

Study 1. Miriam

READ: Exodus 1: 7-16, 22;
2: 1-10;
15: 19-21
Numbers 12: 1-16



KEY VERSE: Exodus 15: 21

“And Miriam answered them:
‘Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed
gloriously!’”

Miriam’s parents were slaves under the cruel Pharaoh of Egypt. Since Jacob and his sons had moved to Egypt when Joseph was ruler, 400 years earlier, their families had grown into a separate nation within Egypt and appeared to be a real threat to the Egyptians. They were no longer welcome and were forced into hard labour. Pharaoh had every intention of destroying the spirit of these strangers who lived in his land.

OBEDIENT

When Moses was born to Jochebed and Amram, they realized somehow, that he was no ordinary child and they would have to save his life! (**Hebrews 11: 23**) Miriam was given the responsibility of watching over Moses, hidden in his waterproof cradle. (**Exodus 2: 4**) She may have been about 12 years old at the time and was young for such an assignment, but Miriam had inherited the courage and resourcefulness of her mother and was ready to help. No doubt her obedience to her parents pleased the Lord and this made it possible for Him to use her in His great plan of delivering her people from the wicked hands of Pharaoh.

VICTORIOUS

A further 80 years passed before the Israelites were freed from their slavery in Egypt. Moses became their leader and after ten plagues (**See Exodus 7-14**) Pharaoh agreed to let the people go. When he changed his mind and pursued them, God opened a pathway through the Red Sea to allow the people to escape, bringing the sea back again over Pharaoh’s armies. There on the shores of the Red Sea, the people saw the hated Egyptians destroyed forever by the power of God.

Now a whole nation of people was ready to begin its journey to the Promised Land of Israel. Leading the

people were Moses, Aaron and Miriam. “**For I brought you up from the land of Egypt . . . and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.**” (**Micah 6: 4**) Miriam’s early promise as a responsible and trustworthy person was still in evidence. Her life for God had not stood still - she had become a prophetess (**15: 20**) and was able to receive God’s Word for the people. Known and respected by the women of the nation, she led them in praising Him who had kept His promise to deliver. (**See Key Verse**) It is vital that we seek to progress in our Christian lives, always being obedient to God’s Word and encouraging others to do the same.

DEFIANT

As time went on, Miriam became somewhat jealous of the leadership role which Moses had. She used the marriage of Moses to an Ethiopian woman as an excuse to air her grievances. Miriam was a strong-minded person, with a natural gift for leadership which God had used for the good of His people.

Instead of being thankful, and supportive of her brother, she reached out for a position which was not hers to have! It was really an act of rebellion against God’s choice, and, indeed against God Himself! The consequences of her action were horrendous, and it was only through Moses’ intervention that Miriam was saved from a living death! (**Read again Numbers 12: 9-16**)

It is sad to record Miriam’s fall, for she was a person who had so much to offer, and yet she neglected her own spiritual life! God gives us talents and opportunities to use for Him, but He expects us to value those talents and develop our own spiritual lives, in order to be a help to others. “**. . . pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith . . .**” (**1 Timothy 6: 11&12**)

NewLife WorkSheet

Study 1. Miriam

1 **EXODUS 1: 11-16** OUTLINES HOW PHARAOH BEGAN A PERIOD OF GREAT PERSECUTION AGAINST THE ISRAELITES BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID OF THEM. DESCRIBE IN WHAT WAYS HE MADE THEIR LIVES MISERABLE.

