# *Women in Scripture*

*A Dictionary of*
Named and Unnamed Women in the
Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books,
and the New Testament

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Persian period (c. 538–400 B.C.E.), after the Babylonian exile. There is no reason to suppose that the reference is to a male guild; indeed, a relevant grammatical, and perhaps vocational, parallel is the female herald *(mĕbaśśeret)* in Isa 40:9. Thus we can presume a guild whose ancestor was a female scribe, especially since the presence of female scribes in Babylonia (whence this group came) is well attested. Scribes were skilled professionals whose duties may have included record keeping and related administrative tasks.

TAMARA COHN ESKENAZI

SEE ALSO Part II: Those Who Bear Tidings/Herald (Ps 68:11, etc.).

FOR FURTHER READING: Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn. "Out from the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Postexilic Era."

# Hazzelelponi

"he gives my face shade," from Hebrew *ṣll,* "to give shade," and *pānîm,* "face"

(1 Chr 4:3)

Hazzelelponi is the sister of Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash, according to the Chronicler's genealogy of the tribe of Judah. Etam, named early in the verse but nowhere else in the Bible, may be the father of these siblings. Like Ashhur and Mered, other descendants of Judah who appear — with female members of their families — only in Chronicles, the presence of Etam and his children helps emphasize their tribe, Judah, which is probably the most important tribe in the Chronicler's estimation.

JULIA MYERS O'BRIEN

SEE ALSO Part I: Helah; Miriam 2; Naarah.

# Helah

meaning unknown

(1 Chr 4:5, 7)

Helah is one of the two or more wives of Ashhur, great-grandson of Judah. Helah bore Ashhur four sons: Zereth, Izhar, Ethnan, and Koz. Her co-wife, Naarah, bore four. The text lists another son (Tekoa) by an unnamed wife.

The inclusion of names of wives of various members of the tribe of Judah, which is not done for other tribes in the genealogy of Chronicles, attests to the author's disproportionate interest in Judah, the source of the Southern Kingdom and the Davidic dynasty.

ALICE L. LAFFEY

SEE ALSO Part I: Hazzeleponi; Naarah.

# Hephzibah 1

"my delight is in her," from Hebrew *ḥepṣî,* "my delight," and *bâ,* "in her"

(2 Kgs 21:1; 62:4)

Hephzibah is the chief wife of Hezekiah of Judah and the queen mother during the reign (698–642 B.C.E.) of their son, Manasseh, although her name is omitted from his regnal formula by the Chronicler (2 Chr 33:1). She is the only Judean queen mother for whom neither patronym nor place of origin is recorded, perhaps because of the extremely negative evaluation of her son, who undid his father's reforms and instigated extensive idolatry and evil behavior. Yet her name, ironically, appears as a designation for Zion restored, in Isa 62:4 — "you shall be called My Delight Is in Her."

RHONDA BURNETTE-BLETSCH

SEE ALSO Part III: Hephzibah/My Delight Is in Her, Jerusalem.

FOR FURTHER READING: Ben-Barak, Zafrira. "The Status and Right of the *gᵉbîrâ.*"

# Hephzibah 2

SEE Hephzibah/My Delight Is in Her, Jerusalem (Part III).

# Herodias 1

feminine form of Herod, from the Greek *heros,* "hero, heroic"; the term can also designate the revered, deified dead

(Mark 6:17–28; Matt 14:1–11; Luke 3:19–20)

A granddaughter of Herod the Great (king of Judea, 37 B.C.E.–4 B.C.E.), Herodias is vilified in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew as the instigator of the gruesome execution of John the Baptist (an event not narrated in the Gospel of Luke). Herodias's antipathy toward the Baptist is ascribed to her problematic marital history. The first-century C.E.

## Herodias 1

Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Herodias's first husband was her uncle, Herod (a son of Herod the Great). After the birth of their daughter, Salome, she appears to have deserted (or perhaps actually divorced) Herod in order to marry her first husband's half brother (and also her uncle), confusingly also named Herod, called Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee (*Antiquities* 18.136). Josephus characterizes Herodias's behavior as an intentional transgression of ancestral traditions. Most interpreters consider the marriage a violation of Lev 18:16 and 20:21, but Josephus's objection is unspecified and may (also) have to do with the irregular dissolution of the first marriage.

According to all three Synoptic Gospels, John the Baptist criticizes Herod for marrying his brother's wife: Herod, in response, imprisons John. Both Mark and Matthew relate that, at a celebratory banquet (possibly his birthday), Herod is so delighted at the dancing of the daughter of Herodias that he offers the daughter anything she wishes. Both Gospels concur that Herodias has engineered the daughter's request for the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

Yet the two accounts differ significantly. In Mark, it is Herodias who wants to have John killed but cannot, since Herod fears this righteous and holy man. Here, Herodias is consistently the instigator and the actor, although always indirectly, through the immediate agency and power of her husband. In Matthew, it is Herod who from the start desires to execute John but who fears the crowd, which regards the Baptist as a prophet (14:5). Matthew minimizes the role of Herodias, limiting her action to "prompting" her daughter and receiving the severed head.

