



The
ARK *and*
the **DOVE**

The Story of Noah's Wife

Jill Eileen Smith



The
ARK *and*
the DOVE

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When Life Doesn't Match Your Dreams

She Walked Before Us

The
ARK *and*
the **DOVE**

The Story of Noah's Wife



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To our beloved kitty Tiger.

This was the first book you didn't get to "help" me finish. Since the book is filled with so many animals, I think you would have enjoyed knowing that it is dedicated to you. Any cat mentions in this story are for you.

God blessed us with five cats to love in this life, but you were the sweetest, and the only one who was there for every published book until now. You were my muse. My pen-chewing, finger-holding-as-I-tried-to-type, best-snuggling, most loving kitty ever.

Missing you doesn't get easier.

You were deeply loved.

September 5, 2005–August 15, 2022



Part 1



Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” . . .

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis 6:3, 5–8 ESV

Prelude

I never thought my life would turn out this way, and to be honest, I would never have chosen this path, given the choice. The world is a harsh place now, though when the boys were young, it was harsh in a different way.

I remember the day Shem came home with his lip split and bruises on his face. My middle son was strong-willed and a little rebellious, but he'd never been in any kind of fight. I rushed to his side and pulled him close. He was thirteen, still a child in every respect. I never should have allowed him to go to the market alone.

"What happened?" I held him at arm's length, then hurried to the cooking room to retrieve a rag. After dousing it in water, I returned and placed it over his swollen eye. "Tell me."

"Some boys chased me down the street." He looked beyond me as though embarrassed.

"You didn't get these bruises from being chased. What happened?" I took his face and gently coaxed him to look me in the eye.

"They punched me. I fought back, but they were bigger than me." He hung his head, and a tear slipped onto his sandals. He shook his head. "I'm fine, Ima. Next time I will take a stick. I'll beat them good."

Oh, Elohim, help us!

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but there was no possibility that I would allow him to go anywhere without Noah or Japheth. Ham was younger still, and I would protect him, protect them all, as long as I could.

I did not realize that the older they got and the longer we lived, the more hurt they would suffer. The more violence they would encounter. The world was not like it had been when I was young. And I did not like what it had become.

Chapter

1

2275 BC

The cool mist that rose from the ground covered Emzara's feet as she walked through the small plot of ground behind her house in Seth's City. Birds twittered and sang in the trees above her, and she caught a glimpse of a male and female cardinal looking down on her. The male stood tall and proud among the leaves like a bridegroom coming from his chambers. Zara smiled, her heart swelling.

Such a perfect day for Shem's wedding.

She drew in a deep breath, gratitude filling her. In this increasingly unbelieving city, the Creator had seen fit to give her and Noah believing women to marry Shem and Japheth. How foolish her worries seemed now on this beautiful day. How gracious God was, blessed be He. The month before, Japheth had wed Adataneses, a descendant of Zara's grandfather Methuselah, and now Shem would marry Sedeq, the daughter of Vada, one of Zara's closest friends.

She lifted her gaze and raised her arms to the heavens. *Thank You! Praise You, Adonai Elohim, for Your kindness to us.*

She and Noah had prayed all their lives for their family to stay true to the Creator. To realize that He had heard and answered their prayers, to know that God was pleased with them, warmed her heart. Sedeq would be a welcome addition to their home, a daughter-in-law to love who also loved Elohim. As best as one could love the Almighty One.

Memories surfaced as Zara thought back on their long history. She did not know the Creator as Eve and Enoch had, as Noah did, but she did love Him. But oh, to love Him more! Was it possible? She could not see Him as Eve once did, only the things He had made. Perhaps that was enough.

He had made Adataneses and Sedeq to join their family. Now she need only worry about finding an equally kind and loving woman for Ham.

A chipmunk scurried across her path and hid in the tree's undergrowth. Today was Shem and Sedeq's day. And it seemed as though all of creation rejoiced.

The crunch of stones sounded behind her. She turned. Her mother, Abriyah, appeared along the side of the house, walking toward her.

"Ima." Zara hurried toward her, arms open to embrace her. "You're up early."

"As are you, my daughter. I could not sleep. There is too much to do." She linked arms with Zara, and together they walked about the garden. "Where are your baskets? I will help you pick the vegetables for the stew and the sauces." She released Zara's arm and looked about. Spotting a stack of baskets behind the house, she walked toward them.

