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ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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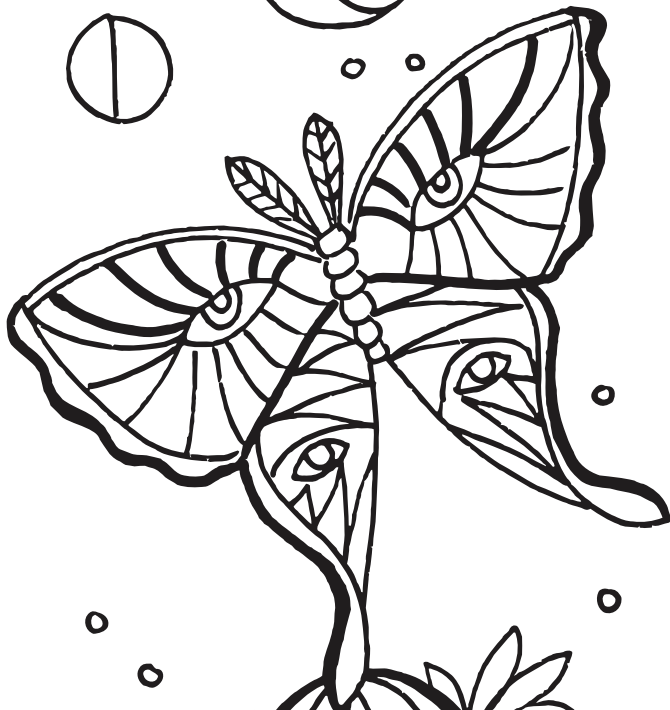
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Coloring WOMEN of the BIBLE

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A THEOLOGICAL
INTRODUCTION

WHO IS MY MOTHER?
BEHOLD, MY MOTHER!

*She walks in beauty, like the night
of cloudless climes and starry skies;
and all that's best of dark and bright
meet in her aspect and her eyes*

—Lord Byron†



A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

I was once asked in a committee examining me for ordination, “What is the gender of God?” If I would answer “all genders,” I would be challenged out of transphobia. If I would answer “no genders,” I would be accused of holding onto an impersonal God. If I were to answer “male and female,” I would be challenged for meandering into pagan goddess worship.

The answer the committee was looking for, of course, was “male.” The *only* answer could be “male” because the men in the room had trained everyone to think it to be true. There could be no ambiguity about this matter, despite the scriptural foundation for it to be otherwise. God is male because Adam was male and Jesus was, and remains, male.

I remember saying, after being lectured on the penis-ownership of the divine, “This was a trick question.” I was wrong: it was circular reasoning. But it felt like a trick question, because the answer those with authority wanted to hear was the only answer that I knew was false in its exclusivity.

That’s the insight: trick questions.

“Hocus Pocus.” The origin of this phrase is roughly from the Latin Mass: *hoc est enim corpus meum*, that is, “This is my body.”

Embodiment. The *body* of Adam and *body* of Christ and *body* of a (male) pastor must reflect the body of God. Therefore the *body* of Eve and *body* of Mary Magdalene and *bodies* of women must be *less-than*. Maleness is a virtue of totalitarian superiority. Anything *less than* such an absolute is *less-than* of God.

Feminist philosopher Mary Daly was right when she famously wrote, “as long as God is male, the male is God.” The issue is *embodiment*.

An implied sexual caste system is imposed and interlaced, as if it were the *logos* of history, in traditional readings of scripture and Christian practice. This interpretation of scripture not only demands a denial of our bodies but also what it means to encounter *the body*, *the blood*, the feet, the hands of Christ. And further: this direction of thinking is a denial of the *logos* of Christ in history, working in and through the church. In other words, when it is said that “we are the body of Christ,” the statement must be asterisked as a reminder that the sexual caste system prioritizes masculinity over all other expressions and coincidences of embodiment.

In essence, we lie when we as church claim to be the body of Christ, because the conditions under which we say it are not honest.

This coloring book represents my journey with re-calling the feminine divine and mining the Bible—often in dark corners—but not exhaustively. Omissions aren't meant to prioritize certain characters over others, as a few better-known characters don't appear here. Characters are roughly organized thematically around some of the more provocative feminine aspects of God in scripture. My hope is that it is informative, enlightening, and illuminating; blessing those tagging along on this journey to hear the stories and struggles of those often left nameless, faceless, and scapegoated in our more pedestrian readings.

You are invited to respond by retelling the stories on opposite pages from your own perspective; to challenge my interpretations, speak out, speak loud, and be silent for others to speak. I look forward to seeing what we as coloring theologians grok and speculate.

