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The Women's Scrolls

by Grippy and Cormo

Scene: Jezebel's room in God's mansion. This is Jezebel's bedroom as she would have had it in Ahab's castle – large pillow bed, ottomans to sit on, a dressing table with many bottles on it, a hand-held mirror, that Jezebel holds as she applies her make-up. **Miriam** arrives. At the back of the stage, are 3 scrolls, marked Rebecca, Jezebel and Miriam. As each woman's story is explored, her scroll gets a spotlight. Jezebel is combing her hair at her mirror, oiling her breasts, putting on make-up. A curtain shields the entryway to Jezebel's room. Miriam knocks at the wall beside her doorway, then pushes aside curtain.

Jezebel: Come in.

(Miriam enters)

Jezebel: Sorry I can't get up, Miriam – I'm in the middle of putting on my make-up, and once I start, I like to do everything in sequence.

Miriam: God sent me to talk with you, Jez.

[looks around]

You sure have a lovely room. I was expecting something awful – some sort of punishment.

Jezebel: What are you supposed to talk with me about?

Miriam: I think I'm supposed to help you see the error of your ways. You were a wicked woman after all, and I was a prophetess.

Jezebel: You think God wants *me* to listen to your small-minded prattle?

Miriam: God chose *me* as a leader of Israel. And He sent me to talk with you.

Jezebel: And *God* told you *I*, Jezebel, Queen of Israel, was a wicked woman?

Miriam: It's in the Bible.

Jezebel: Do you believe everything you read?

Miriam: (flabbergasted – walks over to Jezebel, puts hand on her shoulder, spins her around.) Didn't you commit adultery, start wars, and have innocent people executed so you could steal their land?

Jezebel: Oh, that.

(She turns back to mirror.)

Miriam: Yes, that.

Jezebel: That bothers you?

Miriam: Not just me. I think it bothers God, too.

Jezebel: If that's all that's bothering you, then relax. God is not upset about that.

Miriam: (shakes the tambourine on the side table.)

God is not upset? You actually think God doesn't care about that? Haven't you read the ten commandments that my brother brought down from Mount Sinai – not once, but twice?

Jezebel: Those are great rules for a happy life. I recommended them to my husband many times.

Miriam: I'm not concerned with your husband. I'm concerned about you. You didn't follow them.

Jezebel: They didn't apply to me.

Miriam: Listen to yourself. Do you really think you are above God's laws?

Jezebel: Above, parallel to, who cares about the geometry, darling? Somebody's got to do it, and I volunteered. (Pause) You know, this blue eye-shadow would look lovely on you. Want to try some?

Miriam: You are the most evil woman in the Bible. Why would I take your advice about anything?

Jezebel: Elijah said the same thing. But he took my advice and benefitted from it.

[more knocks at wall beside curtain]

Jezebel: Come in.

[Rebecca enters.]

Miriam: (nervously shakes tambourine again)

Rebecca, are you looking for me?

Rebecca: God sent me by. He told me to talk with Jezebel. I think he wants me to turn her from her wicked ways.

Miriam: That's why I'm here.

Rebecca: How's it going?

Miriam: Not so good. She thinks the ten commandments are for other people.

Rebecca: Then we have our work cut out for us. (Looks around Jezebel's room, touches the fancy pillows on Jezebel's bed. Miriam pulls her away. Leads her to an ottoman.)

Miriam: If that's how you are going to act, I think you should leave. I can do this better by myself.

Jezebel: The ten commandments are great rules – but what good are rules if there's no temptation to break them? When you play a team sport, you agree to try to keep the other team from their goal, and they agree to do the same for you. That's how you hone your skills.

Rebecca: Life isn't a sport, played to win.

Miriam: She's trying to confuse you. And probably tempt you at the same time.

Jezebel: I'm trying to teach you. You remember, like Solomon wrote in Proverbs: "the first step towards wisdom is the fear of God." They never tell you the next step. That, you have to discover for yourself.

Rebecca: Are you sure there is a next step? The Bible doesn't say there is. (Again she gets up, touches the bedspread. Again Miriam pulls her back.)

Jezebel: The Bible leaves out many important things.

Miriam: The Bible says everything we need to know.

Rebecca: I see that you were a temptress – but did you have to break the rules yourself-- while you were tempting others?

Jezebel: I was just about to tell Miriam about how Elijah took my advice.

Rebecca: He didn't!

Jezebel: Darlings, you are as silly as the people of Schechem. Elijah did take my advice. The Bible only tells part of the story. We'd been having a drought in Israel for three years. God was trying to get people to pay attention to Him. We'd eaten all the grain in the granaries. We were down to eating weeds, even at the palace. Everybody in the marketplace was loudly praying for rain -- to any god they'd ever heard of. Then Elijah came to the palace – to see me – not my husband the king – to see *me*.

Miriam: (tambourine) Unlikely story.

Jezebel: He asked *me* if it was time to end the drought.

Rebecca: He had to ask *you* that? Couldn't he just look around and see that the streams were dry?

Jezebel: That's exactly what I said to him. He said God told him to ask *me* if it was time to end the drought. Naturally I said, "Yes."

Miriam: That's not much in the way of advice. He could have gotten that advice from any child in the marketplace.

Jezebel: That was only the beginning. Elijah said he would go down to the marketplace, pray for rain and leave. Talk about dumb! What kind of impression would that make? He'd just be one more voice in the marketplace calling for rain. Nobody would give him or God credit.

Rebecca: You had a better idea?
(She walks around to inspect the make-up on Jezebel's dresser.)

Miriam: Hush, Becky.

Jezebel: Does rain make things wet? Of course I had a better idea, darlings. I suggested Elijah stage a contest between God and Ba'al-Zebub. He would sacrifice a bull to God and the Baal worshipers would sacrifice one to theirs. Then, let the people see which god brought rain. I set the whole thing up beautifully.

Miriam: The Bible says *that* was Elijah's idea.

Jezebel: Of course it does, darlings. The Bible was written by men to make men look good.

Rebecca: (seating herself luxuriously on Jezebel's bed. Miriam drags her off and back to the ottoman.) That's true. The Bible doesn't tell half of my...

Miriam: Which commandment did you violate this time?

Jezebel: Not all the commandments are in stone. Some are more profound – like dropped objects fall down, and wet wood doesn't burn...

Rebecca: We don't have a choice about those laws.

Jezebel: But God doesn't have to follow them – all the time. I told Elijah, "You walk into the market place, like you said. But instead of praying for rain, you challenge the Baal priests to bring down fire. Everybody knows that powerful Ba'al-Zebub can bring down lightning. He does it regularly on request. Nobody has ever seen God bring down lightning, so this will look

like you've lost your mind.

Rebecca: But.

Miriam: Hush.

