOU, QUEEN ESTHER, AND WHAT IS THY REQUEST? IT SHALL BE GIVEN TO THEE, EVEN TO THE HALF OF THE KINGDOM." SHE ANSWERS BY INVITING THE KING AND HAMAN TO A BANQUET WHICH SHE HAD PREPARED THIS SAME DAY. THE KING REPEATS ESTHER'S REQUEST IN THE PRESENCE OF HAMAN.

HAMAN'S VANITY GETS THE BEST OF HIM AGAIN, BECAUSE HE ALONE WAS ASKED TO SUP WITH THE KING AT ESTHER'S BANQUET OF WINE. WHEN HE SAW MORDECAI HE BECAME INCENSED AND LAID A PLOT TO KILL HIM. IF MORDECAI CAN BE GOTTEN OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE THE BANQUET, HE CAN ENJOY HIMSELF, BUT FIRST HE MUST HAVE THE ASSENT OF THE KING.

DURING THE NIGHT, FOLLOWING THE BANQUET OF ESTHER, THE KING IS SLEEPLESS. HE DISCOVERS THAT MORDECAI HAS NOT BEEN REWARDED FOR SAVING HIS LIFE. EARLY IN THE MORNING HAMAN CAME TO THE ROYAL PALACE TO DEMAND OF THE KING MORDECAI'S EXECUTION. THE KING SAID TO HAMAN, "WHAT SHALL BE DONE UNTO THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOR?" HAMAN FLATTERED HIMSELF THAT THE KING HAD HIM IN MIND. HE REPLIED, "LET ROYAL APPAREL BE BROUGHT. A ROYAL HORSE AND A CROWN, AND MAY THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOR BE THUS ARRAYED AND CAUSE HIM TO RIDE ON HORSEBACK THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE CITY."

"THEN SHALL IT BE DONE TO THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOR." THE KING SAID TO HAMAN, "MAKE HASTE, TAKE THE APPAREL AND THE HORSE, AS THOU HAST SAID AND DO EVEN SO TO MORDECAI, THE JEW THAT SITTETH AT THE KING'S GATE AND LET NOTHING FAIL OF ALL THOU HAST SPOKEN."

HAMAN DARED NOT DISOBEY. WHAT A TRIAL TO HAMAN, THE HUMILIATION OF ESCORTING HIS HATED ENEMY THROUGH THE STREETS AS THE KING'S FAVORITE.

THE SECOND BANQUET WAS HELD. THE KING A THIRD TIME REITERATES HIS STATEMENT TO ESTHER. SHE HAD PUT THE KING OFF TWICE, NOW ESTHER STRUCK WHILE THE IRON WAS HOT. WITH GREAT TACT SHE BEGAN PLEADING FOR HER OWN LIFE, SPEAKING OF THE DISTRESS AND SUFFERING OF HER PEOPLE, AND ACCUSED HAMAN OF PLANNING THE MASSACRE OF THE JEWS. HAMAN DISCOVERS HE HAS AGGRAVATED THE KING, FIRST BY CONDEMNING VASHTI AND NOW BY TRYING TO DESTROY ESTHER, THE QUEEN, AND HER PEOPLE.

ESTHER, PUSHING HER ADVANTAGE, ATTAINED A BLOOD-THIRSTY RETRIBUTION. THE KING'S WRATH BURST FORTH ANEW AND HE ORDERED HAMAN TO BE HANGED ON THE SCAFFOLD HE HAD PREPARED FOR MORDECAI. THE KING, DISCOVERING THE QUEEN'S RELATIONSHIP TO MORDECAI, HAS HIM INSTALLED IN THE PLACE OF HAMAN, GIVEN FULL POWER AND THE SIGNET RING.



ESTHER GOES BEFORE THE KING AGAIN UNSUMMONED. SHE APPEALS TO HIS NATURAL PRIDE. SHE ADDRESSES THE KING IN THE LIGHT OF HER PERSONAL DANGER AND BEGS FOR A REVERSAL OF THE KING'S EDICT. HER REQUEST IS GRANTED. THE ENTIRE STORY OF ESTHER LEAVES A DEEP IMPRESSION ON US OF THE FAR-SEEING WISDOM AND ENDURING PROVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH. ESTHER HAD MANY CHARMING QUALITIES. SHE USED HER LIFE FOR HER PEOPLE.