Herodias's actual complicity in the death of John the Baptist is historically suspect. Josephus, whose version of these events postdates Mark and probably Matthew, contradicts the Gospels on key issues. Josephus blames both Herodias (*Antiquities* 18.136) and Herod (*Antiquities* 8.110) for their irregular marriage and places the blame for John's death squarely on Herod, with no mention of Herodias's participation. Whereas Josephus understands Herod to have been motivated by fear that John's popularity might incite an uprising (*Antiquities* 18.116–19), the Gospels portray Herod's actions as grounded in lust and lack of self-control. Although Josephus criticizes the marriage of Herodias and Herod, he nowhere suggests that John the Baptist did so. Josephus is often a suspect source: a general during the Jewish revolt against Rome, Josephus was either captured by or surrendered to the Romans at the siege of Jotapata in Galilee (he provides conflicting narratives in the *Antiquities* and in his subsequent account of the war), and all his writings were composed with the financial support of the Roman imperial family, whose client he became after the war. It seems difficult to understand why he would have omitted Herodias's role in John's death, had he known of it.

Some scholars have questioned the entire story. Corley and Crossan both suggest that Mark has created the narrative, borrowing from a story about Lucius Quinctius Flaminius, who was expelled from the Roman senate in 184 B.C.E., allegedly for beheading a condemned man at a dinner party at the request of a courtesan whom he loved and who had expressed a desire to see such an act performed.

If we assume that Josephus's narrative is accurate in two details at least — the agency of Herod and his political motivation — assigning the blame to Herodias in the Gospels cannot be explained as a mere derivative of an older Roman narrative. On the contrary, if such a narrative does underlie the Gospels, it may be because the story of Flaminius lent itself to assigning blame to Herodias, rather than to Herod. Such a revision would be consistent with early Christian tendencies to deflect blame for the persecution of key Christian figures away from the Romans and their allies (which the Herodians clearly were) and onto more vulnerable and safer targets. Matthew's awkward recasting, attributing to Herod the desire to kill John but the actual instigation of the act to Herodias, may reflect both knowledge of Herod's actual responsibility and a desire to correct the Gospel of Mark without altogether refuting it.

If Herodias may have been innocent of the Gospels' charges against her, she nevertheless emerges from Josephus's narratives as a complex woman

desirous of power and prestige (not unusual for members of the Herodian family). Although Christian sources have portrayed (and some continue to portray) Herodias as evil personified, Herodias appears in Josephus as a stereotypical schemer but also a loyal if misguided wife to Herod Antipas. After the emperor Gaius (37 C.E.–41 C.E.) made her brother Agrippa a king (37 C.E.–44 C.E.), Herodias persuaded Herod to seek the same honors for himself. Herod was ultimately accused, by Agrippa, of conspiring against Gaius, who then confiscated Herod's tetrarchy and banished him. Learning that Herod's wife was Agrippa's sister, Gaius offered to spare Herodias from exile and to allow her to keep her property. But Herodias demurred, insisting that having shared in her husband's former prosperity, she would be wrong to abandon him in his present misfortune. Gaius apparently then banished Herodias with her husband, confiscating her resources and giving them over to her brother (*Antiquities.* 18.240–55; see also *The Jewish War* 2.181–83).

Josephus sees these events as divine retribution, punishing Herod for listening to the "light speech" of a woman and punishing Herodias for resenting that her manipulative, spendthrift brother had become a king while her own husband, a member of the royal family, remained only a tetrarch, a lesser prince. A feminist perspective prompts other understandings. From Herodias's point of view, Agrippa's success at her husband's expense might seem unjust indeed, and her subsequent appeal to the emperor Gaius on her husband's behalf highly understandable. Perhaps what particularly offended ancient writers (including Josephus, Mark, and Matthew) about Herodias, was precisely her autonomy and her attempts to exercise control over her life, something women were not generally expected to do. If her complicity in the death of the Baptist is, in fact, manufactured, it is all the more interesting to consider that such blame functions as a telling critique of autonomous women.

ROSS S. KRAEMER

SEE ALSO Part I: Herodias 2; Salome 2.

FOR FURTHER READING: Corley, Kathleen S. *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition.*
Crossan, John Dominic. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography.*
Macurdy, Grace H. "Royal Women in Judea."

# Herodias 2

(Mark 6:22–28; Matt 14:6–11)

According to Mark 6:14–29, manipulative females brought about the death of John the Baptist. John had criticized Herod (the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, 4 B.C.E.–37 C.E.) for marrying Herodias, who had previously been married to Herod's brother. Herodias wished to kill John but was prevented by Herod's fear of John's righteousness and holiness.

At his birthday banquet, however, Herod is so entranced by the dancing of a young girl that he promises her anything she wishes. At her mother's behest, the girl asks for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. A dismayed Herod complies to preserve his honor before his guests. At the end of the scene, John's head is brought to the daughter, who gives it to her mother.

Ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark are divided in their identification of the dancer. According to a famous fourth-century C.E. manuscript, Codex Alexandrinus, and other witnesses, the dancer is called "the daughter of Herodias herself." But other equally famous and major witnesses, including Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Bezae, name the dancer Herodias and identify her as the daughter of Herod.