Jezebel: I told Elijah, "You ask some local cattle dealers to bring two bulls. Then you let Ba'al-Zebub's prophets choose first. You take the reject. You let those prophets have the best pick of the kindling to build a pyre. You take the leavings. Then you let them pray first to their god. Ba'al-Zebub is in on this. He won't send lightning. I have his word on this. He knows this whole drought is a set-up to get people to trust God, and he is God's chief assistant.

Miriam: (tambourine, emphatically) Absolutely not! Ba'al-Zebub is evil. God is good.

Jezebel: You're so keen on the Bible. In Isaiah, God says he created evil. In Job, Ba'al-Zebub drops in at God's house for a game of poker. Of course they're best buddies. How do you think God helps his children grow up? How do you play a sport, if there's no opposition team?

(Pause, Miriam and Rebecca look dumbfounded)

(Rebecca wanders over to Jezebel's vanity and picks up her hairbrush.)

Rebecca: What's this?

Jezebel: It's from Persia, darling. Want to try it?

Miriam: No she doesn't. (Pulls Rebecca back to ottoman.) (To Jezebel:) Life is not a sport.

Jezebel: Elijah didn't know that either. And like you, he had the delusion that he could turn me from my so-called wicked ways. Anyway, I continued to tell Elijah my plan:

I'll even give you some of our precious water, so you can dump it on your kindling. This will grab the crowd's attention. They'll be sure there's no way your God can win. And they'll be angry that you are wasting water. Then, after the Baal worshipers fail, and you succeed, and God sends fire from heaven to consume your bull and your wet wood and even the stones of your altar, then the people of Israel will pay attention when you call on Him to send rain."

Rebecca: That does sound like a much better plan than Elijah's. Did he take it?

Miriam: (plays with tambourine) Coming from her – I'd suspect a trap. I'll bet Elijah did, too.

Jezebel: You're both right. Elijah did suspect me of tempting him, but he took the bait. To be fair, I was tempting him. And, the bait was effective. Within the hour, the folk of Schechem were prostrating themselves in the marketplace shouting, "God is God!" And the rain was falling.

Rebecca: That doesn't sound like a trick, to me.

Jezebel: You are so sweet and innocent. Think about it. Nobody wants a trick donkey for God.

Rebecca: (back at Jezebel's vanity) Could I try some of your make-up?

Miriam: Leave that alone.

Rebecca: It's just play. You could try some, too.

Jezebel: Here – this blush would bring out the lovely shape of your cheekbones.

(Rebecca begins playing with the make-up.)

Miriam: So then what happened? What did Elijah do when your plan worked?

Jezebel: The ingrate conveniently forgot that I work for Ba'al-Zebub. And that Ba'al-Zebub's prophets had helped in his little drama. He had all my prophets killed. And in the rain storm, I couldn't even round up strong men with shovels to give them proper burials. Elijah succumbed to power faster than I thought he would, the fool!

Rebecca: Elijah was no fool. He was an honest servant of God.

Jezebel: Oh darling, like Abraham, your father-in-law? And Miriam's foolish brother, Moses? Fools, the lot of them! I sent my servants to kill Elijah.

Miriam: But you didn't kill Elijah. It says so in the Bible.

Jezebel: No. I realized that I was wrong in time. Instead, I let him run for a month. I knew his greatest fear was death of the body – the poor sap thought you kill the soul when you kill the body. He didn't even stop to sleep for forty days and forty nights. Then I called off my servants. I'd started a war, and I wanted him to help my husband, King Ahab, win it.

Rebecca: Sounds like you're the fool – making threats you don't mean.

Jezebel: But I did mean to send his soul back to God, in the beginning. I just thought better of it. You'd rather I killed him, like your precious Abraham killed your beloved Isaac?

Miriam: Abraham didn't kill Isaac. It says so in the Bible. It says Abraham tied Isaac to the sacrificial altar, but then the angel cried, "Halt!"

Jezebel: But the Bible doesn't say Abraham obeyed. He didn't halt, did he, Becky?

Rebecca: No, he didn't. She's right, Miriam. The Bible leaves out a lot of my story. Abraham and Isaac had been arguing about God, and by the time the angel cried "Halt!" Abraham's arm was already in motion. Abraham was too angry to stop. His knife slit my Isaac's throat.

Miriam: That's not what it says.

Jezebel: The Bible doesn't say many things. I told you, it was written by men to make men look good. Abraham killed Isaac.

Rebecca: Great Uncle Abraham didn't totally kill my Isaac. Abraham was a religious nut – you have to understand that about him. He didn't kill Isaac's soul. He couldn't! (She continues to apply make-up, using Jezebel's mirror.) He killed Isaac's body, but Isaac's soul entered a goat-boy who standing in the thicket near the altar. Possessed him, you might say.

Jezebel: Are you telling me that Isaac – in the goat-boy's body -- was still the same tender lad you loved (pause) after Abraham slit his throat on that sacrificial altar in Moriah?

Rebecca: I didn't realize it at first. The Isaac I loved sang to the sheep as they grazed, his fingers as skilled on the lute as any city lad trained in musicianship for years. When he spoke, his voice was tender music, too. He saw dreams in the stars. He showed me the world in wonder -- mushrooms springing from a dead tree like shelves, tiny flowers opening after rain. He fascinated me with his thoughts about life and love and his father's god.

(Miriam takes the mirror away from her and puts it back on Jezebel's vanity)

The Isaac that came back from Moriah, riding that donkey, was a different boy, a wild boy, a rough and hairy boy -- his lower body and legs were as coarse pelted as any animal's -- who loved to hunt and kill. A boy who smelled like a goat, and had worse manners. As different from Isaac as drought from sweet cooling rain.

Miriam: (tambourine) So why did you marry? A woman doesn't need a man to have a full life.

Jezebel: (handing Rebecca the mirror)

What do you think? Doesn't the blush enhance your cheekbones?

(Rebecca stares into mirror)

And how did you ever find your beloved Isaac in that disgusting goat-boy's body?

Rebecca: Hey, this isn't about me. I'm trying to turn you from your wicked ways. You started a war that could have killed your husband. You committed adultery. You arranged the deaths of innocent men. I married my true love, even in a repulsive animal-body.

Miriam: Are you trying to be pretty to make up for his ugliness?

Rebecca: I like being pretty.

Jezebel: So, you had two husbands. Isn't that a kind of adultery? Not that I'm saying there's anything wrong with that. We all know Abraham had a child with the family maid, and then sent the maid and baby out into the wilderness to die. This is your beloved honorable Great Uncle Abraham, we're talking about.

Miriam: The Bible says Abraham only did that because Sarah asked him to.

Jezebel: You still believe the Bible?

Rebecca: The real story is that Isaac was up crying all night. The maid was exhausted from caring for her child and didn't hear him. In the morning, Abraham accused her of neglecting her duties. She told Abraham that he had legs. If the baby was crying, Abraham could have walked the child just as well as she or Sarah. Abraham couldn't stand criticism, or his maid talking back to him.

