JACOB, RACHEL, AND LEAH: THEIR RELATIONSHIP AS A LENS FOR THE STORY OF HANNAH AND THE STORY OF RUTH

JESSICA SPITALNIC

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

March 1999:
Advisor: Dr. Sharon Keller

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

In preparing the analysis of relationships that is done in this thesis, the author cannot help but acknowledge her own relationships that inspired the creation and completion of this thesis.

First, I express gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Sharon Keller. Her approach to teaching Bible both prompted my general interest in the field of Bible, and the desire to pursue this specific thesis. She guided me through this process with insight and tolerance, and her efforts are greatly appreciated.

Next, I would like to thank family and friends for all their words of support and encouragement. Fellow HUC-JIR students, the staff at Temple Shaaray Tefila, and my parents Robert and Madeline Spitalnic, who all not only inquired about the progress of the thesis, but my own personal growth during this process.

Finally, to my husband Scott Brockman, I express the most heartfelt gratitude for the love and patience that he offers, not only during the thesis, but always.

March 8, 1999
Adar 20, 5759

Introduction

Interactions with families, friends, and colleagues are static. The purpose of the meeting, the mood of a person, or the motivation behind the encounter influence the nature of each interaction. The accumulation of these interactions over time leads to the development of a relationship. A bad interaction can be tempered by the hope that the next will be better, and a joyous time leads to hopes for future reunions. Just as we experience good times and bad times with those in our own lives, biblical characters also have variable reactions to one another. As Alter writes;

> Bible brings us into an inner zone of complex knowledge, divine intentions and the strong but sometimes confusing threads that bind the two...What it is like...to be a human being with a divided consciousness- intermittently loving your brother but hating him even more.[1]

Using the stories of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah as the starting point, the goal of this thesis is to analyze the intricacies of their relations with one another, and use their relationship as a standard to look at relationships in two other biblical stories, the story of Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2) and the story of Ruth (Ruth 1-4). The thesis is composed of four main sections. The research for each section is based on a combination of biblical text comparisons, concordance work, books and journals.

The first section traces the timeline of the relationships that develops between each pair in the triangle of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, as well as among the three as a whole unit. There are certain events in Jacob's early life, before he meets Rachel and Leah, that influence his interactions with the sisters.

It is important to focus on the events of Jacob's early life that center around the sibling rivalry he has with his brother Esau, and the role his parents have in promoting this rivalry. In addition Jacob's vow at Bethel and the bargaining nature of Jacob's interaction with God reemphasizes Jacob's concern with his own interests above all else.

When Jacob arrives in Haran, the focus of the thesis shifts from Jacob alone to how Jacob's relationship develops with each of his uncle Laban's daughters, Rachel and Leah. The interaction between Jacob and Rachel at the well seems a clear indicator they will

---

[1] Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 176.

marry. Their marriage does not proceed as expected because Laban puts Leah in Rachel's place on the wedding night. So also examined is Jacob's reaction to the deceptive origins of his marriage to Leah that end up haunting Leah for her entire life with Jacob. After this first wedding, Jacob must agree to work for Rachel as well. Jacob's marriage to these sisters regenerates the issue of sibling rivalry in the Genesis text. This sibling rivalry centers around two major issues, Jacob's love for Rachel over Leah, and Rachel's inability to bear children. Laban's deceptive actions influence the relationship for good, by uniting the three against Laban, and for bad, by depriving his daughters and son-in-law of what is rightly theirs and by using Leah as a pawn in his deception.

Jacob's reunification with his own brother Esau accentuates the inability for Rachel and Leah to reconcile themselves. Other events, such as the rape of Leah's daughter and the death of Rachel in childbirth also reemphasize the themes of rivalry related to family size and favoritism that permeate this relationship.

In the second section, the story of Hannah is the focus, with the themes of the Jacob, Rachel, and Leah relationship as the lens for this examination. The two main issues that connect the story of Hannah to this story in Genesis are Hannah and her rival co-wife Peninnah, and Hannah's barrenness. Both these issues and how they develop in the Hannah story inspire both strong connections as well as great differences with the other characters lives, particularly Rachel's.