Zara chuckled. "There is still time, Ima." She had hoped for a moment more alone with the Creator, but apparently that was not to be. She glanced again at the heavens. *Help us today.*

"Are you coming, Zara?" Her mother knelt in the dirt and filled a basket with ripe cucumbers.

Zara joined her and took several baskets from the stack.

“I think we will make a cucumber dill sauce to dip the bread in along with the vegetable barley stew. Adataneses should be up soon to begin the baking. I set the starter in separate bowls last night.”

“She is not baking all the bread by herself, is she? I’m expecting half of the town to come. I’ve certainly invited many.” Her mother stood, lifted the first basket, and carried it into the house.

Adataneses emerged from her room just then and met Abriyah and Zara as they entered the cooking area. “Good morning,” she said, smiling at them. “I’m ready to begin the baking.” She took one of the bowls of starter and pulled the sack of ground flour from the shelf.

“Have you broken your fast? You don’t want to grow faint from hunger.” Zara set a basket of cucumbers on the wooden table.

“I’ll eat a few dates and pistachios Japheth and I shelled last night as I work. Don’t worry about me.” Adataneses poured out some of the flour and mixed it with the starter and water.

Zara returned to the garden to pick some carrots for the stew and took them to the well behind the house to wash. Voices from the rest of the waking household drifted to her, the air of excitement palpable. This would be a good day. She wondered if her mother was right about the crowd she expected.

Since Noah had first heard from the Creator forty-five years ago regarding His judgment of evil, the world had grown more chaotic and violent. Traveling alone was unheard of, especially for women and children, unless they carried a weapon. Even the men rarely walked the city streets by themselves.

All during that time, Noah had preached repentance. His words had not endeared their family to the rest of the city, or even to their own relatives. Another reason why she was grateful to have found believing women who loved her sons.

She finished washing the dirt from the carrots and carried them into the house.

“How much bread should I make, Ima Zara?” Adataneses gave Zara a confused look.

“She needs hundreds of loaves. And I hope you have neighbors and family baking too.” Abriyah picked up another bowl of starter and poured flour into it. “I will help her, but my help will not be enough.” She leveled Zara with a commanding look as Shem entered the cooking room and snatched a cucumber from the pile. “Those are for the sauce!” Abriyah stopped her kneading and slapped his hand. He put it back.

“I’m hungry.” He rubbed his middle and gave Zara a piteous grin.

“Go to the cellar and get some dried fruit and cheese. You are on your own today. But stay away from the food for tonight.” Zara shooed him out of the room and faced her mother again. “The neighbors are also baking bread, Ima, so you needn’t worry. And Vada has her family bringing food tonight. We will have plenty.” She put an arm around her mother’s shoulders.

Abriyah continued to knead as Adataneses reached for another bowl of starter. “Good. But you still need to hurry.” She set one round of dough to rise and began another. “Start chopping the peppers. Where are your serving bowls?”

Zara hid a smile. Her mother loved taking charge, even in Noah and Zara’s home. But Zara didn’t mind. This day was for Shem and Sedeq.

She opened a cupboard and set the bowls on the worktable. “I will chop the peppers when I finish gathering.” She grabbed another basket and went to pick the radishes.

The sun had risen above the horizon, and suddenly she felt the urgency her mother did. They had much to do and little time to do it.



The house was bursting with relatives and friends, as Zara's mother had expected. Zara looked about, checking the wine, wondering how many had come for the food and drink more than for the celebration. She stood in the room she shared with Noah, wishing they had built a bigger home to accommodate her sons' wives, but there was no place to expand within the city. Perhaps it was time to move. Would they be safe outside the city walls with the Watchers always roaming the forests and fields? They stalked humans as they came and went from the safety of the cities.

She shook the thought aside as she pulled a fresh tunic over her head and tied the belt of her robe. She clasped a string of jewels about her neck, adding earrings and bracelets and rings to enhance her appearance. Glancing into the bronze mirror, she tied up her long, heavy hair beneath a veil. Satisfied, she exited the room and nearly ran into Adataneses emerging from the room she shared with Japheth.

"You look beautiful." She touched Adataneses's shoulder. "Are you happy to welcome a sister to our home?"