Jezebel: Humph. Lazy, thin-skinned, lecherous, hypocritical . . . man. But what about you and the two husbands?

Rebecca: It's different for a man. And while it's true that Isaac's spirit was in another man's body-- I loved only Isaac, and had only one man in my bed.

Jezebel: It's different for a man? Since when? I didn't see two sets of commandments – one for men and one for women. Men: Thou shalt commit adultery. Women: Thou shalt not! Or, is that what the first one – the one Moses broke – said? Miriam, you can tell us the truth.

Miriam: Your teasing may turn men on, but I find it false. Moses was a good man, a true servant of God. And he did marry both his wives. He did right by them.

Jezebel: That's not what you said at the time. You must have said something that caused Moses to give you leprosy and send you out alone into the desert.

Rebecca: The same as Abraham.(She dabs herself with Jezebel's perfume.)

Miriam: It's true. I criticized Moses. I told him to spend more time governing the unruly Hebrews and less time in bed with his tush-wiggling young wife. I was angry, and I felt betrayed. So, I took things into my own hands. I was wrong. I can admit that. Why can't you?

Jezebel: I did nothing wrong. I fulfilled my assignment. Are you sure you won't try the blue eye shadow?

Miriam: I won't succumb to your temptations.

Jezebel: Rebecca, how about you? The green eye shadow would bring out the hazel in your eyes.

(Rebecca accepts the eye shadow vial.)

Miriam: (tambourine) God needs us to obey His commandments. Those of us who know them have to obey to set a good example for the uneducated.

(Rebecca picks up the mirror again.)

Jezebel: Why? Since when do uneducated people follow what you intend for a good example? They usually look at the self-consciously good citizens and regard them as stupid marks.

Miriam: Not just showing them how to live a good life – but enforcing the laws – punishing the law-breakers.

Jezebel: God needs you to enforce His laws? He can't do it by himself? Seems to me he makes gravity work without anybody's help. If a law is important, He sets it up to be self-enforcing. If He didn't want me to do what I did, I couldn't have done it. Look, people will do anything, rather than obey God. They have to try everything else, and find out that it doesn't work, before they'll try God's way.

Miriam: Is that why you broke the laws – because you were trying everything else? Were you trying to teach a lesson that you haven't yet learned, yourself?
(Tambourine)

Rebecca: (she now has green eye-shadow on one eyelid.)

I can't have you gals thinking I'm so totally good that I never disobeyed. When I was a child, even, there were the wolves. That started because my parents were always sending me to stay with Great-Aunt Sarah and Great-Uncle Abraham because they wanted me to marry Isaac when I grew up. Great-Aunt Sarah always had me bring Isaac his lunch, fresh and warm. We'd sit and eat, watching the animals and talking...

Miriam: This is a story of you being disobedient? You sound like the perfect daughter. Feh!

Rebecca: Until one day – I heard the screams and howls before I saw anything. I panted up the slight rise, terrified. Making insane promises to every god I had ever heard of, if only Isaac would be all right. I knew that was a wolf yowling. How could Isaac, tender, soft bodied child that he was, hold off a wolf with only a shepherd's simple stick?

He was still standing, covered with blood, face contorted with pain. The animals were rushing about, bleating and baaing in terror. A large hairy body lay still at his feet.

Isaac pointed at the dead wolf with its crushed, bloody skull. "Becky! Look!. She's female, Becky."

His finger touched a swollen nipple. A thin trickle of milk dribbled out.

"There are cubs somewhere. I haven't just killed her. I killed her cubs, too. No wonder she was so desperate for food."

We decided then and there to find the cubs and give them milk from our ewes.

(Rebecca looks from Miriam to Jezebel)

Jezebel: Poor Becky! (Pats Becky's shoulder.)

Rebecca: You've both raised sheep. You know what Abraham would have said. Help wolf cubs to survive? He'd be furious, call us crazy. It was during our hunt for the cubs that Isaac and I fell in love. We found them. They were whining feebly and weak when we found them, which explained the she-wolf's desperation. The cubs grew quickly, accepted us as surrogate parents. They were -- they were fun. We played with them. They treated us like . . . like their mother. As they outgrew the milk, Isaac used his slingshot to bring down birds or small animals for them, but he didn't like that, and we soon left them to learn to hunt on their own. But now and again, one or another would seek out Isaac, and come and rub up against him, in friendship.

Our special favorite was a sleek male with a streak of light colored fur down his forehead. Even after the others drifted away, he still came, rubbing against me or Isaac, curling up at our feet while we talked.

The cubs conspiracy against the adults, drew us together. I loved Isaac. I knew he loved me. We pledged ourselves to marry when we were old enough.

Miriam: I wouldn't stay up nights with guilt over an adventure like that. It only makes you sound sweeter and more innocent than ever.

Jezebel: You say that like it's a bad thing. I'm too wicked; she's too good. What kind of person do you think God loves?

Miriam: I'm sure God loves you, Rebecca. I know he loves me. And he loved Abraham and Moses. It's you we're worried about. It's *you* he sent us to help.

Jezebel: (oiling her breasts. She smells the oil luxuriously.)

Let me see if I have this straight. Rebecca is the sweet little girl who grew up to marry her childhood sweetheart. It doesn't even bother her that his father killed him and his spirit was living in the most repulsive body she has ever seen. Her love is so pure she didn't even give it a second thought. And Miriam. The only time you criticize your brother is when you think he's ignoring his job. You don't even harbor the tiniest resentment that he gave you leprosy and sent you into the desert.

Rebecca: I'm not so pure. (She reaches for the oil)

Jezebel: Just use a light dab, darling.

Miriam: (tambourine) Why would you brag about that if you've come to reform Jez? We don't need to see the minuscule errors of your ways, when her trespasses loom so large.

Jezebel: I want to hear them. Perhaps she was tempted. Perhaps she broke the laws, and learned from her mistake. Perhaps I can learn from her example. I'm not claiming I'm perfect. (To Miriam:) Becky is the sort of woman I'd expect God to send to me. A woman of compassion, a woman capable of loving others despite their apparent flaws or faults.

Miriam: And I'm here to keep you from corrupting her with your wicked ways.

Rebecca: When I saw what Great-Uncle Abraham brought home from Moriah – the boy he called “My gift from God in my old age,” I was disgusted. Great-Aunt Sarah took me straight home to my parents and she never went back. But my parents were intent on having me marry Isaac. They didn't believe me about the murder and I didn't yet know about Isaac's spirit in the goat-boy. Great-Uncle Abraham was wealthy and they wanted me to inherit that wealth. I wanted nothing to do with it.