Christopher D. Rodkey †

1. OPENING PRAYER: SHE WHO SEARCHES

*You who light the lamp,
and hunt every detail
between the boards of the floor
and the blades of grass;*

*You who rejoice in discovery
of names obfuscated by men;*

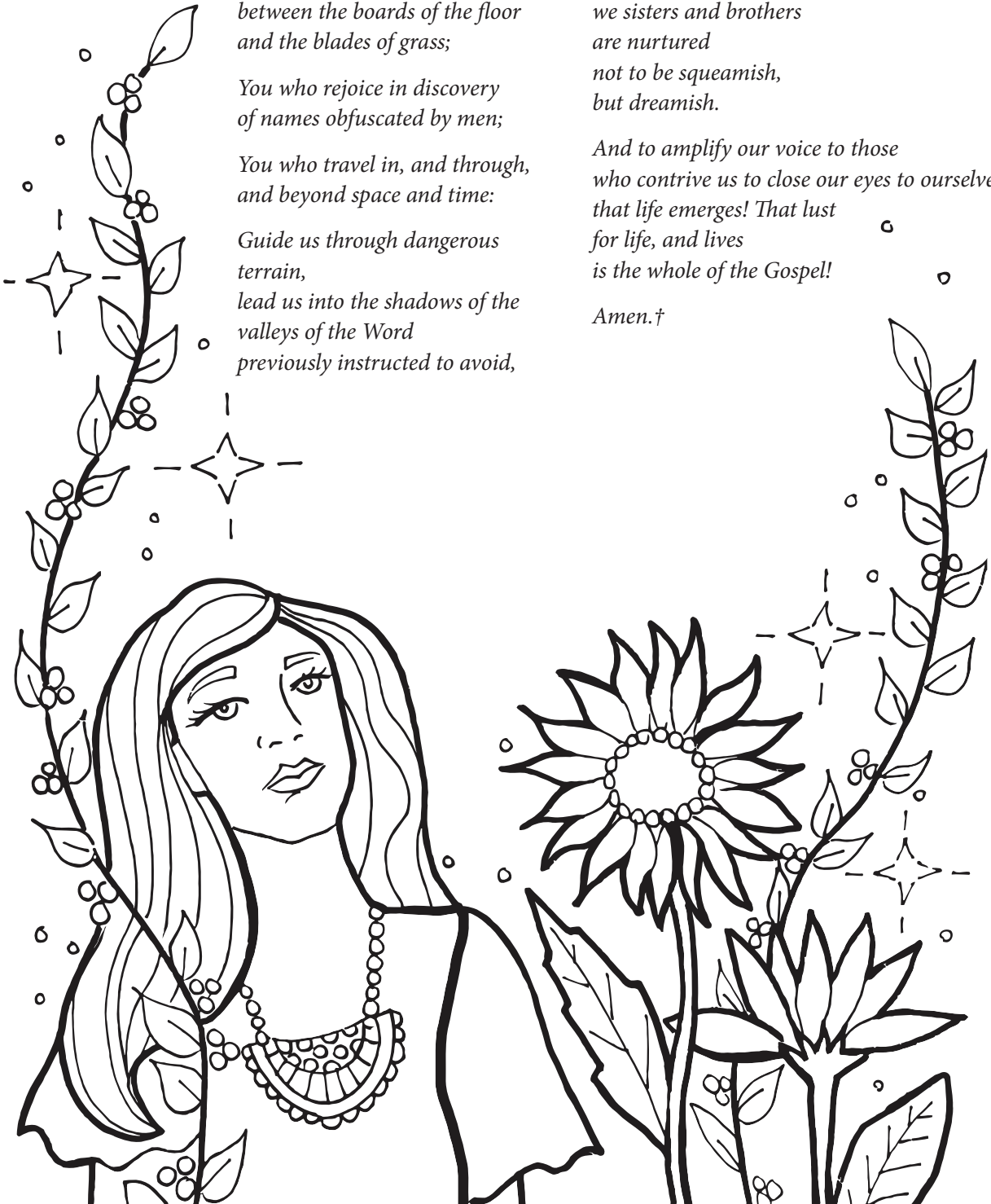
*You who travel in, and through,
and beyond space and time:*

*Guide us through dangerous
terrain,
lead us into the shadows of the
valleys of the Word
previously instructed to avoid,*

*So when together we unveil
what had been draped,
we sisters and brothers
are nurtured
not to be squeamish,
but dreamish.*

*And to amplify our voice to those
who contrive us to close our eyes to ourselves,
that life emerges! That lust
for life, and lives
is the whole of the Gospel!*