Influenced by the report of the first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus that Herod's wife, Herodias, had a daughter named Salome by her first husband (*Antiquities* 18.136), and by the long history of Christian identification of the dancer as Salome, many editions of the Greek New Testament have preferred the manuscripts that call the dancer "the daughter of Herodias." However, some recent editions of the Greek New Testament now prefer the reading "his [Herod's] daughter, Herodias," and the NRSV of Mark 6:22 follows them. This decision is based on a text-critical principle that copyists are more likely to change a "difficult" reading to something easier than they are to make an "easy" reading harder. In this case, scholars reason that ancient

scribes would more likely have changed the "difficult" reading, "his daughter, Herodias," to the less problematic "the daughter of Herodias" than vice versa; hence, this "difficult" reading is preferable.

If the reading "his [Herod's] daughter, Herodias" is earlier, identifying this daughter with Salome becomes implausible. In the notes to the HarperCollins Study Bible of the NRSV for Mark 6:22, C. Clifton Black points out that it seems strange for Mark to call the dancer Herodias, when according to Josephus her name was Salome. The real problem here is not so much the dancer's name but rather her paternity. According to Josephus, Salome was not the daughter of the Herod (Herod Antipas) for whom the dancer performs in the Gospels, but the daughter of his half brother by the same name (who is called Philip in both Mark and Matthew, although Josephus reports no additional name for that Herod). Herod Antipas is not known to have had a daughter, either by his first wife or by Herodias. But if he did, she might well have been named Herodias after her father. At least one scholar has argued that the dancer is to be identified with an actual daughter of Herod and his first wife, a princess of Nabatea (an ancient kingdom whose capital was Petra, in present-day Jordan) whose name is not preserved.

Although the verses that describe the interaction between mother and daughter never explicitly name the mother, the Gospels clearly assume that the dancer's mother is Herodias. Thus, Herodias the daughter could only also be Salome if she went by both names, a practice occasionally attested among Judean royalty in antiquity (for example, Queen Alexandra Salome). Since the historical Salome's father was also named Herod, she could conceivably have also been called Herodias. But if the parents of the dancer were Herod Antipas and Herodias, she cannot have been the historical Salome.

The textual situation for Matt 14:6 is much simpler. Codex Bezae calls the dancer "Herodias, his daughter," as it does also for Mark 6:22, but other manuscripts generally identify her as the daughter of Herodias. In the mid–second century C.E., Justin Martyr (a convert to Christianity from Samaria), retelling this story, names neither the mother nor the daughter, but does identify the dancer as the niece *(exadelphē)* of Herod (*Dialogue with Trypho* 49:4–5). By this, Justin may mean that he understands her to be the daughter of Herod's brother, which in turn suggests that Justin knows a version of the story in which the dancer is the daughter of Herod's wife and her first husband.

If, as seems likely, the entire narrative is a fabrication, reconstructing the original reading of Mark will only help us identify the dancer intended within the Markan narrative. Nevertheless, if we accept the reading prevalent in Matthew ("the daughter of Herodias herself") as also reflecting the older Markan reading, the identification of the dancer with Salome might initially seem plausible, since Josephus records no other children of Herodias, daughters or sons, from either marriage. The authors or knowledgeable early readers of Mark and Matthew, or both, might well have drawn such an inference. Yet what we know of the historical Salome may make it less likely that she could ever have been the dancer.

Ross S. Kraemer

See also Part I: Herodias 1; Salome 2; Part II: Young Dancer Who Asks for the Head of John the Baptist (Matt 14:6–11).

# Hodesh

"new, new moon, month," from Hebrew *ḥōdeš*, "month"

(1 Chr 8:9)

Hodesh is one of at least three wives of Shaharaim, within the genealogy of the tribe of Benjamin. 1 Chr 8:9–10 suggests that her children — Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah — were born in Moab after her husband sent away two other wives (Baara and Hushim). The reasons for this connection between Benjaminites and Moabites are unclear.

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See also Part I: Baara; Hushim.

demand the release of Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. Pilate acknowledges the leaders' request, even though it was not addressed directly to him but to the crowds. Conversely, his wife's urgent message goes unacknowledged by the characters depicted in the narrative, although it is implicitly echoed both by Pilate's hesitancy to condemn Jesus and by his later question, "What evil has he done?" (27:23).

In the *Acts of Pilate* (an anonymous Christian text dating to the fourth century or earlier), the wife's legend is extended. Here Pilate acknowledges his wife's communication and indicates that she is a Gentile who reveres the God of Israel: "And Pilate summoned all the Jews, and stood up and said to them, 'You know that my wife is pious and prefers to practice Judaism with you.'" When the Jews acknowledge his comment, Pilate then repeats his wife's message. The *Acts of Pilate* 11 reports that when Pilate and his wife heard that Jesus had died, they fasted and mourned. In later noncanonical texts, Pilate's wife, named Procla, becomes a disciple, and she dies after witnessing her husband's martyrdom.