The relationship between Peninnah and Elkanah, Hannah's husband, also serves as a gauge against which to compare the relationship between Leah and Jacob. Elkanah's fair treatment of Peninnah further highlights Jacob's inability to treat Leah, and later her children, fairly. The thesis also examines reaction of Hannah to the birth of her son, articulated in the Song of Hannah. The vengeful tone of this song, along with Rachel's reaction to the birth of her child, show that the once barren woman who eventually bears still harbors great resentment for those whom she once envied.

The third section is an analysis of the book of Ruth in light of the Jacob, Rachel, and Leah relationship. The betrothal between Ruth and Boaz occupies a large part of the Ruth story, and there are comparable elements of Ruth's betrothal to the betrothal and marriage in the Jacob story. Like Jacob, Boaz is to some degree tricked into a marriage.

The thesis compares the reactions of Jacob and Boaz who find themselves in such a situation and how this reaction affects the course of the relationship with the woman they have been tricked into marrying. Also central to the story is the care Naomi and Ruth show towards one another. This care is so great it motivates each woman to act to ensure the other's survival and even growth. This chapter is also an opportunity to look at the both stories and their connection to the actions of Tamar and of Lot's daughters. The characters' reaction to recurring situations in the different stories are important for what their actions tell us about the ability of a biblical character, particularly a woman, to change her situation for the better.

Finally, in the fourth section, one issue in all three biblical stories is examined, how the biblical characters use the naming of their children to express their intentions. A man only names one child among these three stories, so the chapter mainly focuses on naming as a vehicle for women's expression. For some women, particularly Leah, naming seems to be the only place to express perspectives on the relationships they are part of. Also examined are the other types of naming that take place, as with Naomi's renaming of herself in the book of Ruth.

The conclusion compares the development of the relationships as a whole and asks why some of these biblical relationships show the growth of the characters in their ability to care for one another, while other relationships only grow more tortured as time goes on. The conclusion also provides an opportunity to speculate why characters find themselves in situations that improve or deteriorate over time, including the examination of the focus of each characters concern.

This thesis was an opportunity to study biblical texts and their modern commentators. The power contained in the biblical relationships is evident not only in the Bible, but in our own lives. The influences and interests that effect these relationships are reflected in the relationships we create and develop daily. And like our own relationships, the biblical relationships contain both great joys and great sorrows. Examining these relationships is a chance to see what lessons permeate these stories and what should both we and the biblical characters do with them. I am comforted in the notion that the last story examined for this thesis, the story of Ruth, takes the recurring themes and scenarios

examined in this thesis and ends a message of both caring concern for the individuals and great hopes for the future of the Jewish people.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, the relationships that exist among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah are analyzed and the analysis of these relationships is used to look at other biblical texts. Before beginning, the question must be asked if this relationship is even worth analyzing. For if the main goal of this Jacob narrative is to trace the twelve tribes to one father and contribute to, "the history of the tradition which helped unify Israel..."[2], this could be easily done without going into the nuances of the utterings, behaviors and views of the characters who create the twelve sons, particularly Rachel and Leah.[3] All that needs to be established is that the children of Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah all share one father. But the writers of the text find that the "very tense drama about the two wives of Jacob"[4] an important story to share in its own right and the detailed relationship between Jacob, Rachel , and Leah grants the reader permission to examine its nature more closely.[5]

This story offers insight on the nature of love,[6] the difficulty of family relationships and how they affect individuals, deceptions, the "suffering of women due to their ability to have children,"[7] and "the truth of God's work in history and of Israel's hopes and failings."[8] It is desirable to know and expect that the Biblical text would offer more than basic information and this story is worthy of its own development for there are lessons to be learned from the relationships that unfold.[9] Recurring Hebrew roots, descriptive words, dialogue, and narration all aid in the exploration of these relationships.