Amen. †

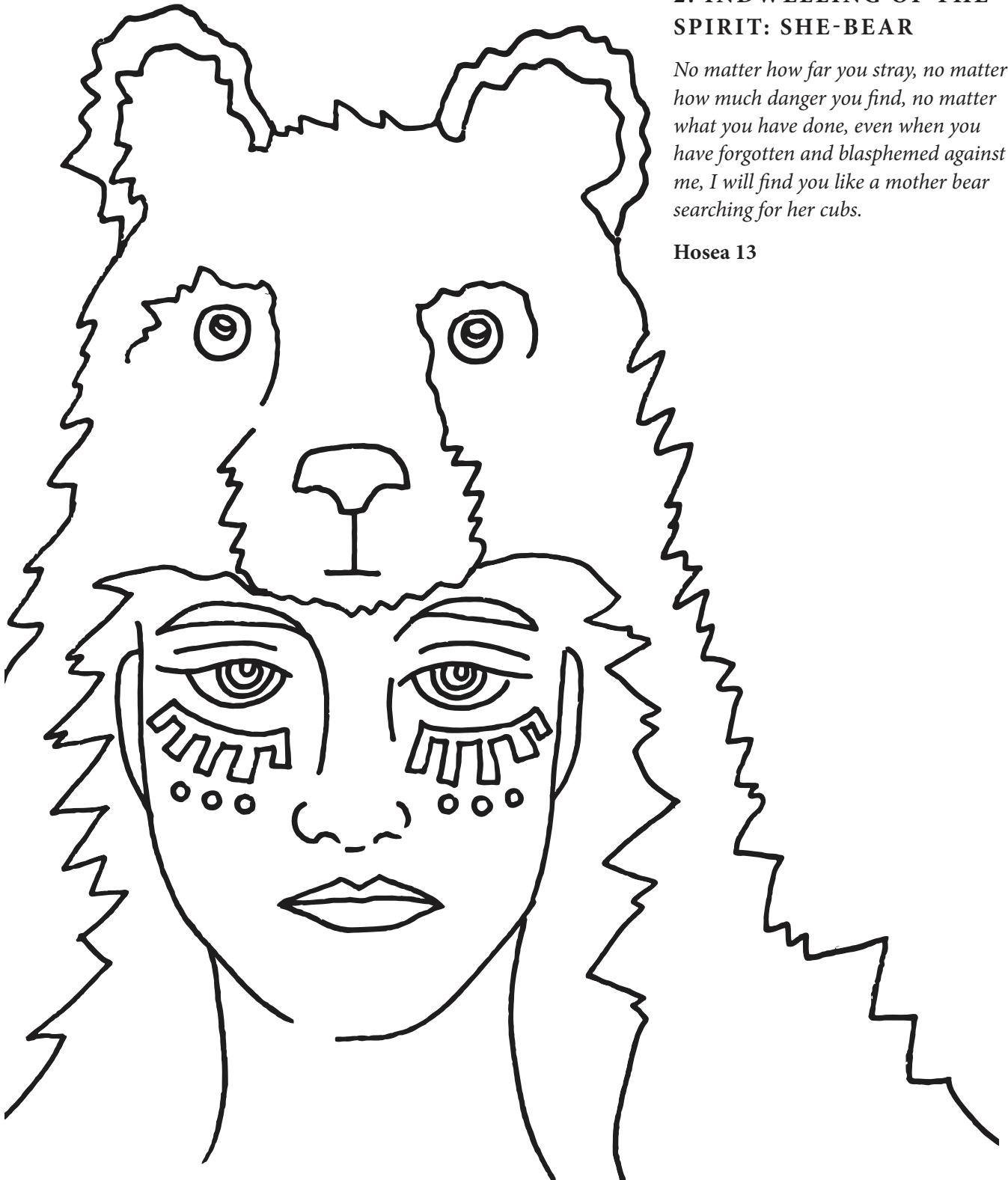


PART ONE

2. INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT: SHE-BEAR

No matter how far you stray, no matter how much danger you find, no matter what you have done, even when you have forgotten and blasphemed against me, I will find you like a mother bear searching for her cubs.