My parents made me go back to Great-Uncle Abraham's. And he made me take lunch to the boy he called Isaac. I tried not to look at him, or smell him. Sometimes he wiped his nose with his fingers, picked his teeth, and deposited it all on his hairy arm. Sometimes he relieved himself where he stood, seldom bothering to get whatever filthy clout he was wearing out of the way. Mostly, he ignored me completely, except when he wanted some food, then he treated me like a slave girl.

Miriam: Typical male.

Jezebel: I taught my husband, the king, to bathe. Sex is so much nicer when a man is clean, don't you think?

Miriam: (to Rebecca) Don't answer that.

Rebecca: Sometimes I saw intelligence shining out of his lackluster, animal eyes. Sometimes he spoke softly and treated me like a human being, instead of a mere girl, just as Isaac always had. Sometimes he acted so civilized, it was as if there were two different souls in the one hairy, filthy body.

Sometimes, I almost thought, almost hoped . . .

Then one day when I was again, sullenly, dragging my feet, bringing him lunch, we heard anguished bleating. The goat-boy, Isaac's replacement, raced toward the sound. A wolf was loping up to the camp, toward me. The animals were scurrying about, baaing and screeching. The goat-boy had often belittled animal herding. Yet now he ran, waving his staff, shouting “Hai! Hai!” as Isaac used to.

The wolf, growling loudly, tried to dodge around the goat-boy. Suddenly the goat-boy

hurled himself on the wolf, biting his neck. Blood spurted, and the wolf collapsed. The goat-boy gave a guttural, triumphant cry, then put his mouth to the wound and sucked.

I ran to the animals, tried to calm them. I soothed the sheep, the goats, petted them, crooning as Isaac used to. One lamb came up and gave suck. As I petted the lamb, I felt a gentle, familiar hand on my shoulder. I felt goosebumps. The hand was warm. This was no ghost.

“Isaac?” I asked without looking up.

Isaac's voice, the one I loved, replied. “Yes. I'm sorry, Becky. I couldn't stop him. He's all fierce inside. I just wanted to scare the wolf off. But the wild boy wanted blood... The wolf . . . it's one of ours, Becky.

I saw the forehead streak, too. “It's okay,” I told him.

At last, I knew with utter certainty, that this was Isaac. No one else knew about “our wolves.”

Now I knew they were both in there: Isaac and the goat-boy, in the same body. This was strange, and scary. But Isaac and I were born to be together, and nothing could stop us. Not even his death.

Jezebel: Now you're sounding guilty. Were you attracted to the goat-body after all?

Miriam: Don't pick on her. She had to marry Isaac.

Rebecca: Yes. No...Maybe... But it was the only way I could have Isaac. It was the only way Abraham could have a grandchild to pass on God's promises...

Jezebel: There you go again, thinking God needs us to accomplish his will... You think God's laws are so weak they cannot enforce themselves, so fragile we dare not break them – even to prove a point – and so vague that we must enforce them for the ignorant...

Miriam: (tambourine)

She did what was best for our people. Not like you, Jezebel, who did whatever you pleased!

Jezebel: Why do you think tempting all those men wasn't good for them? Do you think I wanted to bed all those kings and sign their sheets? Do you think I got pleasure from starting wars and arranging deaths? Is that what has you upset? That I might have enjoyed it?

Miriam: Didn't you?

Jezebel: I take pride in a job well done. That's why I learned to hold a stylus in my vagina and write as neat a script as any man. But enjoy the sex? Kings are no good at sex! They just want to think they have possessed a woman. They don't care about giving her pleasure.

Miriam: Is that why you cheated on your husband?

Jezebel: He had 70 other wives. It's not like he'd miss me.

Miriam: You committed adultery.

Jezebel: With a handful of other kings, just as clumsy as my husband.

Rebecca: Then why did you do it?

Jezebel: To start wars and arrange deaths, darlings. I thought you knew.

Rebecca: If that was your job, couldn't you have done it without committing adultery?

Jezebel: Adultery is one of the temptations. If I don't do it myself, then I have to tempt a man to commit adultery with someone else. I fail to see where that's an improvement in your scheme of morality.

Miriam: (tambourine) And you don't think starting wars and arranging deaths is wicked?

Jezebel: No I don't. And I don't think you do, either. You have held up Abraham and Moses as examples to follow. By what rules are these men good, while I am wicked? Come now darlings, I may have killed hundreds. But Moses killed thousands of Egyptians and thousands more Hebrews, the people he was supposed to be rescuing. Abraham endangered and killed the ones he was bound to protect – his children.

Rebecca: I told you Abraham was a religious nut. Could I try some of that lip gloss?

(Jezebel hands her a jar of lip gloss. Rebecca dips a finger in, begins applying it to her lips.)

Miriam: You're dead, remember. Who are you gussying up for?

Jezebel: She's doing it for herself, darling. Like a normal woman. (To Rebecca:) Push against your finger with your lips.

Miriam: I protected Moses when Pharaoh ordered all the male Hebrew children killed. I was only an 8-year-old child, but I saved my brother's life. My mother put him in a basket in the stream to float away or drown. But I made sure Pharaoh's own daughter pulled him out of the Nile and then I brought my own mother to him as a paid wet-nurse. I got him the best education in the palace. And then when he grew up and killed an Egyptian overseer, I helped him hide the body, and I helped him escape to Midian where he found his wife and met God face to face.

Jezebel: I see. While trying to prove to me that you, a great prophetess of God, a righteous woman, save lives-- you also prove to me that you are a law-breaker who helps hide crimes and helps a murderer escape. And you wish to convince me that I'm wicked and I should change my ways? How are you so different from me?

Rebecca: The Bible says Miriam and Moses and Abraham were good. And, the Bible says you were wicked.

Jezebel: We've been over that. The Bible was written by men. Surely, after your experiences, you can agree that men really don't know what's going on around them.

Miriam: There you go again – tempting us. (Tambourine)

Jezebel: Yes, of course I am – it's my skill. But do you really mean to tell me that you've never given in to temptation, and been glad for it – even for a moment? See how pretty Rebecca looks with that blush on her cheeks and the green eye-shadow. I really think you'd like the look of that blue eye shadow...

Miriam: Don't change the topic. (tambourine)

Jezebel: The topic is temptation. Surely there was a time you gave into temptation. ..

(Miriam fidgets.)

Rebecca: I've given in – to temptation. (Pause) Isaac and I had been married for about twenty years, and he had been pressuring me to have a child. Finally, I said, yes. We were making love. Isaac was sweet to me, even in that goat-man's body. Suddenly our love-making changed to wild grabbing. Isaac had gone. His spirit was only able to remain on Earth until his mission was complete. As I realized later, his seed had fertilized my egg – he was just here – his spirit in that horrid body -- to have a child to carry on the line of Abraham and Sarah. Only he didn't know there were two eggs. The wild man's seed fertilized the other.