The timeline of events that make up the interactions among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah show the development of the different relationships. Jacob's association with each of the

---

[2] Mary Callaway, Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 23.
[3] Callaway 23.
[4] Callaway 26.
[5] Callaway 26.
[6] Callaway 26
[7] Sharon Pace Jeansonne, The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 70.
[8] Robert Alter, Genesis: Translation and Commentary (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996) 46.
[9] Alter, Genesis 46.

sisters individually, together, and the sisters' relationship with one another are all important parts of this timeline. A study of these interactions and the unfolding events that illustrate these characters' lives introduce and develop certain ideas, some recurring, some unique, and allows the reader to reflect on the status of the relationship.

For example, fighting siblings is one of the most frequent themes of the Jacob story. Jacob's own tension with his brother Esau is not just a factor that affects his relationship with his brother. The tension that infuses the early relationship between Jacob and Esau reappears with the introduction of the sisters, Rachel and Leah, and then once again with Jacob's children. Although there have been sibling rivalries before, in the Jacob story, each set of siblings is given multiple opportunities to both articulate their attitude towards the rivalry along with the texts' description of it.

Sibling rivalry is not the only way the nature of the different relationships are expressed. Other issues raised in the text include familial relations, characters forming complementary pairs, barrenness and the responses to it, dueling co-wives, and the power of women to name children . The power of these different ideas are gauged in a variety of ways, including Hebrew word usage, reference to other biblical events, characters' reaction to one another, the representation of themselves, and what the text chooses to reveal or veil about each character.

A timeline is the an appropriate way to examine the development and portrayal of the different issues because how Jacob, Rachel, and Leah deal with these different issues over the course of the relationship, and how they highlight the reality of the relationship at different points along its timeline helps to clarify intended themes. Furthermore, because the reader is restricted in an analysis of the relationship by what the narrator chooses to report, examination in the form of a timeline leads the reader on a "process of discovery"[10] that the nature of the relationship between Jacob, Rachel , and Leah is not a consistent one. The development of biblical characters is a "dynamic process" [11] and the "unique combination of features" [12] that make up the participants in a relationship cause both stable

[10] Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 329.
[11] Sternberg 346.
[12] Sternberg 347.

and fluctuating elements in the relationship. For example, it is clear that Rachel is loved by Jacob over the course of their relationship, even after her death. Specifically, this love is manifested in Jacob's attitude towards her sons that he favors. At the same time, Jacob still reprimands Rachel along the course of their relationship, when Rachel chooses to come to him regarding her concern for having children (Genesis 30:2). This is much like relationships in our own lives. We may be angry at a spouse or a friend over a specific act, but we still have undying love for them over time.

Because Jacob is the only character among the three that moves from one family, his own, to another, Rachel's and Leah's, it is useful to examine what issues are raised in the context of his own family that follow him to the family he marries into. Jacob's life experiences before meeting the sisters are in his role as part of a sibling relationship, a parent/child relationship, and in a relationship with God .

Jacob's relationship with Esau affects a large part of our understanding of Jacob when he joins Laban's family. Although they are twins, the text makes it clear that Jacob and Esau are very different. Esau is described as אִישׁ יֹדֵעַ צַיִד, "a skillful hunter," while Jacob is described as אִישׁ תָּם, "a mild man" (25:27). Along with the descriptive differences, portrayals of their interactions also highlight their differences that foreshadow the tensions Jacob will both encounter and encourage in his next family. Two encounters that provide insight to these differences are the interaction between these brothers in Rebekah's womb (25:21), and the encounter just before they will separate and end the relationship of the first part of their life (27:41).

The first verb used to portray the interaction between the brothers is וַיִּתְרֹצְצוּ in 25:22. As a root רָצַץ can describe one person doing something to another or a confrontation where one is stronger, one is weaker, or one wins and one loses. In Amos 4:1, the act of struggling is done by a weaker group against a stronger power. Although the struggle of someone physically strong versus someone physically weak seems a clear parallel for the outdoorsy Esau and the milder Jacob, this is not the only possible characterization of the relationship suggested by the use of this verb. For as the events unfold it will become apparent that although Esau may be physically strong, he is weak in

power. Jacob's victory over Esau in his ability to acquire the birthright from Esau and the blessing of the firstborn from his father show that one who is physically weaker can overcome once who is physically stronger. This type of struggle and victory is reflected in Judges 9:53 , a specific case of one who would appear physically weaker, a woman, who literally crushes, ותרץ , "she crushed,"Abimelech's, the local monarch, head.