AMY-JILL LEVINE

## MATT 27:55
## Unnamed Women at the Cross

Matthew follows Mark 15:41 in mentioning the presence of both named women and many unnamed women watching the crucifixion and death of Jesus from afar. In Matthew's version, the unnamed women are explicitly included in the description of the women as "following" Jesus and "ministering" to him. Some feminist scholars see these words as identifying the women at the cross as disciples and ministers, as they appear to do in Mark. Others view Matthew's Gospel as limiting discipleship to the twelve men named in 10:2–4, partly on the grounds of the Gospel's preference for the phrase "the twelve disciples" (Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17; 26:20; 28:16; the last scene speaks of eleven disciples because of the death of Judas).

MARY ROSE D'ANGELO

SEE ALSO Part I: Mary 3; Mary 4; Part II: Mother of the Sons of Zebedee (Matt 20:20, etc.); Unnamed Women at the Cross (Mark 15: 40–41).

FOR FURTHER READING: Wainwright, Elaine. "The Gospel of Matthew."

Wire, Antoinette Clark. "Gender Roles in a Scribal Community."

## MATT 27:56
## Mother of the Sons of Zebedee

SEE MATT 20:20, etc. Mother of the Sons of Zebedee (Part II).

## MARK 1:30
## Mother-in-Law of Simon (Peter)

In Mark, Jesus' first exorcism of an unclean spirit (from a man in the synagogue) is quickly followed by his first healing miracle, involving the unnamed mother-in-law of his newly called disciple Simon (also known as Peter). Accompanied by James and John, Jesus enters the house of Simon and his brother, Andrew, where Jesus cures the woman of a fever by taking her hand and lifting her out of her sickbed. Although the story is brief, it contains the central elements of a healing story. The final scene provides concrete proof of the cure when the woman serves the men.

Found, with some differences, in all three Synoptic Gospels, the story raises questions about the participation of women in the Jesus movement. The Greek verb translated as "serve" *(diakoneō)* has technical meanings in many Roman-period religions, including later Christianity, and is the basis for the English word *deacon.*

Davies has suggested that, when the cured mother-in-law responds by "serving" Jesus and his newly appointed disciples, the story uses *diakoneō* in the sense of special discipleship manifest in close

## Mark 3:32–35

attendance. Others interpret *diakoneō* in an ordinary sense to mean merely that Simon's mother-in-law performs the appropriate gestures of hospitality (for example, the Scholars Version produced by the Jesus Seminar translates it: "Then she started looking after them"). Still others, arguing that it would have been unusual in first-century Galilee for a respectable free woman to wait on men who were not her immediate relatives, see this passage as evidence that the Jesus movement was characterized by egalitarian social practices (including meals) that conflicted with widespread (although not necessarily universal) ancient notions of propriety.

Does this story thus signal the unnamed mother-in-law's participation in the Jesus movement, or does it simply depict a woman whose miraculous return to health is demonstrated in her immediate ability to perform ordinary gendered tasks of hospitality? That she never reappears in the Gospel narratives might imply that she plays no significant role in the movement, yet cannot rule out the possibility.

The healing of the unnamed mother-in-law points to her absent daughter, Simon's similarly anonymous wife. By itself, the wife's absence from this story says nothing. The fact that she never appears in the Gospels, might be taken to mean that she is dead. However, 1 Cor 9:5 (Paul's claim that Cephas — usually taken to mean Simon Peter — was accompanied by a "sister-wife") is often taken as a reference to a wife of Peter's. Even if this is correct, that wife need not be the one implied here.

That the mother-in-law lives in the house of Simon and his brother, Andrew, suggests that she is a widow who has moved in with her daughter's marital family, although it is also possible that the house could be understood as hers. That she lives with her son-in-law makes it less likely that Simon and her daughter are divorced. Whereas other passages in the Synoptic Gospels (such as Matt 15:3–6; 19:19; Mark 7:10–13; 10:29–30) suggest that adult children do not always care for their parents properly, this story may represent Simon's family as fulfilling the commandment to honor one's mother and father.

Ross S. Kraemer

See also Part II: Mother-in-Law of Peter (Simon) (Matt 8:14); Mother (and Father) to Be Honored (Mark 7:10–13); (Mark 10:19); Mother-in-Law of Simon (Peter) (Luke 4:38); Mother (and Father) to Be Honored (Luke 18:20); Sister/Wife Who Accompanied Apostles Other Than Paul (1 Cor 9:5).

For further reading: Corley, Kathleen. *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition.*

Davies, W. D. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount.*

## Mark 3:32–35; Matt 12:50
# Sister(s) of Jesus

Early in Mark, while surrounded by a crowd of followers in his native Galilee, Jesus is told that members of his family are outside, asking for him. Jesus responds that those around him are his true relatives; that whoever does the will of God is his brother and sister and mother" (3:35). Similar versions occur in Matt 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21.

The reading of Mark 3:35 is uncontested, occurring in all significant early manuscripts. In a few, however, two important early Bible manuscripts, Alexandrinus (A) and Codex Bezae (D), have the crowd inform Jesus that "your mother and your *adelphoi* [masculine plural] and your *adelphai* [feminine plural]" are outside," whereas the majority of other ancient manuscripts read only "your mother and your *adelphoi* are outside."