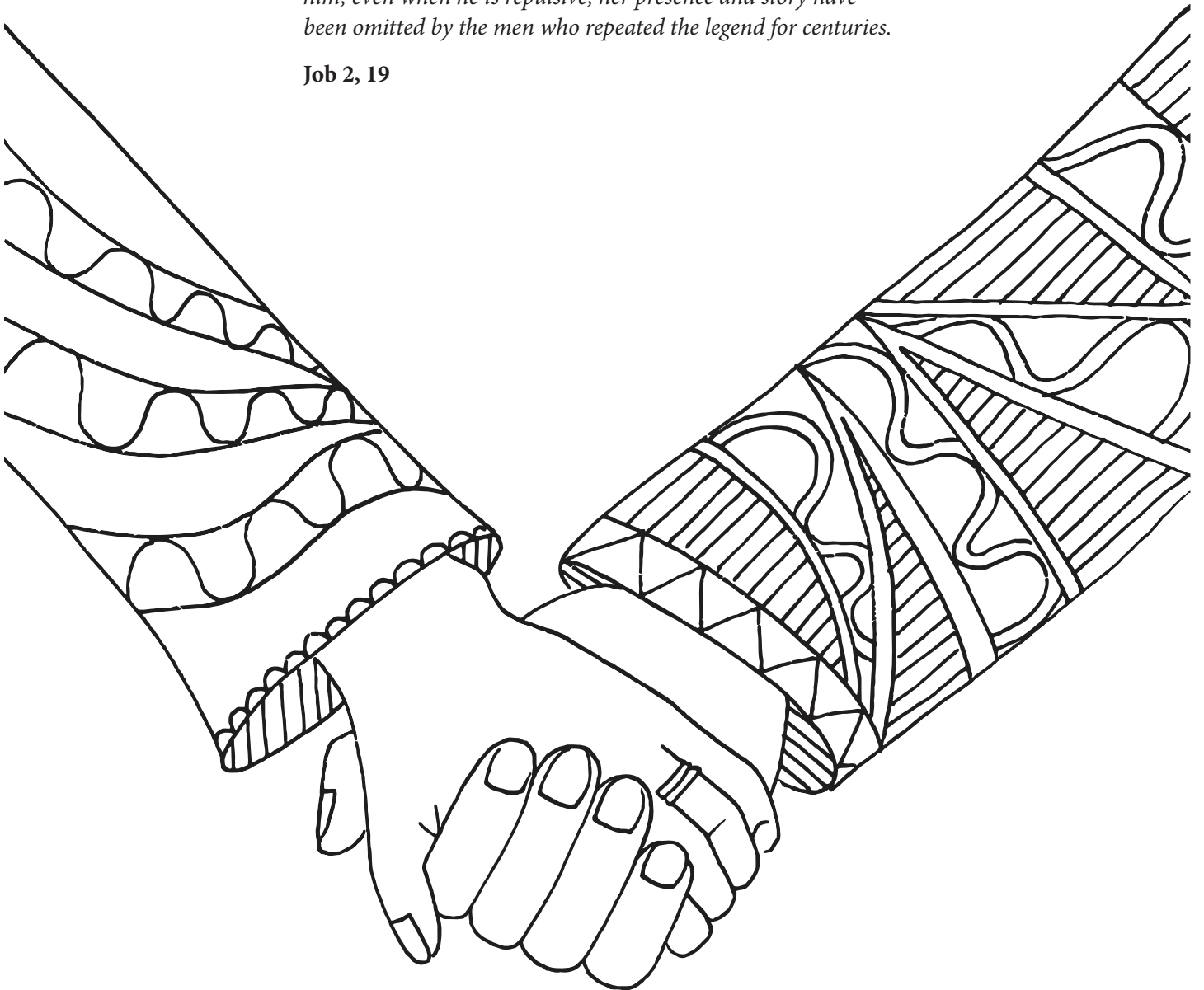
Hosea 13

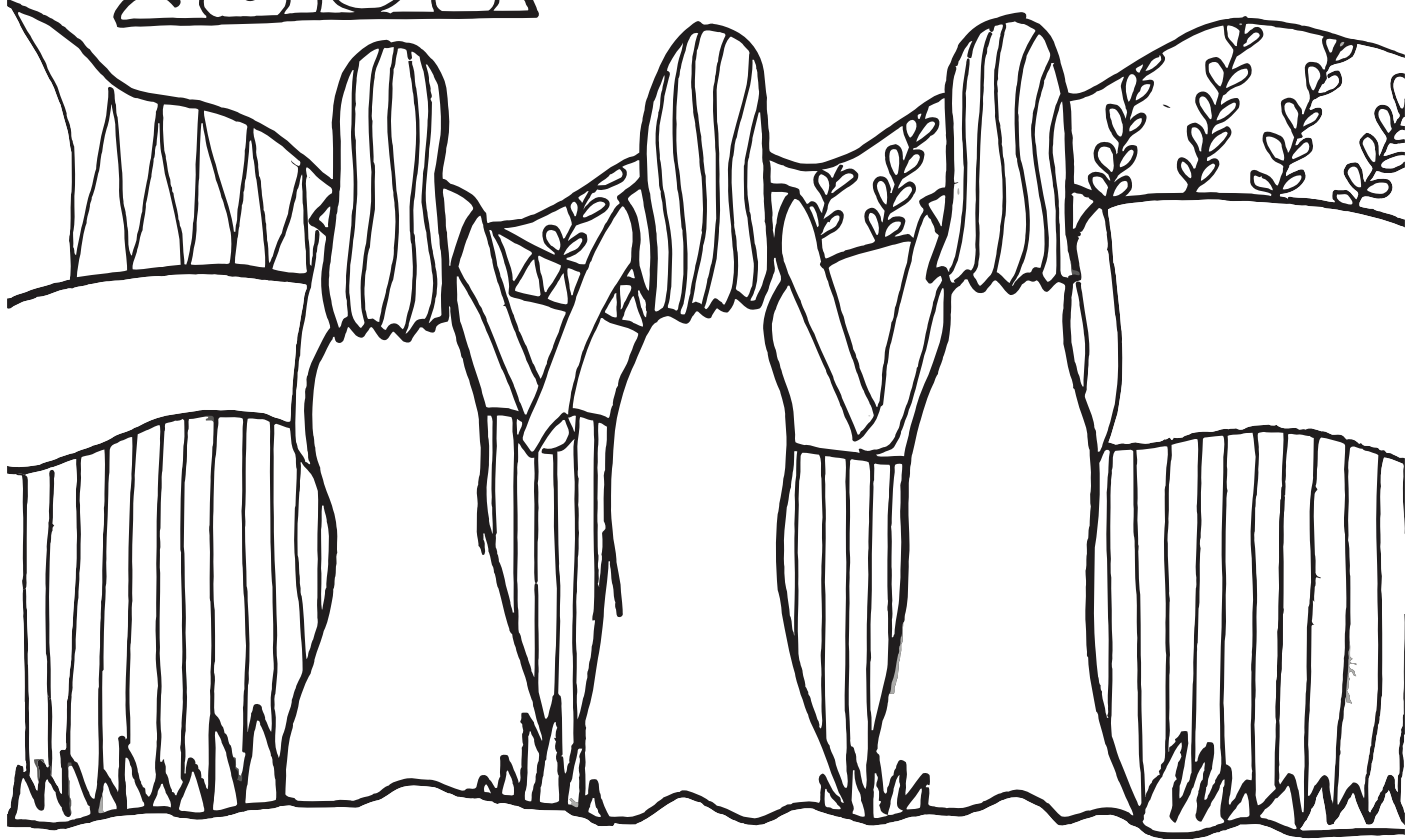
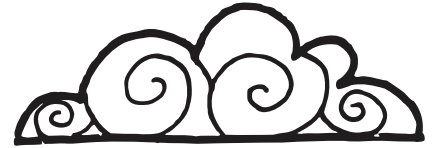
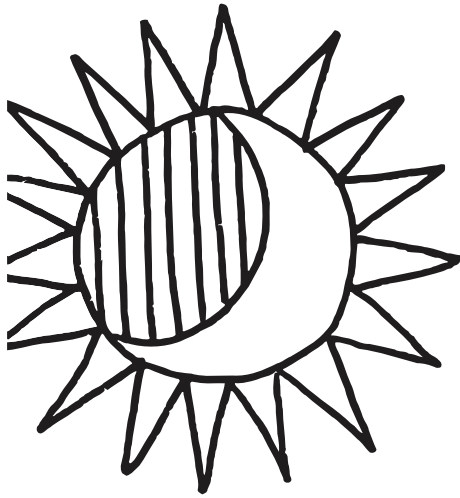


4. FAITHFUL BUT OMITTED: JOB'S WIFE

Disappearing by the end of Job's story, Job's wife remains by him, even when he is repulsive; her presence and story have been omitted by the men who repeated the legend for centuries.

Job 2, 19





5. THE RUPTURE: THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD

Before Moses and all of the tribal leadership, five sisters—Mahlah, Noah, Milcah, Tirzah, and Hoglah—defend their rights as women to own land. Moses, unconvinced and confused, takes the matter to God, and God immediately instructs Moses to grant the women their rights.

Numbers 27†



6. DARK STAR: ESTHER

Black, beautiful, intelligent, and strong, Queen Esther defines who she is for herself, threatening powerful men and saving her people.

Esther 8