But no winner of this struggle between brothers is declared and so the physical nature of the struggle is less important than the meaning that lies behind their struggle. For the struggle may represent each brother's personal struggle, as Jacob's relationship with Esau goes as far to suggest that these biblical siblings may even signify the internal struggling of a single entity, each brother completed only by what the other has.[13] This idea of siblings struggling with each other while at the same time completing each other's inadequacies will reappear with Rachel and Leah. Both sets of siblings exhibit characteristics of a pattern that reoccurs with biblical siblings who are,

> bound tightly together...so much so that no single member of a given pair is a full personality in [their] own right but just a psychological segment...[V]iewed together, as parts of one single entity, they might constitute a satisfactory image of one person.[14]

And although Jacob's own personality is fully developed in its own right, the significance of meeting Rachel, who comes to him while doing work as a shepherd, may also provide Jacob with the half he needs once his relationship with Esau is severed. For Esau is the one who works with animals while Jacob stays home. (While later Jacob becomes a shepherd, this is not what he did originally, for the text of 25:27 says he stayed home.) Rachel too works with animals , as the reader is informed of Rachel's arrival with the sheep even before Jacob sees her (29:9-10). She, in this way, becomes the complementary fit to Jacob, and replaces Esau by exhibiting a similar skill. Leah will serve no such role.[15]

---

[13] Norman J. Cohen, Self, Struggle & Change (Woodstock, Vt:.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1995) 102.
[14] Athalya Brenner, ed., The Feminist Companion to Genesis (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 207.
[15] Brenner 206.

Like the portrayal of the brothers' first interaction in the womb, the portrayal of their last interaction in their early relationship is also significant for the emotions and attitudes it conveys. When Esau discovers that Jacob has stolen Isaac's blessing (27:41), Esau is said to hate Jacob, (שטם) וישטמ., "he hated." In Job 30:21, the same root is used to expresses the harshness of God's hand against Job and in Proverb 55:4 to demonstrate the wrath against someone being pursued. This root expresses an extreme emotional response on Esau's part, elicited by Jacob's behavior. The root is also brought up in relation to Joseph. In Genesis 50:51, the brothers think Joseph will hate them and treat them like they treated him, using this root. But Joseph does not have the capacity to hate his brothers in this way. Both Jacob and Joseph do not hate to this degree but find themselves hated by others. Jacob will, throughout his life, elicit such extreme reactions from those around him -- starting with his brother and moving to his wives and father-in-law.

The bookends of struggle that bracket this relationship between Jacob and Esau are also notable because the struggle eventually ends and in Genesis 33:4, the brothers reconcile. But the family Jacob flees to in order to escape these early struggles with Esau, will be affected by Jacob's presence and the struggles Jacob elicits in this new family. He will cause tension and struggle in this new setting, both between the set of siblings he encounters, Rachel and Leah, and then among his own children. The text details the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau in Genesis , but there is a never a portrayal of a reconciliation between Rachel and Leah from the tensions Jacob causes.

Another early relationship in Jacob's life also serves to raise and foreshadow issues. Jacob's inability to express love to more than one wife, Rachel, and more than one child, Joseph, may be traced to the actions of Jacob's own parents, Rebekah and Isaac. If the text clarifies that each parent, Isaac and Rebekah, loved one child (25:28) it can be inferred that the other child was at the very least not loved as much as the first by the other parent. And Rebekah acts alone in order to aid one child and trick her husband at the same time. This shows Rebekah prioritizes helping her favored child over demonstrating

honesty in the relationship with her husband.[16] The sentiment of favoritism that is clearly demonstrated by Jacob's own parents effects not only those who are favored but also those who are not favored. Much of the Jacob, and later Joseph stories, detail the attempts of those who are less beloved to either gain Jacob's love, as in Leah's case, or the attempts to override the affects of Jacob's own favoritism, as the brothers' violent actions against Joseph demonstrate.