### MARTHA

BETHANY IS A SMALL VILLAGE, SITUATED ON THE SOUTHWEST SIDE OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, LESS THAN TWO MILES FROM JERUSALEM. IT IS A MISERABLE, UNTIDY AND TUMBLED DOWN VILLAGE. YET, WE ARE FILLED WITH REVERENTIAL AWE AS WE RECALL THE IMMORTAL MEMORIES OF WHAT OCCURRED WITHIN AND AROUND THIS LITTLE VILLAGE.

HERE LIVED MARTHA, MARY AND LAZARUS, AND SIMON, THE LEPER. IT WAS NEAR BETHANY THAT JESUS WAS LAST SEEN BY HIS DISCIPLES. THERE IS VERY LITTLE AUTHENTIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE EARLY HISTORY OF MARTHA, MARY AND LAZARUS. IT WOULD SEEM THAT THEY WERE AN ORPHAN FAMILY. THEIR HOME IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN A VERY BEAUTIFUL AND WEALTHY HOME, WITH EVEN LUXURIES. MARTHA WAS THE HOUSEKEEPER, SHE LOOKED AFTER THE FOOD, THE COMFORTS OF THE FAMILY AND THE GUESTS. THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF THE WHOLE STORY IS JESUS, WITH MARTHA AND MARY STANDING IN THE FOREGROUND. TIME AND TIME AGAIN WE FIND THE MASTER AMID THE TUMULTS, STORMS, APPLAUSES, SUCCESSES OF PUBLIC LIFE, TAKING REFUGE IN SOME SECLUDED OR QUIET SPOT. LITERALLY YEARNING FOR THE PRIVACY AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF DOMESTIC LIFE AND HOME LOVE. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHEN JESUS BEGAN TO MAKE THEIR HOME HIS HOME, WHEN IN BETHANY.

CHRIST. ON LEAVING HIS EARTHLY FATHER'S HOME IN NAZARETH, BECAME A WANDERER. HE NEVER HAD A HOME OF HIS OWN ON EARTH. HIS LONELINESS IS MANIFEST BY HIS FREQUENT COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER.

THE HOME AT BETHANY WAS TO HIM A HOME OF QUIET AND REST. WHERE A MOST CORDIAL AND LOVING WELCOME WAS EXTENDED WITH SINCERE AFFECTION. A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP SPRANG UP BETWEEN JESUS AND EVERY MEMBER OF THE BETHANY FAMILY. THE HOME WAS ONE OF FRIENDLY PEACE, THAT WAS NOT TAINTED WITH INTERESTED AMBITION. FURTHERMORE, ITS MEMBERS COVETED NO PLACE OF HONOR. JESUS WAS AT HOME IN THIS HOUSEHOLD. WITH HIS MISSION FULL OF PERPLEXING PROBLEMS OF ALL KINDS, HOW HE MUST HAVE APPRECIATED THIS RETIRED HOME, WHERE FRIENDS FOUND LOVE'S REWARD IN LOVE'S SACRIFICES AND THE JOY OF LIVING IN THE INCREASED CAPACITY TO LOVE. HE WENT THERE NOT SIMPLY FOR QUIETNESS, TO EAT AND TO SLEEP, BUT THE FRIENDLY AND SYMPATHETIC SURROUNDING MADE IT REFRESHING TO THE SOUL OF JESUS.



MARTHA RECEIVED JESUS INTO HER HOUSE. MARTHA WAS ENCUMBERED WITH MUCH SERVING, BUT MARY SAT AT THE FEET OF JESUS. THE CHIEF VALUE OF THE STORY IS THE HUMANITY OF JESUS. MARTHA, IN HER EAGERNESS AND DESIRE TO ENTERTAIN JESUS IN THE MOST WORTHY MANNER, WANTED EVERYTHING JUST RIGHT. AND BECAME IMPATIENT WITH MARY BECAUSE SHE DID NOT LEAVE JESUS TO HELP HER PREPARE THE MEAL. HER MIND WAS ALL ABSORBED WITH THE PARTICULAR JOB THAT WAS HERS. SHE BECAME ANNOYED, SHE GOT WORRIED, LOST HER TEMPER, OTHERWISE SHE WOULD NOT HAVE COMPLAINED OF MARY IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN SUCH A FAULT-FINDING WAY. MARY WAS INTERESTED IN WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING, SO SHE DID NOT HEAR THE CALL OF MARTHA. JESUS, HOWEVER, UNDERSTOOD MARTHA, APPRECIATED HER WORTH AND LOVED HER. WE SHOULD BE EVER READY TO SHOW A TENDER SYMPATHY FOR THE HARD-WORKING AND OVERBURDENED WOMEN AND MEN ABOUT US.