Although the NRSV translates the reading of A and D for Mark 3:32, a reading attractive to modern audiences desirous of a gender-inclusive Bible, it may well be a later revision, produced by scribes who modified v. 32 to make it more consistent with Jesus' response in v. 35. A similar desire for consistency may account for the Lukan form of this story. There, Jesus' mother and brothers are outside, and Jesus replies, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (8:21). Ancient attestations of Matthew follow the majority reading of Mark, which lacks the specific reference to the sisters outside, but includes "sister" in Jesus'

saying. Mark and Matthew but not Luke, are thus unambiguous in their inclusion of "sister" and "brother" in the community of those who do the will of God.

Since the story privileges this community over blood relationships, it is unlikely that the revision in Mark should be taken as evidence of a desire to stress the presence of Jesus' sisters. Nor should the absence of sisters in Luke be taken as evidence of a desire to mute the presence of women in the Jesus movement, although both might fuel such interpretations in the absence of more careful consideration.

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See also Part II: The Sisters of Jesus (Matt 13:56); (Mark 6:3).

## Mark 5:22–23, 35–43
# Daughter of Jairus

Although she never acts or speaks, the daughter of Jairus plays a substantive role in considerations of Mark's Christology, depiction of social roles, and literary artistry. Her resuscitation anticipates the resurrection; the interruption of her story by the healing of the hemorrhaging woman adds to the miraculousness of her cure and insists that the two stories be treated in relation to each other; the daughter's relations to her parents and to the hemorrhaging woman have implications for family structures, gender categories, and economic issues.

The daughter is introduced in a series of deferred meetings, which both increase the tension regarding the extent of her illness and indicate the number of individuals drawn together by her condition. She is presented first through her father's description to Jesus, "My little daughter is at the point of death" (5:23); next through messengers from Jairus's house who announce her death; then through reference to the mourners at the house; and finally by means of the entry of Jesus, his three disciples, and her parents into her direct presence. Her communal, domestic, and familial connections all contrast with the situation of the hemorrhaging woman, who appears without reference to family, home, or remaining economic resources; rather than gain Jesus' attention, she hopes to hide in the crowd.

By the time Jesus arrives at Jairus's home, the girl has died. Jesus nevertheless reassures Jairus: "Do not fear; only believe" (or "have faith"; 5:36). He tells the crowd that the girl is but sleeping, yet the mourners laugh at him (5:40). Their change of response, from "weeping and wailing loudly" (5:38) to laughter contrasts with the silence of the mother and the continuous concern of the father. Separating the child's parents and his three disciples (those who did not laugh) from the unbelievers, Jesus enters the place where the girl is and takes her by the hand. Commentators frequently see this gesture as indicating Jesus' abrogation of Levitical purity laws concerning corpse uncleanness. However, although contact with a corpse makes one ritually impure, it is neither illegal nor sinful, and the burying of the dead is an act of worthiness. It might be more appropriate to emphasize here Jesus' human compassion: he not only comforts her father and touches the girl, but also he addresses her directly in Aramaic, "*Talitha Koum,*" or, as Mark translates it, "Little girl, get up!" The child rises and walks, and Jesus commands then that she be provided with food.

The food confirms that the child is not a ghost. In Luke 24 and John 21, the resurrected Jesus demonstrates his corporeal nature by eating. Mark 16:14, an addition to the text, which originally ended at 16:8, also refers to the presence of Jesus in the context of a meal, but here Jesus himself is not depicted as eating.

Jairus's daughter may also be compared with other daughters in the Gospel. On one hand, her cure is more direct than that of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30), although in both cases the parent seeks Jesus' miraculous power. On the other, she presents a contrast to the daughter of Herodias, who at a feast dances before another Jewish leader, Herod Antipas, bringing

about a death rather than representing regained life.

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SEE ALSO Part I: Herodias 1; Herodias 2; Salome 2; Part II: Daughter of Jairus (Matt 9:18–19, etc.); (Luke 8:41–42a, etc.); Young Dancer Who Asks for the Head of John the Baptist (Matt 14:6–11); Daughter of the Syrophoenician Woman (Mark 7:24–30).

## MARK 5:25–34
# Woman with a Twelve-Year Hemorrhage

Mark interposes the account of a woman suffering from what is likely a uterine hemorrhage with the story of the request for the healing of a dead girl and the fulfillment of that request. The structure of the entwined stories, which suggests comparison of the woman to both the girl's father and to the girl herself, emphasizes several Markan themes: the former comparison evokes the themes of faith in Jesus, secrecy regarding his messianic status, Jesus' fidelity to the Law, gender and class issues, and family structures; the latter recollects interests in female sexuality, in the suffering of Jesus, and in his resurrection.