I had twin boys, one of whom I hated. And I hated my husband now that Isaac's spirit was no longer in him.

Jezebel: So that's why your boys were so different. I knew the Bible had left out some important details.

Miriam: Nothing important is ever left out. It doesn't matter why the one boy was defective. He's not *my* ancestor.

Jezebel: But poor Becky, having to raise that horrid beast and live with a man she hates. Can you give her no sympathy?

Miriam: I won't let Becky play victim – that's the stupidest game on the planet. You weren't a victim Becky. You made your choices as a God-fearing woman.

Jezebel: I told you there's a second step after fearing God.

Rebecca: For years I was angry with Isaac for leaving me. A seer once told me Isaac's spirit was in my younger child. I sensed this was true. But being Isaac's mother wasn't the same as being his wife. If I'd never said yes to having a baby, I might have had Isaac with me until my dying day. I gave into temptation – thinking a child would make my life complete.

Miriam: And if you hadn't done that, Moses and I would never have been born.

Jezebel: Do you women see what you're doing? You are so busy congratulating each other on your good fortune and your good deeds – you're missing the point.

Rebecca: And the point is?

Jezebel: That your greatest triumphs have come when you made mistakes, took chances, overcame adversity. And if everybody kept the commandments, you would not have grown. You would still be little girls instead of women.

Miriam: Our triumphs do not excuse your treacheries. How did your neighbor the vineyard owner triumph when you had him killed to steal his land?

Jezebel: Before we go into that, how do you justify the plagues your brother brought on Egypt, or the jewels you stole as you escaped from slavery?

Miriam: Moses was just obeying God when he brought those plagues.

Rebecca: He had a choice. Those plagues were cruel. He destroyed the crops, poisoned the water, killed the first born boys...

Miriam: Whose side are you on, now? (Tambourine)

Jezebel: It's all in your precious Bible. The Bible even says Pharaoh's magicians could do most of those so-called plagues your brother brought – but they had the honesty to call them magic tricks. Come on, darlings. Think! God created the heavens and the Earth in one day. Do you really think if He wanted to free the Hebrews from slavery that He'd wait 400 years and then use a few magic tricks to pull it off? Turning a stick into a snake is common-place. So is temporary leprosy, or turning water into blood. And that final trick of making a path through the Red Sea with a wind that blew all night. Really. God could do that in a heartbeat, but it took Moses all night. It didn't even take God all night to create the heavens and the Earth. You think that was God at work, and not a magician? A master magician, I admit – but a magician nonetheless. And once you admit it wasn't God, but just a man doing all these things, then are you sure you can call *his* deeds righteous? Or mine evil?

Miriam: Moses' plagues were successful. He freed our people from slavery, according to God's promises. You failed. You killed a man, committed adultery and started wars for nothing.

Jezebel: So, Moses and Abraham are good for killing people because their plans succeeded? And I'm wicked for killing people because you think my plans failed? That doesn't sound like the absolute principles you claim to be talking about.

(She applies powder to her face. Passes the jar to Rebecca.)

I admit – things didn't turn out the way I planned much of the time. But I'm working on a grander scale than a day, or a week, or even one entire lifetime. My neighbor who owned the vineyard was a good man. That's almost as dangerous an occupation as being a prophet. He was born to die for his land. His death was supposed to help wake up his king and my husband, and even give Elijah a little shove. I don't know about the long-term repercussions, but in the short-run I can see where it looks like I failed on all three counts.

Rebecca: You admit it then? You were wicked? And you regret it?

Jezebel: I admit I *may* have failed. I don't regret doing my best. And I don't always see God's full plan. Short term failure may result in God's ultimate goal. He is God after all.

Miriam: Suppose you tell us – what were you trying to do – besides kill your neighbor, commit adultery again, and help your husband steal land from the neighboring kingdom?

Jezebel: Temptation, darlings. I was tempting them all. My job was temptation. And I was good at it. My husband came in to dinner one day insisting he wanted a vegetable garden. I knew that was a lie. He always sneaked his vegetables under the table for the dog. So, if he was lying, he was giving me a chance to tempt him. Temptation is how we grow.

Miriam: Only if we resist temptation.

Jezebel: No. We often grow the most when we learn from accepting temptation. Rebecca didn't have to marry that goat-man. She didn't have to agree to have a child. You didn't have to criticize Moses when you thought he was doing a poor job of governing the Hebrews. You both gave into temptation. And you both value the lessons you learned from your mistakes.

Rebecca: So you let him get away with feeding the dog under the table? So what? How does that lead to killing a man?

Jezebel: I told my husband that he's the king. Of course he can have a vegetable garden if he wants one.

Rebecca: You told him the truth? I thought temptation required telling lies.

Jezebel: Nonsense. That's an amateur's method. I tell the truth. I tell people they can have what they want. I just don't mention the consequences.

Miriam: If they knew the ten commandments, they'd know the consequences.

Jezebel: So you admit the ten commandments are self-enforcing and you don't need to do anything to make them so?

Miriam: I do not. (Tambourine) You're twisting things again.

Rebecca: What's that you're putting on your hair?

Jezebel: Crushed mica – it's a stone from the seabeds. Here, sprinkle some on – just a hint. Use my mirror.

(Rebecca accepts the vial, brush, and mirror.)

Jezebel: My husband told me he didn't want just any vegetable garden. Our castle was on the edge of Israel. Just over the wall outside our kitchen lay the most gorgeous vineyard. My husband knew what I thought of his drunken brawls, so he wouldn't tell me he wanted a vineyard. Instead he told me he wanted that vineyard for his vegetable garden.

Rebecca: Minor difference. You knew what he meant. He knew you knew. And you didn't object.

Miriam: He was tempting you to call his bluff. Why didn't you accept his temptation? You might have saved the land-owner's life.

Jezebel: My job was to offer temptation – not to accept it. Obviously drunkenness and a nagging wife were temptations for my husband – I had to use what he offered me.

Rebecca: You mean you didn't really care if you reformed him? You weren't trying to get him to do the right thing?

Jezebel: A temptress knows she can't get anybody to do anything. She can only offer choices. My husband told me he'd asked the landowner to sell. He'd offered to trade him for a bigger plot of land. The landowner outright refused. The landowner knew what he was born for. My husband was turning red – he was so angry he looked ready to commit murder.

Another opportunity for temptation. So, I asked, "Then why don't you kill him?" My husband said he was afraid that killing the landowner would anger the landowner's king. Fear is a lovely tool to use in temptation. And, he didn't want to waste men on a war with the landowner's king when he was getting ready to fight another king – one whose bed-sheets I'd signed. Fear again, on two counts. So, I offered to set things up so the landowner's own king would kill him and give my husband the land. Ahab hugged me as tightly as in carnal embrace. I'd successfully tempted him not only to theft of land, but to murder as well.