JESUS DID NOT BLAME OR CONDEMN THE WORK THAT MARTHA DID, BUT WHAT HE DID DO WAS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE SERVICES THEY WERE RENDERING. HE DID NOT BLAME HER FOR HER NATURE, BUT HE POINTED OUT TO HER THAT SHE UNNECESSARILY BURDENED HERSELF WITH PERPLEXITIES OF WHICH THERE WAS NO NEED, AND THAT SHE FOUND NO TIME TO SPEAK OF THE ONLY AND ONE CONSIDERATION THAT ENDURES BEYOND THIS WORLD. MARTHA WAS INTENT ON HOW SHE WOULD FEED THE LORD.

WORD HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO JESUS THAT LAZARUS WAS SERIOUSLY ILL. A MESSAGE FROM THE SISTERS, SAYING, "LORD, HE WHOM THOU LOVEST. IS SICK." JESUS DELAYED STARTING FOR TWO DAYS IN ORDER TO WORK OUT THE DIVINE MISSION. HE KNEW BEFORE HE STARTED OF THE DEATH OF LAZARUS.

LAZARUS HAD BEEN IN THE TOMB FOUR DAYS WHEN JESUS REACHED BETHANY. MARTHA, WITH HER NATURAL IMPULSIVENESS, RUSHES OUT TO MEET HER LORD AND SAY, "LORD IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER HAD NOT DIED. AND EVEN NOW I KNOW THAT WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT ASK OF GOD, GOD WILL GIVE THEE." THE LORD REPLIED, "THY BROTHER SHALL RISE AGAIN." MARTHA REPLIED, "I KNOW THAT HE SHALL RISE AGAIN IN THE RESURRECTION AT THE LAST DAY." JESUS SAID TO HER, "HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME, THOUGH HE DIE, YET SHALL HE LIVE AND WHOMSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH ON ME SHALL NEVER DIE, BELIEVEST THOU THIS?" AND SHE ANSWERED, "YES LORD."

JESUS ORDERED THE STONE ROLLED AWAY AND HE CRIED IN A LOUD VOICE, "LAZARUS, COME FORTH." WHAT A TENSE MOMENT! ALL HEARTS ALMOST STOPPED BEATING. LAZARUS CAME FORTH. THERE HE STOOD BEFORE THEM. THEIR OWN AND ONLY BROTHER. ONE CAN WELL IMAGINE THE JOY THAT FILLED THE HEARTS OF THESE SISTERS AS THEY CLASPED THEIR BROTHER IN SILENT AND SPEECHLESS EMBRACE.



MARTHA AND MARY REPRESENT THE TYPES THAT ARE WITH US TODAY, AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN. THEIR LIVES EXPRESS IN A FIGURATIVE WAY THE LIFE PRESENT AND THE LIFE TO COME, THE LIFE OF LABOR AND ACTIVITY, THE LIFE OF QUIET. THE LIFE OF SORROW, THE LIFE OF HAPPINESS, THE LIFE TEMPORAL, THE LIFE SPIRITUAL. WHAT MARTHA WAS DOING, THAT WE ARE ALL DOING. WHAT MARY WAS DOING IS WHAT WE SHOULD HOPE FOR.

MARTHA IS THE PATRON SAINT OF ALL GOOD HOUSEWIVES. HER CHARACTER MAKES A STRONG APPEAL TO ENERGETIC WOMEN, AND ESPECIALLY TO COMFORT-LOVING MEN.

### ELECTA

THE SCENE OF THE FIFTH STAR POINT IS LAID IN ASIA MINOR, A PENINSULA BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. ON THE WEST COAST OF THE PENINSULA, IN LYDIA, IS EPHEBUS, THE RESIDENCE OF ST. JOHN, WHO, EXCEPT TO GO ABOUT IN ASIA MINOR TO VISIT ESTABLISHED CHURCHES, SELDOM LEFT EPHEBUS.

ST. JOHN WAS THE LAST SURVIVOR OF THE APOSTLES TO CARRY ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. FOR THREE YEARS HE WAS UNDER THE DIRECT TUTELAGE OF JESUS. HE IS SPOKEN OF AS THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED. HE RETURNED THAT LOVE WITH AN UNSWERVING DEVOTION.