Adataneses smiled. She was truly a beautiful girl with an equally beautiful spirit. Sedeq was a little more strong-willed like Shem but still kind and loving. Would the woman they found for Ham be the same?

"I am more than ready, Ima Zara," Adataneses said. "A houseful of mostly men is not easy to handle at times."

They both chuckled. How well Zara understood.

"I am grateful the Creator sent you to us." She turned with Adataneses and walked with her to the cooking room. "The rest of the people should be here soon. Let's set some of the food out and make sure they have something to drink, though perhaps not too much. We will serve the rest when Shem returns with Sedeq."

The noise coming from the sitting room and the courtyard outside carried to them. Zara's mother and the neighboring

women entered the house through the back door, and soon their children carried trays of food and drink to the people milling about.

At last Noah called above the crowd, "Let us be going to bring Shem's wife home."

A cheer erupted. The young men surrounded Shem and nearly carried him through the door and out into the street. Zara and the women followed, leaving only her mother behind to watch over the house.

The streetlamps burned, lighting the path, and the crowd sang boisterous songs as they walked. Zara blushed at some of the words coming from the mouths of the younger men and even some of those nearly Noah's age. She should be used to these things by now, for the whole world had set aside proper speech long ago. Weddings were the worst as people lost restraint and sang sexual songs with images better left unsaid.

Though Zara inwardly cringed, she noted that Shem was laughing with the crowd. She knew his heart, so perhaps she was too concerned about these things. He would mellow once he married Sedeq, wouldn't he?

The singing abated as they approached Sedeq's home. Shem was pushed to the front of the crowd, and Noah joined him. Shem knocked on the door and called out, "I have come to claim my bride and place my covering over her."

"He wants to do more than cover you," a voice shouted from the back of the crowd, and the men laughed.

Zara wanted to tell them to be quiet, but Shem did not react, nor did Noah. The door opened, and Sedeq's father, Raiden, stood there smiling. He walked around the side of the house and retrieved a donkey tied to a post. After bringing it to the door, he helped Sedeq to mount and handed the reins to Shem.

"I give my daughter into your care," Raiden said to Shem. He looked on Sedeq with fondness. Though he and Vada no longer believed in the Creator as Sedeq did, Zara was grate-

ful that they were loving, kind parents. “Make sure you treat her well.” He brushed moisture from his eyes, and the house emptied of him and Vada and their children as they followed Sedeq to Noah’s home. Sedeq’s friends surrounded her and tossed flower petals along the path.

Shem led his bride through the streets, and this time the songs were of the bride’s beauty, the traditional words Zara had heard all her life.

She sighed, falling into step beside Vada. “I am glad this day has come.” She looked at her friend. “Now we are family, not just friends.”

Vada looked on her daughter, pride in her gaze. “She is beautiful, isn’t she? You will enjoy her as I have.” Emotion clogged her voice. “Treat her with kindness, Em. I know you will.”

“Of course!” Had she ever treated anyone any other way? She prayed not. “I already love Sedeq as my own. And you are welcome to visit us anytime.”

Vada glanced at Zara, her gaze suddenly clouded. “Oh, I won’t be doing that. At least not often.” She lowered her voice.

Zara frowned. “Why ever not?”

“Raiden forbids us from spending too much time near Noah or his family. He agreed to this marriage because Noah paid a high bride-price and because Sedeq seems to think like her grandmother rather than her parents.”

Zara knew Vada’s mother believed in the Creator. Sedeq had learned of Him from her. “Surely our faith should not keep us from being friends. We are family now.”

Vada shook her head and looked about. Zara followed her gaze to where Raiden walked with Noah as though they were close companions. “Raiden has not liked Noah’s influence since he began to preach against all we believe. I’m sorry, Em. This will be our last day to be ‘family.’ After Sedeq is in Shem’s care, she knows she will not be ours. I will try to come if I can. But she is yours now.” Vada choked on the last words and turned away.

Zara's eyes widened. How had she not seen this coming? She'd had no idea that Vada or her husband felt this way about Noah. She thought they were friends. Had been for years. Apparently until now.

Sorrow filled her, but as they neared her home, she forced it back. Surely things would not be as bad as Vada suggested. Their children would draw the families together. Sedeq would coax her father to change his thinking or at least change her mother's thinking.

But as she watched Raiden and Sedeq's brother and the rest of the crowd celebrate through the night, she wondered.