Miriam: And you don't think that's wicked? You don't regret it? (Tambourine)

Jezebel: How is it wicked to give a man a learning opportunity? And why would I regret it? How would I be helping him grow if I told him to be a good boy and stop coveting his neighbor's land? He knew the rule. He wanted to break it. He had to succeed in breaking the rule, if he was to learn why the rule is good. I sent the landowner's king a note offering to sign *his* bedsheets. I described a public theater event, comparable to Elijah and the rain, which would justify killing the landowner and giving his vineyard to my husband. The landowner's king agreed. And the rest is history. Sheets signed. Landowner dead. Vineyard acquired.

Rebecca: I see your husband was a sucker for your temptations. But why did you have to break the laws yourself? And how did you get Elijah mixed up in all this?

Jezebel: Elijah did it himself. He thought he was above temptation, but he wasn't. He just played on a different level. Sometimes the synchronicity of evil deeds amazes even me. He came to my room to brag about what a great job he was doing as God's prophet. I told him that as far as I could see people were afraid of him, and afraid of God, but that nobody had changed their lives because of his efforts. He shot back that nobody had changed their lives because of my efforts either and that I was doing evil.

So, I told him about the sheets, the landowner, and the vineyard, and how this was supposed to teach my husband the futility of getting what you think you want. Things *don't* make you happy. And things bought at such a price taste sour quickly.

We watched my husband tear down part of the wall between our yards and enter the neighbor's vineyard. He danced and sang, and sang and danced. I was dumbfounded. Elijah was furious. And he gave in to pride and power again. He ran down the stairs and out into the yard. He cursed my husband. He cursed the air he breathed, the day he was born, the days each of his children were born. He cursed all my husband's children by all his wives to die childless. He cursed the food he ate and the water he drank. Then he looked up at me and cursed me to be thrown to an early death from the balcony where I stood. To have my flesh devoured and my bones carted away by dogs as my blood sank into the ground. Quite poetic cursing, actually.

And that appeared to make an impression on my husband. Sometimes two wrongs do make a right – temporarily. My husband came up stairs and put on sack cloth and ashes.

Rebecca: So Elijah's methods worked where yours failed? Did that teach you anything?

Jezebel: For three days, my husband wore the sack cloth. Then it was time for his daughter's wedding. He refused to wear anything but his best outfit to the wedding, so the sack cloth went back in the chest. And that was the end of his repentance. Elijah and I were tied at nothing to nothing. But I wasn't done with him yet.

Miriam: Didn't the curse bother you? (Tambourine)

Rebecca: Poor Jez.

Jezebel: We servants of God aren't supposed to leave relics around for superstitious folk to hang onto. Elijah said God promised him he wouldn't die. Instead God would carry him away in a chariot of fire. I think that was his fear of death talking. But still, he understood the value of a relic free death.

Miriam: I arranged a relic-free death for Manna Man. (Jingles tambourine nervously)

Rebecca: Who was Manna Man? He's not in the Bible.

Miriam: After Moses sent me into the desert, after he gave me leprosy, I was furious – not just with Moses, but with God. Either Moses didn't deserve to govern the Hebrews ... or God didn't deserve to be God! All these years. Helping Moses out of scrapes, saving his life, advising him ... and this is how he repays me?

God doesn't stop him? I had dedicated my life to our people. I'd never visited plagues on them or allowed them to be slaves. I didn't pick my little brother who thinks with his penis to rule over them. I'd turned down suitors, deprived myself of motherhood, all to serve Israel.

(Miriam hides tears with tambourine.)

Jezebel: Are you admitting *you* have regrets?

(She offers a kerchief, which Miriam accepts.)

Miriam: So much I'd missed-- the family I could have had, the grandchildren I could be enjoying. I'd given all my love to my brothers and to God. Now I had no one. One brother was punishing me, the other hadn't defended me, and God was ignoring me -- when I was only doing my duty. I tried to forgive them. I argued with God in my head. I was right. God was wrong. God has changed His mind before, admitted He was wrong God should apologize soon. I listened desperately for one kind word, one hint that He still cared for me -- just one whisper of love. But nothing came. (Puts down tambourine on Jez's night stand.)

Rebecca: I didn't want God to talk to me – He always caused trouble. He put Great-Uncle Abraham up to killing my Isaac.

Jezebel: Think carefully about what you are saying. You are starting to make sense.

(Rebecca looks confused.)

Miriam: I wanted a family. I'd made God my family. Ever since I was a little girl, God had sung to me.

(She picks up tambourine from Jezebel's night stand. Shakes it during song.)

Blessed be Miriam, daughter of Israel. Daughter of Israel, blessed be she. He told me he

formed me in my mother's womb for a special purpose – to free His people from Egypt. And now – now we were free – He had abandoned me.

(Puts down tambourine.)

I spread my meditation cloth on the sand and walked around it the direction shadows move on a sundial. Unlike Moses, I'd never dealt with magic. But I was going to do powerful magic now.

As I walked, I remembered how God made Adam. First God said, "Let there be light." Finally, He said, "Let us make man ...". He created with words. Just words.

But I have said "man" many times and never formed a new man. I kept walking, thinking. When a woman wants to make a new man, she lies with a man, like you Rebecca.

(Pause – Rebecca looks embarrassed.)

I didn't want to do that so late in my life. Finally I lay down and fell asleep pondering. *How to make a man?*

Rebecca: Why not a woman?

Jezebel: You have to ask?

Miriam: When I woke, it was Friday morning, and the ground was covered with a double portion of God's manna. Or Moses' magic manna (looks at Jezebel) I suppose you'd say? Who cares? We always got a double portion Fridays so we wouldn't have to gather it on Sabbath, Saturday.

I could use the manna to make my man. It would mean fasting, but that would increase my purity, all the better for making a new man. I gathered up the manna. I started with a tiny piece, forming an embryo. I added more small bits, forming a fetus, then a baby.

Rebecca: Could you really do that?

Jezebel: What's the difference? Manna. A man. It's all God's stuff.

Rebecca: But she's talking about making a man without God. Setting herself equal to God.

Jezebel: Nobody can do anything without God. No matter what she thinks.

Miriam: I wanted a companion. If I could make a baby, why not a man? God's first man was an adult. God had said that Man should not be alone, so He made a grown companion for him. He didn't give Adam a baby girl to raise.

I didn't want to be alone. I would make myself a companion.

I added larger bits of manna to my creation. The child became a man. I kneaded the dough and formed him strong and muscular. Like a 30-year-old healthy male.

I formed my man with no genitals, not wanting him distracted with sex.

Jezebel: Then why did you make a man? Or better question: Why call him an man?

Rebecca: After Isaac left, I'd just as soon the goat-man had no genitals.

