

# Lent and Easter

## stories for mothering sunday

### AIM

These stories accompany the all-age service for Mothering Sunday and were written by Pat Stannard.

### 1. MOSES

The Israelites living in Egypt had become numerous and strong and the new Pharaoh in Egypt was afraid of them. So, he decided to make life hard for them by making them slaves, in the hope that they would grow weak.

Pharaoh's plan did not work and he decided to have the midwives kill the baby boys when they were born. But the midwives feared God and did not obey the king. So the Israelite community continued to grow.

Then Pharaoh commanded all his people to kill every Israelite baby boy that was born by throwing him into the river.

About that time, Moses was born and his parents hid him away from the Egyptians.

After three months they could not hide him any more, so his mother made a basket out of rushes, placed the baby Moses in it and hid it in the reeds by the river's bank. His sister kept watch to see what would happen.

The Pharaoh's daughter came to wash by the river and saw the basket. After her maid brought it to her, she opened it and saw the baby crying and felt sorry for him.

Then Moses' sister offered to get a Hebrew nurse to take care of Moses. Pharaoh's daughter said: "Yes", so the girl went to get her mother and the baby spent his first few years with her and his father.

Moses grew. Then his mother took him to Pharaoh's daughter as she had promised. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace and was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

### 2. HANNAH AND SAMUEL

This is a story that begins with a man who had two wives. One had children but the other – whose name was Hannah – did not, and she had to put up with all sorts of bullying from the other wife.

Each year, the whole family travelled to Shiloh to make a sacrifice at the tabernacle – a shrine and temple in a tent. A priest called Eli was in the temple when the unhappy Hannah went to pray for a child, and he blessed her, expressing the belief that God would grant her what she wanted.

Hannah believed the words of the priest Eli. She was a changed person. No longer was she sad. She was happy and joyful because she knew in her heart that she would have a son just as the priest had said.

The family returned to their home and in time Hannah did have a baby boy. She named him Samuel, a word which means "heard by God". God had heard her prayer and answered it.

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When it came time for the family to travel to Shiloh the following year to worship, Hannah stayed at home with her baby son. She said: "I will take him to the temple when he is weaned so that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever."

When Samuel was a little older – probably two or three, though some people say he may have been as old as 12 – his mother took him to Shiloh with her to worship. She also took sacrifices to offer.

When she saw Eli, she told him she was the woman who had prayed there years earlier.

She left Samuel at the tabernacle to be brought up by Eli the priest. Hannah had kept her promise to return her son to Shiloh to serve the Lord.

### 3. THE JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON

Two women who shared the same house had babies within a few days of each other.

There was no-one else living in the house so there were no witnesses to know what really happened when one of the babies died. Each woman claimed that the surviving baby was hers.

This was a huge legal problem, so the pair took their case to King Solomon, a man who was noted for his wisdom.

The first mother told the king: "When her baby died, this woman got up in the night and changed her dead baby for my living one. When I rose in the morning to feed my baby, I found him dead. But when I looked closely, I realised that he was not my child. It was hers."

The second mother broke in to say: "No, the living child is mine. It was yours who died."

And so the women argued back and forth, and the king realised that he could not know the truth of the situation because there were no other witnesses.

The wily King Solomon decided on a dramatic way to reveal which was the true mother. He called to his servants: "Fetch me a sword", and when it arrived he gave his order: "Cut the living child in two and give half to one woman and half to the other."

At this horrifying suggestion, the true mother cried out: "Oh, sir, let her have the baby! Whatever you do, do not kill it." But the other woman's response was: "Let neither of us have it. Cut it in two."

Solomon knew then what he must do. He told his servants: "Do not kill the baby. Give the baby to the first woman. She is its mother."