

Judith

Chapter 1

When Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Assyrians, he fought a war with King Arphaxad and his supporting nations.

Nebuchadnezzar sent a message to the nations near Assyria to help him fight Arphaxad.

But the peoples of those places ignored Nebuchadnezzar. They thought victory was beyond him. But Nebuchadnezzar was in fact victorious and after his victory he set out to punish the nations which had refused his call for help.

Dear God, please help all nations
to live in peace with each other

Chapters 2 – 4

Nebuchadnezzar summoned his top general Holofernes and gave him a huge army to punish the nations that had not joined him for the war against Arphaxad.

Nation after nation, people after people, fell to the sword of Holofernes.

Some places made peace with Holofernes by giving him all their possessions and then becoming slaves of Nebuchadnezzar, worshipping Nebuchadnezzar as a god.

As the army of Holofernes approached Israel, the Israelites fasted and prayed to God for help. They also blocked the mountain passes to delay Holofernes' advance.

Dear God, please help nations
which have been invaded by other nations

Chapter 5

When Holofernes heard that the Israelites were resisting him he was very angry. He asked Achior, leader of the neighboring Ammonites, for information about the Israelites.

Achior told Holofernes of the Israelites' history: how God had freed them from Egypt, how they had conquered the land of Canaan, and how God protected them.

Holofernes ignored Achior's advice and decided to attack the Israelites.

Dear God, please protect our country from war and strife

Chapter 6

Holofernes not only ignored Achior's advice, he ridiculed him for suggesting that the Israelites could resist his army. Holofernes then handed Achior over to the Israelites "to suffer the same punishment as they would receive from Holofernes' army."

Dear God, when people ridicule us for speaking the truth, please give us strength and courage

Chapter 7

Holofernes laid siege against the Israelite mountain town of Bethulia.

Holofernes seized control of Bethulia's water supply springs, thinking that thirst would force the Israelites to surrender.

For 34 days the siege continued, until the people of Bethulia were weak from thirst.

The people of Bethulia prayed hard to God for help.

The leaders of Bethulia planned to hold out for 5 more days before surrendering.

A feeling of hopelessness hung over the town.

God, help of the helpless,
please help people who are in big trouble

Chapter 8

Judith lived in Bethulia. She had been a widow for 3 years. She loved God, prayed all the time, and often fasted.

When she heard about the situation of Bethulia she encouraged the elders to keep on trusting God for help.

Dear God, when life gets tough,
help us to keep trusting you

Chapter 9

Judith put ashes on her head,
bowed with her face to the ground,
and prayed urgently to God:

"Lord God, help of the oppressed, support of the weak,
please hear my prayer and protect your people Israel."

Dear God, help us to imitate Judith
and pray to you with faith when we are in trouble

Chapter 10

Judith put on her most beautiful clothes and jewelry. Then she and her maid headed for the Assyrian camp.

She told the Assyrian soldiers that she was fleeing from Bethulia since it would soon be attacked.

She said she wanted to give Holofernes some important information.

The soldiers took her to meet Holofernes.

Dear God, please give us the courage of Judith

Chapter 11

Judith was very clever when she spoke to Holofernes. She told him that the Jews would be abandoned by God if they broke God's laws.

She said that the Jews planned to break God's laws in a few days by eating consecrated foods.

She said she would monitor the situation each day and let Holofernes know when the Jews were abandoned by God and ready to be attacked by Holofernes.

Judith's words and beauty won over Holofernes and his staff and they agreed to her suggestions.

Dear God, please give us wisdom and tack
for dealing with difficult people

Chapter 12

Holofernes allowed Judith and her maid to stay in a special tent each night, and each morning to go to a spring near Bethulia to wash and pray.

After 3 days, Holofernes held a banquet for his staff. He invited Judith to the banquet with the aim of seducing her.

Holofernes was so captivated by Judith's beauty that he kept on drinking wine until he was drunk.

All the while Judith kept praying to God for strength and help.

Dear God, please give me
a bit more of Judith's faith and courage

Chapter 13

When the banquet was over at a late hour,
Judith was alone with Holofernes in his tent.
Holofernes lay drunk on his bed.

After praying to God for strength,
Judith used Holofernes' sword to cut off his head.

She went outside and gave the head to her maid.
Her maid put the head in her bag.

Judith and her maid then left the camp
as they usually did
when they went to pray early in the morning.

They went straight to Bethulia
and showed Holofernes' head to the people.

The people were overcome with joy
and praised God for what he had done
by the hand of a woman.

Dear God, please give people the courage
to confront injustice

Chapters 14, 15, 16

At daybreak the Jews attacked the Assyrian camp.
When the Assyrians realized that Holofernes was dead,
they panicked and fled.

The Jews gave thanks to God for all that Judith had done.
Judith praised the God of Israel for rescuing the Jews:
"Lord you are great, you are glorious,
wonderfully strong, unconquerable.
May all peoples love and serve you."

Dear God, thank you for the story of Judith.
Please help me imitate her faith