The hemorrhaging woman interrupts Jesus' journey to the home of the synagogue leader, Jairus. Contrasts immediately appear. The woman has no name; no family or home is mentioned; she has endured severe physical suffering for twelve years; she has become impoverished by spending all her resources on physicians; she approaches Jesus from behind. Jairus is named, makes a request on his daughter's behalf, brings Jesus to his home where the child's mother is also present, has status as a leader, is an official part of a synagogue community, and approaches Jesus directly. Yet the two figures share great faith in Jesus' healing power, and their faith is rewarded.

The woman's relationship to the girl is explicit in Mark's noting of the twelve-year illness and the girl's age as "twelve years." The girl, at the [illegible] tional stage between childhood and womanhood, comparable to the woman, who has an excess vaginal bleeding. Both bleed, both are power and both are healed (or "saved"). So too Jesus bleed, become powerless, and finally be raised.

Although often read as indicating Jesus' reject of Levitical purity laws, Mark shows no such in est here: the laws are not mentioned, the cr does not part from the woman or ever show surprise at her public presence, and even the s gogue leader shows no hesitancy in asking Jes touch his child. The woman's action has also b interpreted as violating expected female subs ence, but this too may be extreme. On one ha the woman does approach Jesus from behind the other, Mark on several occasions, without mark, depicts women in active and not necess subservient roles — for example, the Syropho cian (Mark 7:24–30), the woman who anoints J (Mark 14:3–9), and the servant who challenges P (Mark 14:66–69).

Indeed, the woman herself may be seen as ha an active role: the money spent on physician identified as hers, and thus she was at on economically independent. She is also self-di and self-aware, as her internal monologue ( and perception of healing (5:29) indicate. Fin she comes forward to confess before Jesus and crowd that she was the one who had touched (5:30). Her story ends with the woman in a p tion of supplication before Jesus, and so it mi Jairus's initial position. Jesus addresses he "daughter" — again evoking the narrative fram and announces that her faith has made her wel "saved" her). The final line anticipates the he of the girl, but in this latter case, unlike his ac tance of the woman's public testimony, Jesus c mands secrecy from those who witness the cure

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SEE ALSO Part II: Women with a Twelve-Year H rhage (Matt 9:20–22); (Luke 8:43–48).

FOR FURTHER READING: D'Angelo, Mary R "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospels: M and John."

Levine, Amy-Jill. "Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law and Hemorrhaging Women."

## Mark 5:35–43 Daughter of Jairus

See Mark 5:22–23, etc. Daughter of Jairus (Part II).

## Mark 5:40–43
# Wife of Jairus

In his narration of Jesus' healing of Jairus's daughter, Mark identifies Jairus's wife not in her marital role but as the child's mother. Jesus permits only her, his three disciples, and Jairus to witness the cure. The mother may be compared with other mothers in Mark. A woman who does Jesus' will becomes his metaphorical mother (3:34–35), whereas Jesus' own mother (3:31–33), unlike Jairus's wife, is not brought into the inner circle. Jairus's wife may also be contrasted with Herodias: the former is silent, her relationship to her husband is unquestioned, and she is present at the raising of a daughter; the latter is vocal, she is involved in an illegal relationship (6:18), and, with her daughter, she participates in bringing about the death of John the Baptist. Finally, the mother of James and Joses, like Jairus's wife, bears silent testimony to a death and resurrection (15:40, 47; 16:1).

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See also Part I: Herodias 1; Part II: Daughter of Jairus (Matt 9:18–19, etc.); (Mark 5:22–23, etc.); (Luke 8:41–42a, etc.); Unnamed Women at the Cross (Matt 27:55); (Mark 15:40–41); Wife of Jairus (Luke 8:51–56).

## Mark 6:3
# Sisters of Jesus

In Mark 6:1–6a, when Jesus returns to Nazareth and preaches in the local synagogue, many who hear him question his wisdom and authority. They ask, is he not "the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" Matt 13:53–58 reuses the Markan story, with some small but interesting revisions. It is absent in Luke, who thus never mentions any sisters of Jesus.

For the author of Mark, Jesus had at least four brothers and more than one sister. Unlike his brothers, the sisters of Jesus are never named. No members of Jesus' family are identified as participants in the Jesus movement. Mark 6:4 may be taken to suggest that the sisters of Jesus are among those of his relatives who do not honor him as a prophet.

The author of Mark does not specify where and when the "many" (a masculine plural that could grammatically include women as well as men, but equally well may not) who oppose Jesus do so, but it is reasonable to read their response as one made immediately on hearing Jesus, in the synagogue itself. If so, the description of the sisters as "here with us" places women in the synagogue on the Sabbath, in first-century Galilee. In light of claims that Jewish women were excluded from synagogue participation, this representation is significant counterevidence, all the more so since the Gospel shows no interest in this question.

Ross S. Kraemer

See also Part II: The Sisters of Jesus (Matt 13:56); Sister(s) of Jesus (Mark 3:32–35).

## Mark 6:22–29
# Daughter of Herodias

According to the NRSV, the preferred reading of v. 22 is "his [Herod's] daughter, Herodias." However, some ancient manuscripts read "the daughter of Herodias, herself."

Ross S. Kraemer

See also Part I: Herodias 2; Salome 2; Part II: Young Dancer Who Asks for the Head of John the Baptist (Matt 14:6–11).