In addition to favoritism, Rebekah serves as a model of deception for her son Jacob. Rebekah is the one who encourages Jacob to trick his father in order to attain Issac's blessing in Genesis 27. Jacob will later encounter deception from Rebekah's own brother in Genesis 29, but Laban's deception takes advantage of Jacob. The deception inspired by Rebekah ends Jacob's early relationship with his brother and the deception done by Laban dictates the nature of Jacob's entire relationship with Rachel and Leah. Laban's deception of Jacob's also highlights that whatever ability Jacob and Rebekah have had to change the nature of inheritance in a family, their early success does not given them free reign over future events. Rebekah tells Jacob that he will only need to be with Laban for a few days (27:44) and suggests that he will find refuge there (27:45). But, Jacob neither goes for a few days nor does he find that Laban's treatment of him reflects what would be expected by a family member.

The echoes of the events of Jacob's early family life: his struggles with his brother; the favoritism he is a victim of; the trickery that takes place twice (even three times if one counts Isaac calling Rebekah his sister and not his wife in Genesis 26:7); and Jacob's taking away of the rights of the firstborn Esau; will follow him to Laban's family.

In addition to the events that shaped Jacob's early family life, Jacob's encounter with God in the vow at Bethel (28:10-22) offers insight to the characteristics Jacob exhibits when alone and what essence of these characteristics he will bring to the relationship with Rachel and Leah. In this passage, God is revealed to Jacob through a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder going up into the sky. In the dream, God promises Jacob many descendants and protection on his way. In order to

---

[16] Alice Bach, Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 142.

acknowledge the revelation that has taken place, Jacob sets up a pillar of stones at the site and makes a vow to God.[17] These events bridge the time transition from one family to another and "integrate the components of the Jacob/Esau and Jacob/Laban cycles" while also establishing Jacob's relationship with God.[18] And although this scene serves to establish, "God's assistance and presence on the journey, determining the story of Jacob's life and the history of the people of Israel," the nature of Jacob's vow (28:20-22) provides specific, and mostly negative, insights to Jacob's character and methods that will reappear in his time with Laban's family.[19] For the beginning of Jacob's carefully worded vow in Genesis 28:20 begins with the phrase "If God remains with me." This vow that Jacob offers, like the soup he offered to his brother Esau, is conditional.

Furthermore, the content of the vow is a request for personal safety and the demand for basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter (28:20-21). Jacob, worried about his security, "could hardly ask the deity to swear ...so he cunningly bound him to his word by means of a vow."[20] Even God does not escape Jacob's careful wording that assures, as always, the best for Jacob. Jacob's concern with personal satisfaction is reflected in this vow and will be reflected in a life where he never ensures the proper emotional protection of his wife and children.

The experience of Jacob with his own family, with God, and by himself that are portrayed in Genesis 25-28 serve as the backdrop for the relationships Jacob is about to enter. Jacob is entering a new situation, both because he needs to flee from his family and because he has received a hopeful promise from God that assures numerous descendants (28:14) and God's protection (28:15). The time is right for Jacob to begin anew and the encounter with Rachel by the well is the initial setting for the next part of Jacob's life. The meeting with Rachel unfolds in a clear pattern of a betrothal type- scene.[21]

---

[17] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1982) 171.
[18] Tony W.Cartledge, Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 166.
[19] Claus Westermann, Genesis 12-36: A Commentary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981) 460.
[20] Cartledge 169.
[21] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 51.

