

PULP SCRIPTURE:

*Seven Bible Stories
They Didn't Teach You
In Sunday School*

By William Bivins

Brought to you by The Episcopal Church of St. Mary the Virgin

Gone are the days when the stories of Scripture were only taught in stained glass, enacted by traveling troubadours, and given us by the authorities of the Church. In the 16th Century people gave their lives to present to us the Holy text in our spoken common language. We are free at last to read with our own eyes, and hear with our own ears, the whole story of Israel's relationship with God. But do we want to hear it?

How goes life in Old Israel? And does it inform our spirituality today?

Sit back and enjoy; discover The Good Book.

A special thanks to our Cast

Linda Ayres-Frederick*

Emily Jordan*

Dennis McIntyre

Dan Wilson

*(*member, Actors Equity Assoc.)*

Lector, Stage Directions,

Kat Anderson

Program Notes

Lesson 1. The First Sin and its Punishment, Genesis 3

Adam.....	Dan Wilson
Eve.....	Emily Jordan
God.....	Dennis Wilson

Adam and Eve -- the beginning of when things went wrong. Why do things go wrong? Every religion on the earth has tried to explain it. Here is the version from Hebrew Scriptures. But even more puzzling is: how is it that in spite of the fact that things do go horribly wrong there seems to be a consistent gesture of care and miracles in the midst of it all? Apparently God can no longer live with us, but cannot live without us.

We've taken in the godly moral knowledge and it leaves us on our own to call the shots. Humorously we can consider our nakedness, and God's fashion sense. Seriously, it's time we heard this ancient story as a call to use the knowledge we now carry inside us --- the knowledge of good and evil.

Lesson 2. The Depravity of Sodom. Genesis 19:1-11

Sodomite 1.....	Linda Ayers- Frederick
Sodomite 2.....	Dan Wilson
Sodomite 3.....	Emily Jordan
Lot.....	Dennis McIntyre

The arrival of these angels to Lot's door comes immediately after Abraham and God's conversation regarding the fate of Sodom. God is not at all pleased with the people of Sodom and apparently eager to destroy the entire town. Abraham reasons for mercy, and God agrees

Sodom will be spared should the angels find ten just men. The text indicates that, indeed, *all* of the men (aka citizens) of the city are decidedly against these visiting strangers and Lot, a resident alien. The angels clearly see that ten just men do not exist, but there was this faithful family who took them in. Lot clearly placed his regard for God higher than any of his property -- including the property called "daughters." Mercy came upon Lot's daughters as the angels intervened before the girls could be given to the crowd for abuse. Mercy continued in that Lot and his family escaped, but they do not get away totally Scot free. That is another story.

**Lesson Three. The Shameful Origin of Moab and Ammon.
Genesis 19:30-38**

Older Sister..... Linda Ayres-Frederick
Younger Sister..... Emily Jordan

What in the world were these girls up to? Stuck in a cave surrounded by enemies and dependent upon a grieving father, how is consorting with him a good way out of a tough situation? Today we would say these girls had "bad judgment." And one could wonder if there was more behind Lot's willingness to offer them up to the townspeople that horrid night. We try to assume the daughters' good intentions of wanting, however desperately, to carry on the family line. Children are borne of the unions, Moab and Ammon.

As the family line unfolds, nothing but conflict and heartache came between the Israelites and the Moabites and the Ammonites. Israel took the position that is was pure and faithful to God, and the people of Moab and Ammon were compromised and impure.

However, true to the mercy of God, from the tribe of the Moabites came Ruth, another faithful woman sneaking up on a drunken older man -- all for the glory of God. In the great story of God's relationship to Israel, this incident with Lot's daughters, and later Ruth, is part of God working His purpose out. Interesting, eh?

Lesson 4. The Command to Sacrifice Isaac.