## Mark 7:10–13
# Mother (and Father) to Be Honored

In Mark 7:1–15, some Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus why his disciples eat without first washing their hands, ignoring the "tradition of the elders" (v. 3). Jesus counters that the Pharisees and scribes honor human tradition, but violate the divine commandment to honor mother and father (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16) when they dedicate to God resources they would otherwise have provided for their parents. In so doing, Jesus suggests, they speak evil of their parents, an act deserving death (Lev 20:9).

Whose interpretation of the commandments is truly authoritative is cast as the heart of the debate. Why Jesus counters with the example of the commandment to honor one's parents is not immediately apparent. Conceivably, it is connected to the identification of the "tradition of the elders" with the traditions of "the fathers," a phrase common in ancient Jewish sources. It may also be that, in this particular instance of Markan anti-Pharisaic polemic, it is the author who has chosen to cast the Pharisees as violators of the most basic and common ancient moral principles of filial piety.

Once invoked, the injunction of Exodus and Deuteronomy dictates that the dispute be couched in terms of mothers as well as fathers. Jesus' response could be understood to suggest that, in the land of Israel in the first-century C.E., mothers and fathers did not always receive the necessary financial support from their adult children, something that could easily have had a disparate impact on women. If, however, the driving force here is anti-Pharisaic polemic that postdates Jesus himself, we should be cautious in drawing such specific conclusions about social conditions from the narrative.

Ross S. Kraemer

See also Part II: Women in the Decalogue (Exod 20:8, etc.); Mother (and Father) to Be Honored (Matt 19:19); (Mark 10:19); (Luke 18:20); (Eph 6:2–3).

## Mark 7:24–30
# Syrophoenician Woman

By her bold faith and persistence, her courage cleverness, the Syrophoenician woman effects only the healing of her daughter by Jesus, but a significant shift in Jesus' attitude toward Gen In Mark, her story is part of a larger narrative ment (6:45–8:21) that recounts a "detour" thro which Jesus leads his disciples after they fail t on ahead of him to the other side of the Se Galilee, to gentile Bethsaida. During the "det the expansiveness of Jesus' teaching, feeding, healing power not only for Jews, but also for G tiles, is made manifest. Jesus' encounter with Syrophoenician woman is presented as key to transformation of boundaries.

The Markan narrator informs the audience Jesus' intention in going north to the gentile ci Tyre is not to seek out more crowds to heal, b escape public notice. The fact that the Syropho cian woman seeks out the secluded Jesus is jus first indication of her persistence on behalf of demon-possessed daughter. The Markan Jesus buffs her initial request, and he does so wi powerful and degrading metaphor: "Let the dren be fed first, for it is not fair to take the dren's food [bread] and throw it to the dogs" ( The children are Israel. She is a dog, and right back! Two can play at metaphors. Lord], even the dogs under the table eat the dren's crumbs (7:28)." She has him. She has second rebuke and won her daughter's health. this saying ["word," *logos*]" (7:29, RSV), Jesus you may go home to a healed child, a healed ge child. And Jesus, too, seems to have experien healing in the widening of his initial view of G power and care.

This story is bothersome in several ways. The that not the Syrophoenician demoniac, but Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20), is the first healed in Mark's Gospel bothers biblical critics want the text to be logical and consistent. Jesus already moved beyond his Jewish community exorcising a gentile demoniac in chap. 5, so wh

he problem with healing a gentile child in chap. 7?, they ask. Such critics compensate by talking about Mark's compilation of oral sources. The fact that Jesus' initial response to the woman is rude and parochial bothers faithful readers who want Jesus to be a perfect model of morality and courtesy, unmarked by his patriarchal culture and human nature. They compensate by talking about how Jesus, who always planned to heal the daughter, was "testing the faith" of her mother, or about how the diminutive form in the Greek (7:27, *kynariois*, "little dogs") minimizes the insult. But in the Markan narrative, it is first the woman who is bothered by Jesus' narrow view of God's power coming through him, and then Jesus who is bothered by the expansive truth of her observation. They continue by talking to each other, and healing is shared. The Markan narrator continues talking to the audience about the abundance of bread and healing through Jesus, proclaimer of God's ruling activity, until the disciples finally do reach gentile Bethsaida, where, although it takes two stages, even the blind can now see (8:22–26).

Like Jairus (5:21–24, 35–43), the Syrophoenician woman seeks healing not for herself, but for her daughter. Her non-Jewish status is as highly marked (7:24, Tyre; 7:26, Gentile, Syrophoenician) as the Jewish status of Jairus (5:21, "crossed again"; 5:22, "one of the leaders of the synagogue"). Both persevere in their faith: Jairus after his daughter dies, the woman after Jesus' initial rebuff. Together their stories portray a Jesus who listens to the pleas of both mothers and fathers and who heals both Jews and Gentiles.