> The betrothal type-scene...takes[s] place with the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, having journeyed to a foreign land. There he encounters a girl...Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well; afterward, the girl...rush[es] home to bring news of the strangers arrival (the verbs 'hurry' and 'run' are given recurrent emphasis at this junction of the type-scene); finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal.[22]

This meeting at the well in Genesis 29 is parallel to Genesis 24 and Exodus 2, which are scenes that have marriage as a goal.[23] Also in this scene, "true to an ageless pattern, the prospective suitor is inspired to a display of superhuman prowess at the very first site of Rachel."[24]

Because Jacob has not been portrayed with great physical abilities, his love for Rachel seems so extraordinary that suddenly he has the ability to move boulders it would normally take several men to move (Genesis 29:8). "[T]his is the only instance in which Jacob is granted superhuman power in his service of love."[25]

After Jacob displays this strength he kisses Rachel (29:11), a dramatic action that marks the beginning of their relationship. This kiss reflects the dramatic response of Rebekah, upon seeing Isaac, of falling off the camel in Genesis 24:64. There is some power in the moment, all as part of the betrothal type scene, that lets the reader know this couple will have a future together. As far as Jacob knows, this is Laban's only daughter and he is excited at the prospect of meeting her.[26] The kiss and the verb וַיִּשַּׁק, "to kiss" may already be alluded to the verse before (29:10) with the pun played out between the verb ,וַיַּשְׁקְ, "to water " and to kiss. The two roots are also linked in Song of Songs (Song of Songs 8:1-2), where the narrator wants to kiss the object of their affection and offer them wine to drink .[27] But the kiss that takes place by well and water that normally

---

[22] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 52.
[23] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 176.
[24] E. A. Speiser, Anchor Bible: Genesis (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985) 223.
[25] Westermann 465.
[26] Jeansonne 72.
[27] Alter, Genesis 152.

bring life and sustenance, will not signify that for Rachel. "[T]his pastoral scene [also] suggests fertility ...[and] it is ironic that Rachel will struggle for many years"[28] before having children, an issue that will obsess Rachel for much of her life with Jacob. The sheep Rachel waters also allude to the success Jacob himself will have as a shepherd, "...in spite of the unfair circumstances that Laban creates."[29]

The kiss itself is surprising because it seems a bold move for Jacob to make when he has not even identified himself as related to Rachel at this point (Genesis 29:11). For this reason, this kiss could be seen as much as a kiss of love at first sight between a man and a woman, rather than the kiss of a kinsman that Laban gives Jacob in Genesis 29:13. Beyond allowing herself to be kissed by a man who only identifies himself after the kiss has taken place, little else is revealed about Rachel.[30] The text just indicates that she watches her father's sheep and that she finds Jacob's arrival exciting enough to run home for, a characteristic of a betrothal type-scene.[31]

But Jacob's response to Rachel's presence provides greater insight to the potential relationship about to begin and this meeting as compared to other events in his life. For Jacob's action, described as וַיִּגַּשׁ, "drawing near" (29:10) upon first sight of Rachel stands in stark contrast to Jacob's first encounter with his own brother Esau, an encounter of struggle. This drawing near also differs greatly from the the drawing near Jacob did to his father in order to trick him into blessing him as Esau (27:22). This first וַיִּגַּשׁ of 27:22 sets into motion the events of Jacob's life. The encounter with Rachel represents the first time Jacob is portrayed in the text as interacting with someone out of spontaneous joy without other intentions. This unadulterated emotion will be reflected in the lives of Jacob's sons, when Judah will need to draw near (same root) to Joseph, in order to save Jacob's favored son and in a way Jacob's life (44:18). The earnest nature of Jacob's response to Rachel is also shown in the cry he lets out after Jacob kisses Rachel (29:11).

---

[28] Jeansonne 71.

[29] Jeansonne 71.

[30] Speiser 223. He says this may have not been so unusual because "women were subject to fewer formal restraints" in that area.

[31] Alter, Genesis 153.