4

2 **IN EXODUS 2, WHEN PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER OPENED THE BASKET:-**

- a. What did she see and hear? _____
- b. What conclusion did she immediately come to? _____
- c. What part did Miriam play? _____

5

3 **A. HOW DID MIRIAM AND THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL REACT TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE EGYPTIANS AT THE RED SEA? (EXODUS 15)** _____

B. WRITE OUT MIRIAM'S VICTORY SONG.

5

4 **READ NUMBERS 12: 1-13 AGAIN. THEN ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:-**

- a. Why do you think Miriam and Aaron "**spoke against Moses**"? _____
- b. In what way was Miriam punished for her wrong doing? _____
- c. Write out Moses' prayer to God for his sister. _____

4

5 **JEALOUSY AND PRIDE CAUSED MIRIAM'S DOWNFALL. FILL IN THE APPROPRIATE WORDS WHICH ILLUSTRATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF HER PRIDE AND DESIRE TO BE EQUAL WITH MOSES.**

- Proverbs 11: 2 "When pride comes, then comes _____"
- Proverbs 13: 10 "By pride comes nothing but _____"
- Proverbs 29: 23 "A man's pride will bring him _____"

3

6 **PAUL WRITES ABOUT SELFISH AMBITION AND CONCEIT IN PHILIPPIANS 2: 3-4. THESE WERE MIRIAM'S FAILINGS. OUTLINE FULLY IN YOUR OWN WORDS HOW WE CAN AVOID THESE PITFALLS TODAY.** _____

4

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Study 2. Rahab and Achsah

READ: Joshua 2: 1-24;
6: 20-25;
15: 13-19



KEY VERSE: Hebrews 11: 31
“By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe . . .”

RAHAB

FAITH AND WORKS

The children of Israel were on the borders of the Promised Land of Canaan. In a few days they would cross the river Jordan and begin the work of conquering the land that God had given them. Joshua was their leader and he sent two spies across the river to Jericho. Their mission was to find out the state of the city and also the mind of the people, who were only too well aware of an invading army, right on their doorstep.

The Bible does not cover up Rahab's lifestyle. She was a prostitute and someone who was not above telling lies in order to save her own skin! Why, then is she mentioned three times in the New Testament? (**Matthew 1: 5, Hebrews 11: 31 and James 2: 25**) Rahab is there because of her faith in God! **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”.** (**Hebrews 11: 6**) Rahab is a good example of someone who believed in the reality of the God of Israel, and because of that, she was willing to risk her life in order to help His people. Without her encouraging words to the spies, **“I know that the Lord has given you the land . . . and that all the inhabitants of the land are faint-hearted because of you . . .”** (**2: 9**), Joshua might well have hesitated at this crucial moment, instead of going forward in the knowledge that God had prepared the way for victory.

Rahab proved her faith by her works - helping the spies to escape and preparing for their return by gathering her family into her house and tying a scarlet cord in her window. Her life of faith was only just beginning. She trusted in God, in spite of her limited knowledge. Hers was a life which God would ultimately change and use for His glory. Her faith

and her works were rewarded. After the fall of Jericho she became the wife of an Israelite called Salmon, an ancestor of King David. In the kindness and mercy of God, she is named in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Matthew 1: 5-6, 16**)

ACHSAH

(DAUGHTER OF CALEB)

INITIATIVE AND AMBITION

Caleb was a friend of Joshua and his compatriot. With ten others they had spied out the land of Canaan 40 years before, and only Joshua and Caleb had brought back a good report. God had rewarded them by promising that only they would enter the land. He gave them strength during the long years of waiting to enter the land! Now Caleb was claiming his allocation and was settling his family in the area of Hebron.

His daughter was eager to establish her own place in Canaan and after her marriage, she persuaded her husband Othniel to ask for a field. But they needed water as well, if the land was to be productive, and Achsah herself now approached Caleb. She came to her father, dismounted from her donkey as a mark of respect, and asked for the life-giving springs of water. Caleb could not refuse - he gave her more than she asked for, such was his love for his daughter. Without doubt, he was pleased to see that Achsah valued her inheritance and wanted to see all its potential fulfilled.

About 40 years earlier, God had said of Caleb, **“But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land . . . and his descendants shall inherit it”.** (**Numbers 14: 24**) Achsah had inherited, not only the land, but the spirit of Caleb. She showed true faith, a willingness to work and a readiness to ask. Her initiative and spiritual ambition pleased God. Such qualities should mark all those who are followers of the Lord Jesus today!