Genesis 22:1-14

Abraham.....	Dennis McIntyre
Isaac.....	Dan Wilson
Angel.....	Linda Ayres-Frederick

We are shocked by a father who would actually follow God's command to sacrifice his only son. But, is it so different than the father who allows his son to sign up for the infantry? The greater good asks for the life of your child. The father allows his young son to go off to take his chance at the altar of his country, and deep in his heart he thinks maybe God will substitute someone...something else... not take his precious son. When seen from this point of view, Abraham may not be so different from us.

Abraham carries a deep longing to be on the side of ultimate Good. God blessed him with this miracle son, and gave him a promise beyond his wildest dreams. God bestowing other, even more amazing, miracles upon Abraham is not such a stretch of the imagination. Typically an only son would be a father's future, power and hope, to be cherished carefully or all would be lost. However, Abraham's future, Isaac and everything he stands for, is all, obviously, God's province. Who owns the future? How do we keep forefront in our lives that all we have is from God?

Lesson 5. Judah and Tamar

Genesis 38

Judah.....	Dennis Wilson
Tamar.....	Emily Jordan

Where would we be without sneaky sexy women? Clearly King David owes his life to such lusty folk. Tamar has a tough route, no doubt. Two husbands dead, no children, and back living in her father's household. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" could have been her lament too. Her seduction of Judah is a fine example of family values.

Judah is shirking his duties to her by delaying her promised marriage to his son Shelah. She values family and will do everything she can for a family and to continue her side of the promise to bear lineage for Judah. Again, we have a story of a convoluted coupling that will lead directly to God's chosen, King David.

Lesson 6. Samson and Delilah.

Judges 16:4-21

Samson..... Dan Wilson

Delilah..... Emily Jordan

At the point we meet Samson with Delilah, Samson has already had an illustrious and miraculous career tromping the Philistines and leading Israel. Proven mighty by his hand and his famous conquering by the jawbone of an ass, he knows his strength comes from the Lord. And yet, personal calamity is always nearby -- his first wife is burned to death, 3,000 of his own kinsmen betray him, life is never easy though God's might is with him. Good religious folk may take note of that reality.

At birth Samson was dedicated to God, and two conditions of his service were no booze, and no haircuts. These were actions that Samson was to offer as evidence of his alliance with The Lord. Revealing his secret to Delilah was not in itself a horrid thing to do; she was the betrayer. The story continues proving that without his hair his might was gone and horrible consequences followed. However, when his hair grew back in prison, he was granted one final catastrophic conclusion to the Philistines, breaking down the temple and killing all therein, including himself. Samson is a tragic hero whose story echoes other great myths and folklore. What does it do for you? Are the gestures we offer to demonstrate our allegiance to God as sacred to us as Samson's hair?

Lesson 7. The Book of Ruth.
Ruth 2:14-4:21

Naomi..... Linda Ayres-Frederick
Ruth..... Emily Jordan

The story of Ruth suggests again that when God chooses you, God chooses and it doesn't matter what the rules are or how impossible your situation appears. By all reasonable accounts she would have been ostracized, stoned, or harassed out of the community. A Moabite in Israel was never welcomed. Kind, beautiful and faithful to God and family, not what one would expect from a Moabite. Who is this woman and why is she here?

By the Grace of God, Ruth is saved, Naomi is saved. Two women otherwise destined for extreme poverty and disgrace, at best. And Ruth is saved by employing her innate womanly wiles. Yet this is much more than the rescue of a couple of women. It is the story of another act of sneaky seduction that brings about God's purpose. How shall we interpret this? God works in mysterious ways, or God works in all ways, or God is happy to use those who sleep in the right bed -- whoever they may be? From the coupling of Ruth and Boaz comes Obed, who begets Jesse, who begets the beloved King David, and, of course, on down the line to Jesus.

Scripture offers witness to a clear pattern of sneaky, seductive women becoming very useful to God's purpose. Ironic that by Eve's seduction of Adam to eat the forbidden fruit we are driven from God's Grace, yet by many women's sexual seduction we are given the progeny for redemption back into Grace. With such unexpected Holy results coming from these sneaky seductresses, curious that our Ultimate Redeemer was born of a virgin, or so they say.

Program notes by The Rev. Beth Hansen