

HEROIC WOMEN I:

RUTH & ESTHER

RUTH

SET: In the time of the Judges (ca. 1200-1000 BCE)

WRITTEN: In the 5th to 4th Century

THEMES: Defined by CONTEXT

IF the book had been written during the Davidic era, would have established David's legitimacy.

BUT IF it is post-exilic, it responds to the tension between exclusive vs. inclusive ideas of Judaism: Ezra-Nehemiah vs. 2nd Isaiah and Jonah.

What is required to be a member of the community?

LOYALTY: To the Torah
 To the Community

NOT Playing by the rules or worshiping in a certain way.

LOYALTY as *CHESED*

Faithfulness – Kindness – Tenderness

Warm-heartedness – Compassion – Honesty

ESTHER

SET: During the Persian Diaspora (after 450BCE)

WRITTEN: In the 2nd Century (probably), during the persecutions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

THEMES: Defined by CONTEXT – Macabean Judaism:
NEW UNDERSTANDING of **How to Survive**.

The old, un-heroic model: absolute dependence & trust.
Abraham & Moses.

The new, heroic model: self-confidence inspired by faith.
David confronting Goliath.

Thus Esther challenging Ahasuerus.

Complicated by exemplifying that heroism in a woman.

1. What common characteristics make the women heroic?
2. What other qualities enable their success?
3. How does Esther's heroism differ from Ruth's?

1. Loyalty
Courage
Strength of Purpose
2. Intelligence
Sexuality
3. Less conventional