Miriam: I formed him handsome. But he was just dough. God made man from clay and breathed a soul into the man's nostrils. I kneeled beside my man and breathed into his nostrils. Nothing happened. I could not make a soul. I'd have to get one from somewhere else. But how?

Far away, I saw a woman approaching. I couldn't let her see my unfinished man! Quickly, I buried him in the sand. Then, I met her and warned her away. Afterwards, I sat on my meditation cloth, facing away from the encampment.

My man needed a soul. While meditating, I wandered among the souls waiting to be born, recently dead, or haunting the living. I found many babies, and newly disconnected, tired souls. But I wanted a man -- strong enough to rival Moses.

A soul spoke to me: "Woman, why are you here? You are not a mother seeking her child unborn, or recently departed."

I told him, "I'm lonely, and I have made a man of manna to be my companion. I seek a soul to complete him."

He answered, "I am the Egyptian, Shep, whom your brother slew in Egypt. You helped bury me. Choose me. Give me life again."

He looked strong.

He said, "Moses is no longer your friend. He was never mine."

Jezebel: So, he was tempting you.

Miriam: In my vision, I saw my man walking beside Moses. I had no idea what that meant, but it looked like success.

I accepted the soul and breathed it into my manna man who lay buried in the sand. It was like a difficult birth from a dead mother. He grew hair, fingernails, toenails. He took a breath. But he didn't cry. No wail of the newborn, showing initial disappointment with Earth. I've heard that a soul forgets the reason it came when it takes its first breath. It spends the rest of its life remembering.

I asked him, "Shep, Can you hear me?"

He nodded. He could not speak.

I hugged him. I wanted a companion for my old age. God had rejected me. My brothers had rejected me. I had no family. I promised to be good to him.

Shep didn't hug me back. I felt only hatred from him. Hatred of Moses.

He wanted to kill Moses! Perhaps that was his equivalent to a baby's cry.

I told him, "I can't let you do that. Moses is my brother. Shep, I know you are angry. But consider this: when Moses killed you, he did you no permanent harm. You're fine. You're with me now.

That seemed to calm him. He settled against me. But I still sensed his hatred. This wasn't why I made a man! I wanted to forget about Moses and God. Only Shep the Manna Man was

somehow an embodiment of my crazy impulses. His thoughts were ones I'd never act on.

Jezebel: No wonder you *think* you know more about God than I do. You copied him – you created a murderous man.

Miriam: I'd lost all my dreams. Moses took Shep's dreams away. Why should Moses have his dreams when we couldn't have ours?

Moses' dream was to bring the children of Israel into the promised land.

Why should he be the one to fulfill this dream? It was mine first. God gave it to me before he was born. Moses betrayed that dream. He stole my dream from me. I should take it away from him. If God still wanted to bring His children to Canaan -- fat lot He cared about them, leaving them to Moses' mercies -- let Him figure it out on His own, without my help!

Jezebel: You didn't have to – you know. God doesn't need us to accomplish His projects.

Rebecca: If He doesn't, why would He send us to help you change from your wicked ways?

Jezebel: Oh please. Not that again. He only sent you to talk to me.

Rebecca: Why are you fighting us? Your wickedness has hurt everyone around you.

Jezebel: Then I was effective. I provided growing pains. And we are talking – so we are doing what God asked. No need to be scared of His wrath. I'm answering your questions and teaching you to use make-up.

Rebecca: Miriam – you really should try that blue eye-shadow. See how good the green looks on me. This is one area where Jezebel knows what she's doing.

Miriam: Make-up covers the truth. And I'm telling you how I learned the truth – when I broke the laws. (Pause) A week later, Shep and I returned to camp.

Moses decided to send scouts to explore Canaan. Was he starting to doubt God? Canaan was the promised land. It was good enough for Abraham until the drought and famine that brought our ancestors to Egypt, where they became slaves. If the land was still sterile, God could make it fertile again. Why send scouts?

Then Shep put an arm around my shoulders, and I knew.

Shep joined the Canaan scouts. Only I knew he existed, so only I missed him. I knew his mission. The scouts would not love the land God has given us.

The meditation link held. Even when he was away from me, I could see what Shep saw: the giant descendants of the Nephilim, beside whom our scouts looked like grasshoppers. Walled cities. Armies in training. Even every thistle or nettle, he showed me. In the background were pomegranate trees heavy with luscious fruit, grape vines sagging with bulging clusters. Canaan was a land of milk and honey, but the scouts would not report the goodness they saw. Shep managed that, without saying a word.

Part of me wanted that fruitful land. Yet a sharper deeper piece wanted Moses to suffer. Even if that meant I would never enter Canaan.

When the scouts returned, Shep had affected all but two. Only they told the truth: that Canaan was fertile, flowing with milk and honey. The rest of the scouts couldn't stop talking about the giants, nettles, walled cities and armies. Moses was furious. He said God was furious, too. We'd come all this way to the promised land and our people didn't want it. So God commanded that we wander longer in the desert. Shep and I were content.

Then we ran out of water.

Moses promised us another miracle. He would bring us water. Shep followed close behind as Moses walked toward a big rock, his staff in his hand. They walked together, like in my original meditation.

Moses struck the large rock, twice. Water gushed out. The people and livestock drank. I waited for Moses' speech. He always spoke about the greatness and goodness of God and how thankful we should be to God for giving us blessings. But Moses was angry, Shep was feeding his anger. There was no speech. Then I saw that Shep had poisoned Moses' mind as well.

Then we all heard God curse Moses. "Because you did not thank me and honor me in the sight of the Israelites, you will not lead them into Canaan. You will die in the desert, never setting foot in the promised land."

I had wanted Moses punished. But not even set foot in Canaan? Moses deserved that much. Shep had gone too far! Ever since I had made Shep I had felt even more bereft – more alone than before.

I finally understood why God destroys people he created. Shep was too dangerous, too willful, too evil for me to let him continue. And I understood Moses, why he'd thought magic was a shortcut to getting what he wanted. It's not. It only makes things worse for the people you love. It was time to stop the magic.

(Picks up tambourine again)

I spoke to Shep. "I made you live by dancing sunwise around you. Now, I'll dance anti-sunwise."

And my song returned. I felt God's love rush through me, filling me, as if I were an empty flask.

Bless-ed be Miriam. Daughter of Israel. Daughter of Israel. Bless-ed be she.

Bless-ed be Miriam. Daughter of Israel. Daughter of Israel. Bless-ed be she.

I felt the heat of God in my own breast.

Shep's color faded to a pale ember, and went out. Then I knew that God does not hate those he punishes or those he kills. Their job is done. My job was done. God would get His people to Canaan without Moses, without Aaron ... and without me. His love for us would continue beyond our deaths. Bless-ed be Miriam. Daughter of Israel. Daughter of Israel. Bless-ed be she.

(Replaces tambourine.)

Rebecca: So you made your peace with God?