Study 2. Rahab and Achsah

1 A. WRITE OUT THE KEY VERSE. _____

B. HOW DID HER WORKS (JAMES 2: 25) PROVE HER FAITH?

3

2 WHO SAID?:-

a. "Go view the land." _____

b. "Our lives for yours." _____

c. "Bring out the men who have come to you." _____

d. "Bind this line of scarlet cord in the window." _____

e. "Where the men went I do not know." _____

5

3 THE SCARLET CORD MEANT SALVATION FOR RAHAB AND HER FAMILY.

a. Why do you think Rahab was to bind the scarlet cord in her window? (Joshua 2: 18 & 21)

b. What was she to do about her family, as the day for the attack upon Jericho approached?

c. What 'message' would the scarlet cord have for all in the house?

d. For us, what promise does God give to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus?

4

4 RAHAB'S STORY ILLUSTRATES GOD'S GRACE, FOR SHE WAS A GENTILE (A NON-JEW) WHO WAS ACCEPTED INTO THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL.

a. What is meant by 'grace'? _____

b. Whose ancestor did she become, through her marriage? _____

c. Why is she mentioned in *Matthew chapter 1*? _____

4

5 A. NAME THREE CHARACTERISTICS, OR QUALITIES, WHICH CAN BE ADMIRABLE IN ACHSAH.

B. SUGGEST SOME WAYS BY WHICH WE CAN DEVELOP THESE QUALITIES IN OUR LIVES, AS CHRISTIANS.

5

6 ACHSAH'S INHERITANCE CONSISTED OF FIELDS, SPRINGS OF WATER, ETC. OUR 'INHERITANCE' IS SPIRITUAL. READ *EPHESIANS 1: 3-8*, AND MAKE A LIST OF SOME OF OUR BLESSINGS.

4

25

Total marks for this study



KEY VERSE: Judges 5: 7

“Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.”

The situation in Israel was depressing - not at all as God had intended for His people. After Joshua's death the nation had turned away from God and worshipped idols, ignoring His law, **“You shall have no other gods before Me”**. (Exodus 20: 3) God punished them for their deliberate disobedience and instead of becoming progressively stronger in the land, Israel was put under the heel of the surrounding nations, who should by now have been driven out of Canaan. (Judges 2: 7, 11-16) When the people reached their lowest ebb, they **“cried out to the Lord”** and He sent them a deliverer. These deliverers were known as ‘judges’. (3: 7-9)

DEBORAH'S FAITH

Like Miriam, Deborah was a prophetess and a leader, but unlike Miriam she was never spoiled by the pride which can come with authority and power. God had given her a special position among His people. She had a real sense of calling as **“a mother in Israel”**, caring for the needs of individuals and yet aware of the plight of a whole nation. Deborah was a strong-minded woman who had accepted God's will for her. Day by day she was asked to make decisions and exercise judgments between people; with God's help she fulfilled those responsibilities, using His Word with wisdom and receiving His guidance. A prophet's work was not only to reveal the future to the people; more often it was to apply God's Word to the present situation, and so teach His will and His ways.

DEBORAH'S COMMAND

Deborah's right hand man was Barak and when it came to battle, he was the one chosen to lead the people. Deborah realized that the time had come

to fight against Jabin and Sisera, **“Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him”**.

(4: 14) Barak had been less than enthusiastic at first, which must have been a disappointment to Deborah. His faith was not as strong as hers. Nevertheless, she went into battle with him, showing support and encouragement by her actions as well as her words. Because of Barak's hesitancy in fighting, he had to forfeit the privilege of killing the hated general Sisera. That honour was given to a woman called Jael. She was not an Israelite, but she was well aware of Sisera's cruelty and particularly of his merciless treatment of women. (5: 28-30) She was ready to strike a blow literally against evil, and God used her to make known His unchanging condemnation of those who violate womanhood by abuse and rape.