ST. JOHN, THE EVANGELIST. IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN, ADDRESSES A SHORT LETTER TO THE "ELECT LADY AND HER CHILDREN." THE MESSAGE CONSISTS OF THIRTEEN SHORT VERSES OF ABOUT 250 WORDS. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CONJECTURES AND SURMISES AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THIS LADY. (THE NAMES ADAH AND ELECTA GIVEN RESPECTIVELY TO THE FIRST AND FIFTH STAR POINTS SEEM TO BE THE CREATION OF THE WRITER OF THE RITUAL, FOR THESE NAMES HAVE NO MEANING OR SIGNIFICANCE OUTSIDE THE ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR.) WE MUST LOOK LARGELY TO TRADITION FOR THE HISTORY OF THE ELECT LADY, CALLED "ELECTA." NO ACCOUNT OF THIS CELEBRATED WOMAN, WITH THE NAME OF ELECTA, IS TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE IN THE SCRIPTURES. THE EPISTLE IS BRIEF. ST. JOHN BEGINS HIS MESSAGE AS FOLLOWS: "THE ELDER UNTO THE ELECT LADY AND HER CHILDREN." IT WOULD SEEM THAT ST. JOHN, ON ONE OF HIS APOSTOLIC VISITS TO SOME CHURCH IN ASIA MINOR, HAD MET SOME OF THE ELECT LADY'S CHILDREN AND WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED WITH THEIR CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHARACTER. ON HIS RETURN TO EPHEBUS HE WROTE THIS LETTER. ST. JOHN EXHORTS HER TO LOVE.

THE clearest expression of love is obedience to the will of God. IT IS A SORT OF COMMAND THAT SHE SHOULD ABIDE STEADFASTLY IN WHAT SHE NOW KNOWS AND BELIEVES AND LET THIS KNOWLEDGE REGULATE HER LIFE.



OUR INFORMATION CONCERNING ELECTA IS BASED FOR THE MOST PART ON MASONIC TRADITION. SHE WAS BORN AND BROUGHT UP IN ASIA MINOR AND REARED UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF PAGANISM. SHE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WELL ADVANCED IN YEARS WHEN THE EDICT OF THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT WAS ISSUED AGAINST THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. IT IS QUITE APPARENT THAT SHE WAS CONVERTED TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH UNDER THE TEACHINGS OF ST. PAUL.

SHE WAS AN INFLUENTIAL WOMAN IN HER COMMUNITY. SHE SPENT HER LIFE IN RELIEVING THE POOR, DEVOTED MUCH TIME TO CARE OF THE SICK AND KEPT OPEN HOUSE FOR HUNGRY TRAVELERS. BENEVOLENCE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE GREAT PASSION OF HER LIFE.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION BECAME OBNOXIOUS TO THE PEOPLE AND PRESSURE WAS BROUGHT UPON THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT FOR SOME ACTION. ELECTA'S MANSION WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN THE MOST SPLENDID IN THE PROVINCE. THE EDICT OF THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT WAS ISSUED AGAINST EVERYONE PROFESSING THE RELIGION OF CHRIST. ALL CHRISTIANS WERE BOUND TO RENOUNCE IT UNDER PENALTY OF DEATH. SOLDIERS WERE TO EXECUTE THE LAW WITHOUT MERCY. ALL THOSE HOLDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WERE COMMANDED TO TRAMPLE UPON THE CROSS THAT WAS HANDED TO THEM AS A TESTIMONY OF THEIR RENUNCIATION. ELECTA REFUSED TO COMPLY WITH THE EDICT. SHE SPURNED THE TEST AND SAID SHE WOULD NEVER RENOUNCE HER RELIGION. SHE AND HER FAMILY WERE CAST INTO A DUNGEON FOR TWELVE MONTHS, AT THE END OF WHICH TIME THE JUDGE APPEARED AND OFFERED HER ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO RECAT FROM CHRISTIANITY, AND AGAIN SHE REFUSED. THEREUPON SHE WAS DRAGGED FORTH AND SAVAGELY SCOURGED NIGH TO DEATH. THEY WERE THEN TAKEN IN OXCARTS TO THE NEAREST HILL, WHERE SHE AND HER ENTIRE FAMILY WERE NAILED TO THE CROSS. SHE WAS THE LAST OF THE FAMILY TO BE CRUCIFIED, AND THUS WITNESSED THE TRAGIC DEATH OF HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN. SHE PROFESSED HER FAITH TO THE WHOLE WORLD, ALTHOUGH SHE KNEW WHAT REPROACHES AND PERSECUTION SHE MUST UNDERGO FOR THE STAND SHE TOOK. IT MEANT THE LOSS OF HER GOOD NAME, WEALTH, OF MEANS OF DOING GOOD, OF LIBERTY, OF HUSBAND, CHILDREN AND LIFE ITSELF. YET. SHE WAS WILLING TO UNDERGO ALL THESE FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST. AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IN WHICH SHE SHOWED THE MOST IMPLICIT FAITH.