Miriam: With God, yes. But I'm still furious with Moses for killing all those people, for

pretending to be God, for the kind of man he was. And for not appreciating me.

Jezebel: But if you hadn't been so angry with Moses, could you have learned your lesson about loving God? Moses was just providing you with temptation. He was a great tempter – that's why he is considered a great servant of God.

Miriam: You're twisting things. You're trying to make evil look like good.

Rebecca: Sometimes that's the way it is. (Pause) I lied to my husband on his death bed. (She starts putting on Jezebel's bracelets.)

Miriam: You? What could have tempted you to do such a thing?

(Jezebel smiles.)

Rebecca: God came to me as the goat-man lay dying. My husband asked for his oldest child – to give his final blessing. Even though Isaac's child was conceived first, the goat-man's child was wild stock and came out of me first. The blessing conveyed God's promises to Isaac. The land of Canaan. God asked me to trick my husband into blessing Isaac, so the land would go to Abraham's descendants.

Jezebel: Why did you care about that? And did you really think God needed you to tell a lie to accomplish His will?

Rebecca: If I hadn't tricked my husband into blessing Isaac, Miriam and Moses would still be wandering the desert with no land to call their own, and you would not be queen of Israel.

Jezebel: The land might not be called Israel, but I can assure you I would be queen.

Miriam: *You* obeyed God when he asked you to bear false witness?

Rebecca: Abraham obeyed him when he asked him to kill his only child. Abraham used to say, "When God asks, you do not say 'yes' or 'no' – you just obey."

Jezebel: You – sweet innocent Rebecca – you lied to a man on his deathbed – a lie that could not benefit you in any way. Why?

Rebecca: Isaac's soul was in my younger son. Isaac had died for the promises. I did not want his death to be in vain. The goat-man took Isaac's place in Abraham's home and in my bed. I couldn't let his get take my son's future, too.

Jezebel: Oh. So, you played the hero – the woman who saved Israel for generations of Isaac's descendants. You wanted to be famous. So you bore false witness. I see, even you can be

tempted. Do you still think God needs *you* to enforce his laws? When you break one on so little pretext? That lie was your Manna Man – your attempt to remake the world in your own image.

Rebecca: I believe God wanted me to...

Miriam: I think I will try that blue make-up. Rebecca does look lovely.

Jezebel: (handing her the vial and mirror)

I think you'll like how you look with a pretty face. My father always told me, "No one will see your pretty face." I didn't understand that. I looked gorgeous. All my husband's other wives, and his daughters came to me for beauty lessons...

Rebecca: A pretty face is more than make-up. It's what you are inside from obeying God.

Jezebel: My father didn't say my face wasn't pretty. He said no one would see my pretty face. People fear God. And, like you, they fear me because I don't fear God.

Miriam: (applying the make-up)

And the second step is Love. When I destroyed my Manna Man, I felt God's love. Fear was gone. The first step towards wisdom is to fear God. The second step is to love Him.

Jezebel: You're getting it.

Miriam: But that doesn't give me the right to break the commandments.

Jezebel: What was Manna Man, if not an idol or a likeness of a man? Remember: "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the water under the earth?" And the self-enforcing results? 40 years in the desert. Moses dying without setting foot in the promised land.

Rebecca: Okay, we all broke commandments. I was preserving your future. And Miriam was trying to do the same. But you were trying to wreck people's lives!

Miriam: Exactly. Your actions didn't have a good purpose. They only made people unhappy. (She finishes applying the make-up and looks in the mirror. Smiles.)

Jezebel: What's wrong with that? You said breaking the commandments was a bad thing. If breaking them was bad, then breaking them *should* make people unhappy.

Rebecca: And God is unhappy with you.

Miriam: And he praised us. It's in the Bible.

Jezebel: Do you think that public praise is all that counts? Isn't that kind of like public prayer – everybody knows God doesn't listen to that.

Rebecca: I think you broke the laws and you didn't suffer for it, except right at the end. I think that's why God sent us to talk to you. You should have suffered, so you'd learn to keep the commandments.

Jezebel: You did not suffer for bearing false witness to your husband, depriving your oldest child of his birthright. And Miriam, you did not suffer for making a graven image. You died shortly after you saw your brother and brethren condemned to 40 years in the desert. What would you or God gain by my suffering?

Rebecca: You didn't have to break the laws to accomplish your goal of temptation. I had to lie to my husband, or Isaac's life would have been for nothing. And Miriam was angry. You can't really blame her. Leprosy and being banished to the desert, just for telling her brother to spend a little less time in bed with his sexy young wife. But you – you manipulated people just for the power of it. That's what's wicked. That's what's got to stop.

Miriam: And you have the unmitigated gall to say that God wanted you to do all your wicked deeds. That you were working for God as the loyal opposition. People make enough mistakes on their own without an opposition team. Nobody needs you to be wicked. You claim you don't enjoy it. So why do you persist?

Jezebel: Rebecca – you say you lied to your husband because God asked you to. Do you ever question that it was God's voice, and not, perhaps Ba'al-Zebub? You gave in to temptation and disobeyed God's commandment. Miriam – where do you think you got the idea to make an image of man – to usurp the role of God for yourself? By your rules, God could not have asked you to break His laws. Yet, you also disobeyed.

Rebecca: But God did talk to me – I heard Him with my own ears.

Jezebel: What? You think temptation *sounds* evil when you hear it? What good is temptation if it doesn't feel *good* when you do it? It may look expedient. It may look illicit. But it has to appeal to the sinner's most powerful desires, or what's the use? Your desire was to preserve the memory of Isaac. Ba'al-Zebub used that, with God's blessing, to tempt you.

Rebecca: I don't think God works like that! God wouldn't break His own laws – and you shouldn't either.

Jezebel: Then how do you explain why *you* broke a commandment? Not that I'm saying there's anything wrong with that. But why do you think God approved what you did anyway? You broke his laws, and yet you don't think he minded when it was you.

Miriam: God sang to me when I saw my error. He loves me.

Rebecca: God has made me honored among women, and never accused me of error. He loves me.

Jezebel: Jezebel: Did you hear God accuse Elijah of error? Or Abraham? Or Moses? Do you still think they have nothing to learn? Or that God withheld from them the love He gives all His children?

Rebecca: But your wickedness...

Miriam: You even served the wrong God – the God of evil. You cannot excuse your wickedness by pointing at others.

Jezebel: After my husband was killed in that final war, the conquering king went carousing in that ill-gotten vineyard. I came out to dance for him on my balcony. He ordered my eunuchs to bring me down to him. He wanted me to sign his bed-sheets. My eunuchs misunderstood and threw me from my balcony, fulfilling Elijah's curse. As I fell, I saw the heavens open and I heard God's voice: "This is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased."

And God has sent both of you to talk with me today.
(Miriam shakes tambourine.)

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