The Syrophoenician woman knows when not to take "no" for an answer. In addition to her intense desire to be a channel of healing for her daughter, she senses the fuller implications of Jesus' ministry of healing: he heals what is broken — broken bodies, broken spirits, and broken relationships, including the broken relationships between Jews and Gentiles, insiders and outsiders. The Syrophoenician woman, an outsider as a Gentile (Greek) and as a woman, achieves her goal — and more — because of her "saying," not because of her faith alone or her reasoning alone, but because of her speaking up and speaking out — because of her action. Jesus gracefully reacts with the maturity that empowers change and enables inclusivity.

ELIZABETH STRUTHERS MALBON

SEE ALSO Part II: Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:21–28); Daughter of the Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:21–28); Daughter of the Syrophoenician Woman (Mark 7:24–30).

FOR FURTHER READING: Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark."

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Tolbert, Mary Ann. "Mark."

## MARK 7:24–30
# Daughter of the Syrophoenician Woman

The demon-possessed "little daughter" of the Syrophoenician woman is healed at a distance by Jesus, who credits the bold and clever "saying" (RSV; Greek *logos*, 7:29) of her mother as she successfully challenges Jesus to include Gentiles as well as Jews in his healing power. In the patriarchal culture of the first century, it would be more usual for a girl's father to seek help for her from someone outside the family — as Jairus does for his "little daughter" (5:21–24, 35–43). But in the case of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman, no father is mentioned. Whether the father is unwilling or unable to seek help for her is not known. The mother may be a widow, or she may be unwed. Her daughter may be her only family. The mother may simply be more willing to take the risk of presenting the request to this Jewish healer. As a woman, her status is already lower — lower if she is a widow, lower still if unwed. Thus she has less to lose — and her daughter's health to gain.

The mother does, however, seek out Jesus in a house, a more usual domain for a woman than the public space of a street or market area. Yet it is not

her house, and she is not an invited guest but an intruder on Jesus' seclusion — as well as, it turns out, on Jesus' conviction about to whom his gift of healing should be extended. Her love for her daughter impels her to break with social norms that would not sanction her initial speech to Jesus, much less her snappy comeback. Following her lead, the Markan Jesus too breaks conventions, not only speaking to her, but also listening to her. The mother's bold love and faith are rewarded by Jesus' exorcism of the demon from her daughter, without his ever seeing the daughter, the only healing at a distance in Mark's Gospel.

Her story complements the raising of the "little daughter" of Jairus, a synagogue ruler (5:21–24, 35–43). As a Jewish father perseveres in pursuing Jesus' help for his daughter, despite an initial setback (her reported death!), so a gentile mother does the same for her daughter, despite an initial setback — Jesus' refusal to help. But while Jairus is encouraged by Jesus to resist fear and believe (5:36), the Syrophoenician woman has to overcome Jesus' resistance on the strength of her own fearlessness and wit. For Jairus, Jesus is always a helper; for the Syrophoenician woman, Jesus is at first an antagonist. Jairus must struggle with his fear; the Syrophoenician woman must struggle with Jesus. Both daughters benefit, and their stories, taken together, portray a Jesus who listens to mothers as well as fathers and heals and restores gentile as well as Jewish children.

ELIZABETH STRUTHERS MALBON

SEE ALSO Part II: Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:21–28); Daughter of the Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:21–28); Syrophoenician Woman (Mark 7:24–30).

## MARK 10:2–12
# Divorced Wife

Mark 10:2–12 combines two sayings of Jesus on divorce. In 10:2–9, Pharisees ask Jesus whether it is "lawful for a man to divorce his wife," paraphrasing Deut 24:1 as a biblical proof text for the permissibility of divorce (later rabbis based their di law on Deut 24:1–4). Jesus counters with Ge ("God made them male and female") and ("one flesh") as proof texts for his prohibiti divorce. In Mark 10:10–12, Jesus instructs his ples privately that a man who divorces his wi marries another woman commits adultery a the prior wife. So, too, a woman who divorc husband and marries another commits ad against the prior husband. The connection be divorce and remarriage is also found in Deut which presumes the practice of divorce (e through a written document) and is actuall cerned with whether a man may remarry a w has divorced if she has remarried in the in (the passage forbids it).

Jesus' prohibition of divorce changes the tion of adultery. According to ancient Israeli adultery was committed when an Israelite m sex with the wife of another Israelite man (s 22:22). A man did not commit adultery aga own wife by having sex with a prostitute, a f er, a slave, a divorced woman, a widow, or a Further, polygamy was allowed and did not tute adultery. The wife of an Israelite man, trast, committed adultery against her husb having sex with any other man. Jesus alt equalizes the definition of adultery by cl "Whoever divorces his wife and marries commits adultery against her" (Mark 10:1 pare Matt 19:9), as if a man could in fact adultery against his own wife. Jesus also exte concept of adultery to include looking lustf woman (Matt 5:27–30).

Mark, who presupposes women's power ate divorce, prohibits both women and me initiating divorce, whereas Matthew's pro extends only to men. Some scholars belie Mark adapted Jesus' prohibition to Greek a man law, according to which women had th to divorce, whereas Matthew remained cl Jesus' own formulation. We can, however, explain the discrepancy between Matthe Luke) on the one hand and Mark (and Paul other as reflecting the different strands o