DEBORAH'S SONG

Deborah and Barak led Israel in a song of praise after their great victory. (Chapter 5) Its poetry and energy reflect the character of Deborah, whose whole concern was for the people - directing them back to national self-respect and obedience to God. **“When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord.”** (5: 2) She led by example - always ready to take responsibility and make decisions. But her energy and vision had their source in the Lord and she always gave Him the glory for His strength and help. **“Has not the Lord gone out before you?”** (4: 14)

Deborah's history is a challenge to all Christians, whatever their age or gender. We are to be both **“salt”** and **“light”** (Matthew 5: 13 & 14) in a sinful and corrupt world. Only by living good and pure lives can we make an impact for God, and succeed in guiding others into ‘the narrow way’.

(See Matthew 7: 13 & 14)

Study 3. Deborah

1 A. THE ISRAELITES TURNED AWAY FROM THE LORD AND SERVED OTHER GODS. NAME TWO OF THEM. (CLUE! JUDGES 2: 11-16) _____

B. WRITE OUT THE COMMANDMENT WHICH THEY WERE BREAKING.

4

2 TRUE OR FALSE?

- a. The commander of the enemy army was Jabin. _____
- b. Deborah's husband was Lapidoth. _____
- c. Jabin had 900 iron chariots. _____
- d. Jael gave Sisera a drink of water. _____
- e. Barak went willingly into battle. _____

5

3 WRITE OUT THE TWO REASONS WHY GOD HAD TO DESTROY THE INHABITANTS OF CANAAN, ACCORDING TO DEUTERONOMY 9: 1-5.

4

4 A. IN YOUR OWN WORDS, TELL HOW SISERA WAS KILLED.

B. THE GREAT SOLDIER WHO HAD SHOWN NO RESPECT TO WOMEN DIED AT A WOMAN'S HAND! WRITE OUT THE PART OF THE VERSE, FROM DEBORAH'S SONG, WHICH REFERS TO HIS 'VIOLATION OF WOMEN'. (JUDGES 5: 28-30)

.....

2

5 CHRISTIANITY HAS RAISED THE STATUS OF WOMEN IMMENSELY. EXPRESS IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT 1 PETER 3: 7 MEANS.

2

6 A. READ JUDGES 4: 4 & 5. WRITE A SENTENCE ABOUT DEBORAH, THE JUDGE.

B. WHICH DO YOU THINK WAS THE STRONGER CHARACTER, DEBORAH OR BARAK? GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR ANSWER.

4

7 DEBORAH WAS AN EXAMPLE TO THE NATION. SUGGEST SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOUNG CHRISTIANS CAN BE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS IN THEIR CHURCH. (1 TIMOTHY 4: 12)

4

25

Study 4. Hannah

READ: 1 Samuel 1: 1-28



KEY VERSE: 1 Samuel 1: 27
“For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.”

Judges still ruled in Israel, but times were changing and God was preparing for the day when the people would demand a king to rule over them. Samuel, the last judge and an outstanding prophet, would be a key figure in the choosing and training of a king. Samuel, however, was yet to be born!

HANNAH’S SORROW

Every year, those people who were able, went to Shiloh (a town situated in the middle of the country) in order to worship the Lord at His house, called the tabernacle. One family - Elkanah, his two wives and the children - always went to the feast, but what should have been a time of celebration was spoiled by one of the wives. Her name was Peninnah and she was extremely jealous of Hannah, who was the favourite wife. **“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life... and put perverse lips far from you.” (Proverbs 4: 23-24)** Instead of being thankful that God had blessed her with a good husband and a fine family, Peninnah had allowed envy and bitterness to take root deep in her heart. Eventually her hidden antagonism surfaced in harsh words against Hannah, taunting her with the fact that she had never been able to have children. Life became intolerable for Hannah and she dreaded the visits to Shiloh where Peninnah’s insults were so much worse.

