

# Faith & Fortitude

## Women of the Old Testament

PART 1 (PART 2 TO BE PUBLISHED LATER IN 2014)

*We can emulate the Christlike traits of devoted women of the Old Testament.*

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**A**s we consider the extraordinary lives of some of the women mentioned in the Old Testament, we can discover ways in which the characteristics and values that guided their actions have relevance for our day. Following are brief life sketches of six of these women, along with suggested lessons and applications.

# Agency

## Eve

Regarding Eve and her role, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained:

“All the purposes of the world . . . would be brought to naught without woman—a keystone in the priesthood arch of creation. . . .

“From the rib of Adam, Eve was formed (see Genesis 2:22; Moses 3:22; Abraham 5:16). . . . The rib signifies neither dominion nor subservience, but a lateral relationship as partners, to work and to live, side by side.

“. . . She was designed by Deity to co-create and nurture life, that the great plan of the Father might achieve fruition. Eve ‘was the mother of all living’ (Moses 4:26).”<sup>1</sup>

Together Adam and Eve taught their posterity the gospel and set a righteous example for them.

Latter-day Saints honor Eve for her wisdom and courage in providing, with Adam, the opportunity for mortal life to all the human family. Eve said, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11).

### LESSONS

- Parental responsibility is to be shared between husband and wife.
- We are to live and teach the gospel in our families.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Build unity with my spouse.
- Ponder how to deepen my understanding of the gospel and increase my ability to teach it to others.



Agency  
Obedience  
Courage  
Faith  
Wisdom  
Trust

## Sarah

Sarah was of royal lineage, the wife of the prophet Abraham, and the mother of Isaac.

Sarah and Abraham were originally called Sarai and Abram. After marrying, they eventually moved to Canaan, the land that the Lord gave them for their inheritance. Throughout this time, their faith was tested and grew. (See Genesis 12–14.)

The Lord covenanted with Abram, “I will make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 12:2; see also 15:5; Abraham 2:9). The Lord fulfills His promises in the way and the time He knows is best for us, and it was decades before this promise of posterity was realized.

After years of not being able to bear a child, Sarai gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram to wife (see Genesis 16:2), and Ishmael was born.

The Lord changed Sarai’s and Abram’s names to Sarah and Abraham when He confirmed His covenant with Abraham, stating that the patriarch would be “a father of many nations” (see Genesis 17:4–5, 15). The Lord promised that 90-year-old Sarah would have a son (see Genesis 17:16; 18:10). Both Abraham and Sarah rejoiced at this news, perhaps evidencing a bit of joyful disbelief (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:23–24 [in the Bible appendix]; 18:12). The Lord assured them, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). Their son, Isaac, became the father of Jacob, later known as Israel, whose descendants became the twelve tribes of Israel.

### LESSONS

- There may be long delays before we receive our righteous desires, but we can be assured that “all these things shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good” (D&C 122:7).
- Having faith in the Lord helps us to be patient as we wait for promised blessings.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Consider how to make my time spent waiting for the Lord’s blessings more fruitful and productive.
- Think about how I can strengthen my faith and trust in the Lord.

Humility

Faith

Strength

Endurance

Loyalty

Joy

# Service

## Rebekah

Rebekah was the wife of Isaac and the mother of Esau and Jacob.

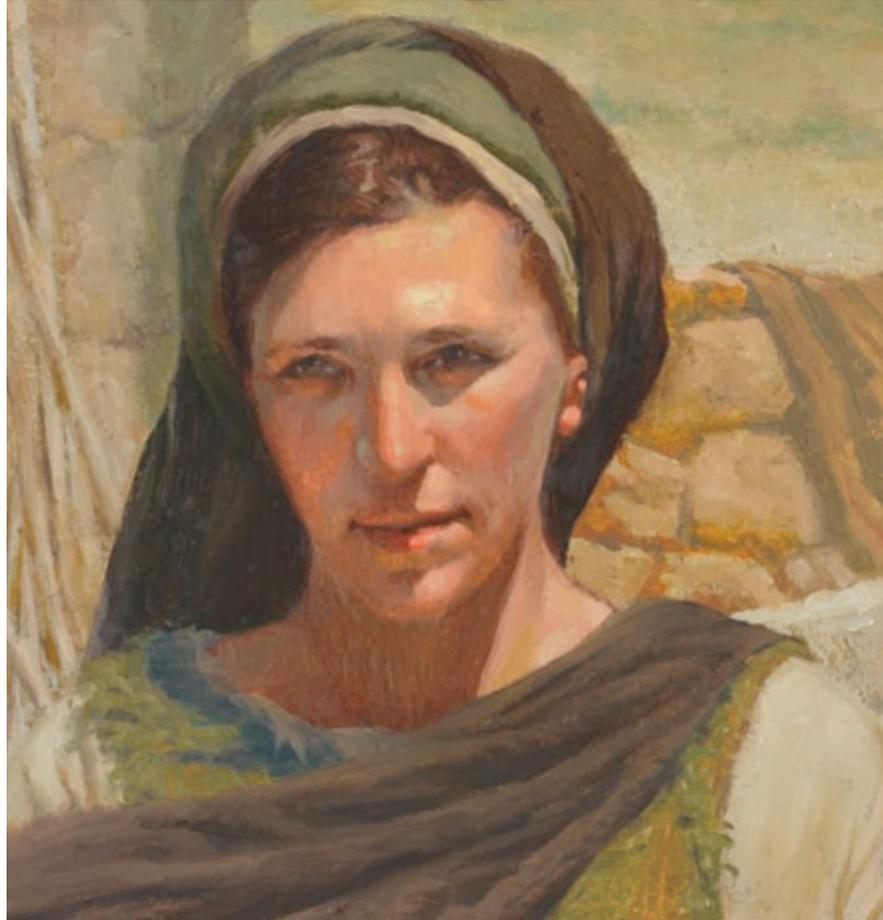
When Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac, the servant prayed that he would recognize Isaac's wife-to-be by a simple act: she would be the one who gave the servant and his camels water to drink. Upon his meeting Rebekah at a well, she quickly and eagerly gave water to both the servant and his 10 thirsty camels.

