

# Commemorating Empress Menen

Sunday School, Empress Menen's Earthstrong Edition

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Strength and honor are her clothing;  
And she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with knowledge; And her tongue is the law of kindness.  
She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her love, Her king also, and he praises her.

Many daughter have done virtuously,  
But thou excellest them all.

Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain;  
But a woman who loveth the Most High She shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands;  
And let her own works praise her in the gates.

- Proverbs 31:25-31

*Just as we should all be well versed in the works and words of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, we should also have a vast amount of knowledge on all things Empress Menen, for we cannot know one without the other. The contributions of Empress Menen highlight the importance of duality in the male/female relationship, and are perfect examples of how this duality can be used to benefit not only our personal dealings, but also our entire nation. Therefore, we can gain new insights that are applicable to our daily trials by studying the life of Empress Menen. Lets review:*

Empress Menen was born on March 25, 1883 at Egua in the Ambassal region of the Wollo province, Ethiopia. She was given the baptismal name of Wolette Giorgis after being baptized at St. Delba George Church.

During her childhood she became skilled in Amharic literature, traditional Ethiopian cloth weaving, and of much use later in life, home economics. On Nov. 5, 1903, she left Wollo and journeyed to Addis Ababa, where she met H.I.M., and was married less than a year later.

Over their 47-year marriage, Empress Menen birthed six children (for a total of 10) and stood by Emperor Haile Selassie's side, helping lead the country through its most challenging times. For the first time in Ethiopian history, Empress Menen was crowned Queen of Queens, alongside Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings on 2 November 1930 at St Giorgis Church in Addis Ababa, where Empress Menen was given a gold and ivory scepter.

Empress Menen performed perfectly in the role of Empress. She combined religious piety, concern for social causes, and support for development schemes with the majesty of her Imperial status. She was the dutiful wife, visiting schools, churches, exhibitions and model farms, attending public and state events at her husband's side or by herself. She took no public stand on political or policy issues. Behind the scenes however, she was the Emperor's most trusted adviser, quietly offering advice on a whole range of issues.

During the invasion of Italy in 1935, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I went to the north battlefield while Empress Menen stayed in Addis Ababa and prepared logistics that got sent to the battlefield. During the bombings she traveled and helped evacuate citizens displaying her courage. Additionally, it is suggested that she lead a separate battle, through prayer and meditation, which was also crucial to defeating the enemy.

Her public achievements and works are said to be unmatched by any former female leader from the Empire. Over her time as Empress she helped established (often times through her own financing) over 32 schools and 100+ churches. Additionally, she founded the Ethiopian Woman's Welfare Association, the Ethiopian Woman's Charitable Organization, and contributed to the Ethiopian Red Cross.

### Selected quotes and excerpts from speeches

*“War is the distress and trouble of mankind. Although women of the world are in different countries with different races and religions, the act of war has victimized their husbands, brothers, and children. War is a destruction of the family and all living creatures, so as women we are against war.”*

**-September 13, 1928, speech to the World Women’s Association**

*“H.I.M. King of Kings knew that there is nothing better for the advancement of a country’s progress and development than education. In this regard, H.I.M. built many schools for boys. But if girls are left behind without receiving a regular education, they may have a great disadvantage. That is why I opened this school for the merit of girls 25 years ago, because I knew girls should learn as boys do.”*

**-April 18, 1949, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of Empress Menen School**

*She is a kind woman; in her nature, she is a total stranger to cruelty and offensiveness. We have lived since our marriage through years of good and ill fortune by sharing together our happiness as well as our sorrows.”*

**-H.I.M. Haile Selassie I, on Empress Menen**

### **How can we apply the knowledge we gain from Empress Menen to our personal lives?**

#### **Sistren:**

- Understand balance and that women can advance their cause without subscribing to destructive **western feminism**.
- Appreciate humbleness and recognize how to express opinion in a restrained manner. This is often better received and leads to quicker results. Submission does not mean that you have no opinion.
- Have a better appreciation for the ability to run the household while also helping in the public arena (as this is still our task)

#### **Bredren:**

- Learn extra respect for the loving caring nature of women.
- Appreciate and value your spouse, respect her opinion especially in areas where she has expertise (e.g., Health, nutrition, home economics, etc.)