HANNAH’S REQUEST

Hannah never retaliated; she even hid the problem from her husband. It was something she preferred to keep between herself and the Lord. One evening, after the special thanksgiving meal was over, Hannah could bear her sorrows alone no longer and she went to the tabernacle to pray. **“And she was in bitterness of soul; and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish.” (1: 10)** Unlike Peninnah,

Hannah took her bitterness to the Lord and poured it out in prayer before Him. For a Jewish woman, to be childless was a real reproach, and she brought this shame to God, telling Him how she felt and what she longed for. Hannah addressed God as **“Lord of Hosts”** - the mighty and powerful One; she spoke of herself as **“Your maidservant”** - humble, and insignificant and yet believing in the ability of God to do anything. She asked for a son and vowed that the child would be given back to the Lord.

Hannah’s spirit was tried again, when Eli, the priest, accused her of being drunk. Her gracious and respectful reply, **“No, my lord . . .” (1: 15 & 16)** is a illustration of the ideal wife in the book of Proverbs, **“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness”.** (Proverbs 31: 26)

HANNAH’S REWARD

God granted Hannah’s request and her son, Samuel, was born. To give this little child back to the Lord must have taken courage, but Hannah kept her vow. When the family returned to Shiloh, year by year, she brought her son a new coat. It must have given her great happiness to watch him grow, both physically and spiritually. **(2: 18-21)** Hannah was blessed with more sons and daughters, but her great joy was her first-born, Samuel. He came as an answer to her prayers and faith. Eventually he would become one of the greatest prophets in Israel, a man of prayer, equal in rank to Moses and Aaron. **“Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel was among those who called upon His name; they called upon the Lord and He answered them.” (Psalm 99: 6)**

HANNAH’S EXAMPLE

Hannah has left us a fine example of trust in God, even when everything seems to be against us. She is also a good illustration of patience under trial and provocation. **(See verse 6)** She proved the truthfulness of **Psalm 37: 5**, **“Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”**

NewLife WorkSheet

Study 4. Hannah

1 IN WHAT WAYS DID PENINNAH MAKE HANNAH'S LIFE DIFFICULT?

2

2 HOW DO THESE 'WORDS' AFFECT OTHERS?

- a. **Proverbs 15: 1** "Harsh word" _____
- b. **Proverbs 16: 24** "Pleasant words" _____
- c. **Proverbs 29: 20** "A man hasty in his words" _____
- d. **Ecclesiastes 12: 11** "Words of the wise" _____

4

3 A. LIKE HANNAH, WE SHOULD TAKE OUR PROBLEMS TO THE LORD. HOW CAN WE DO SO?

B. WRITE OUT EITHER **PSALM 86: 7** OR **1 PETER 5: 7** - _____

2

4 A. HANNAH SAW HERSELF AS 'A SERVANT OF THE LORD'. (See verse 11) WHAT EXACTLY WAS SHE WILLING TO DO FOR HIM? _____

B. READ **COLOSSIANS 3: 17, 22 & 23** AND **2 TIMOTHY 2: 24 & 25** AND SUMMARIZE THE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD CHARACTERIZE US AS 'SERVANTS OF THE LORD'.

4

5 A. WHAT DOES THE NAME 'SAMUEL' MEAN? _____

B. HANNAH ASKED FOR A SON, BUT NOT FOR SELFISH REASONS. SUGGEST SOME THINGS THAT A CHRISTIAN PERSON COULD PRAY FOR - TO USE AS A BLESSING TO OTHERS.

3

6 A. WHAT MISTAKE DID ELI MAKE WHEN HE SAW HANNAH PRAYING?

B. EXPRESS, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT SHE SAID IN REPLY TO ELI.

4

7 **1 CORINTHIANS 10: 11-12** TELLS US THAT EVERYTHING WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE IS RELEVANT FOR US TODAY. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR STUDY OF THESE FIVE OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN? SELECT THREE OF THEM, AND WRITE A SENTENCE ABOUT EACH, POINTING OUT ANY HELPFUL LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED.

6

Return your study sheets to:

or the PBS Centre below

25

Total marks for this study