Arriving at the home of Rebekah's family, the servant asked if they would consent to her marriage to Isaac. The family left the decision up to Rebekah, who responded in simple faith, "I will go." Rebekah veiled herself upon seeing Isaac. This act, one writer observed, "was a sign of her virtue, reverence, humility, and modesty and showed respect for her future spouse." Such qualities indicated Rebekah's "readiness for a covenant marriage."<sup>2</sup>

After the couple married, Rebekah was unable to conceive a child for many years, but eventually, in answer to prayer, she was blessed with twin sons, Esau and Jacob. The Lord revealed to Rebekah that the second-born son, Jacob, was to have the birthright (Esau showed his disregard for the birthright by selling it to Jacob for "a mess of pottage"). An inspired Rebekah helped guide Jacob to receive the birthright blessing. (See Genesis 24; 25:19–34; 27:1–40.)

### LESSONS

- When we are in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing, blessings come.
- "Women are appointed, Rebekahlike, to be guides and lights in righteousness in the family unit."<sup>3</sup>—Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



# Charity

Service  
Modesty  
Kindness  
Patience  
Charity  
Virtue

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Respond, "I will go," when prompted by the Spirit.
- Seek for and act upon revelation for my family, as Rebekah did for hers.

## Rachel and Leah

Sisters Rachel and Leah were married to Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebekah.

When Jacob met Rachel, he loved her immediately and agreed to serve her father, Laban, seven years for her. Then Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, the elder daughter. Nevertheless, Jacob was soon allowed to marry Rachel also, on condition that he serve seven more years.

Jacob loved Rachel dearly, but she could not have children for many years, a great trial for her. Although Jacob had not first been interested in Leah (her great trial), she was able to bear him children. The sisters sought Jacob's love and attention through giving him sons. Both also gave Jacob their handmaids to marry in order to increase the number of their children. In this way they became the mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel. (See Genesis 29–30.)

Eventually the sisters learned to work together. When Jacob was instructed by the Lord to return to the land of Canaan, leaving all he had worked for, Rachel and Leah together replied, "Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do" (Genesis 31:16).

### LESSONS

- Even though our circumstances may be different from what we expected, we will be blessed as we trust in the Lord and align our will with His.
- Although our family situations may seem less than ideal, great blessings will come to us through our obedience and faith.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Put my full trust in the Lord and focus on the good in my family situation as I strive to "make weak things become strong" (Ether 12:27).
- Evaluate my family relationships and ask myself if there is someone in my family with whom I can develop a better relationship.

Faithfulness

Sacrifice

Motherhood

Long-suffering

Prayerfulness

Forgiveness

# Courage

## Deborah

We read in Judges 2:7 that “the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua.” However, the Israelites then began to forget the Lord, and the next 200 years were characterized by periods of apostasy and repentance. During this time, individuals known as judges, chosen either by the Lord or by the people, served to deliver the Israelites from their ever-present enemies.

Deborah was one of these judges, the only woman recorded in scripture to serve in this capacity. She was a prophetess, judge, and deliverer. In her role as prophetess, Deborah did not hold the priesthood or possess ecclesiastical keys but enjoyed the gift of prophecy in a more general sense (see Revelation 19:10).<sup>4</sup>

Deborah and the Israelite captain Barak delivered Israel from the Canaanites and then sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (see Judges 4–5). Deborah’s courage and faith inspired the Israelites so that they enjoyed a 40-year period of peace.



## LESSONS

- We win battles with evil through commitment to the Lord, courage to act as we are inspired to do so, and giving the credit to the Lord.
- As we love, lead, and serve others, we can have joy and satisfaction in fulfilling the Lord’s plan for us.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

- Ponder how I can strengthen my own faith so I can inspire others.
- Consider how the Lord has blessed me to be an instrument in His hands. ■

## NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Lessons from Eve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 87.
2. Cynthia L. Hallen, “Rebekah,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2002, 40.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Sisters from the Beginning,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1979, 63.
4. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 228–29.

Courage

Commitment

Love

Compassion

Leadership

Spirituality