This reaction of וישא את קלו ויבך, " he raised his voice and cried," is the same reaction Esau had upon discovering that Jacob had stolen his blessing (27:38). But while Esau cries because he has lost what is rightfully his, Jacob cries out of relief of getting away with what is rightfully Esau's. The relief Jacob expresses in this cry by the well, and the welcoming response he gets as Laban's kinsman, will be only temporary. Rachel, the one whose presence elicits his kiss and his cry, will soon be taken away from him. Ironically, in the well scene Jacob displays, for the first time, the ability to act without guile and honestly engage with others. He has the capacity to love, as in his initial reaction to Rachel and the strength he finds in their meeting. These changes bring a more complex Jacob to the reader's attention, one that does not only deceive others, but is even engaged by others. The combination of the typical betrothal type-scene elements along with a Jacob who has revealed a more complex, and even positive side would lead the reader to believe that Jacob will soon marry his cousin Rachel.[32]

With the progression of the relationship between Jacob and Rachel, the reader sees that nothing comes to them easily. Obstacles are put in the way of their marriage including their ability to conceive, and eventually their ability to live a long life together. As the examination of the relationship between Jacob and Rachel will show, while Jacob is more frustrated with the obstacles that initially prevent their marriage, Rachel is solely concerned with the obstacles to conception (30:1, 30:14, 30:24). The expected outcome of this scene and all these elements serve as a "...supple instrument of characterization and foreshadowing,"[33] and a forum to convey that the early nuances of the Jacob-Rachel relationship will be affected by an outside force.[34]

The reason that this betrothal type-scene will not run as smoothly as the similar scenes of Genesis 24 and Exodus 2 is mainly because of the actions of Laban. While the influence of Jacob's parents and the interactions with his brother are clearly alluded to in his relationship with Rachel and Leah, it will be Laban who has the greatest affect on the relationships, because he will pit sister against sister. Laban, in an act of deceit, will

---

[32] Speiser 223.
[33] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 56.
[34] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 56.

change the expected outcome of the betrothal type-scene by introducing a new tension, Rachel's sister, Leah, whose introduction leaves long lasting affects on Jacob's life.[35] So this betrothal scene will not run as smoothly as those in Genesis 24 and Exodus 2 and initially Jacob doesn't even get betrothed to the one he meets in the betrothal scene.

Rachel's father, Laban, is the one who changes the course of events to both create a new relationship, between Jacob and Leah, and threaten an independently established one, between Jacob and Rachel. For this reason, it is important to examine the course of Laban's own early actions before he has met Jacob. For once Jacob and Rachel have met by the well, the narrative moves to Rachel's return home and in this second visit to Laban's house that happens in Genesis, there are allusions to the scene of Laban's sister, Rebekah, being visited by Eliezer, who has the intent of finding Isaac a bride. Laban takes a vocal role in the negotiations for his sister's betrothal and the nature of his actions in this first scene will be played out in the negotiations for his own daughters.

> We get a concise, devastating characterization of Laban - seeing the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's arm, he said 'Come in, O blessed of the Lord' (Genesis 24:30-31) - because his canny grasping nature will be important when a generation later Jacob comes back to Aram-Naharaim to find *his* bride at a nearby rural well.[36]

It is this characterization of Laban that shows a man concerned with his own benefit.

Laban's actions and the description of his household point out anomalies that may have affected his character. Rebekah, in her betrothal-type scene, is described as going to her "mother's household". And it is Rebekah's mother and brother who seem to have more say about the conditions of Rebekah's marriage than the father, Bethuel. For it is the mother and brother who ask that Rebekah remain another ten days (24:55). So Laban, as a brother with power, will exert that much more power as a parent. Later, when it is time for Laban's own daughter to be married, he will not ask for his daughter's consent as Rebekah's was asked.[37] Laban's intent to trick may be indicated from this point, for if he

---

[35] Westermann 463.

[36] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 53.

[37] Raphael Patai, Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1959) 53-54.

were to ask his daughters' permission, the daughters would be aware of the deception he has planned for the wedding night. By prioritizing his benefit over the fair treatment of his nephew, Laban's wedding night switch may have benefited him, but its results plagued the lives of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah.

Yet the initial interaction between Jacob and Laban does not foretell Laban's selfish intentions. Like Rachel, Laban runs in reaction to Jacob's arrival (29:13). They also embrace and kiss and then Laban says, עצמי ובשרי אתה, "You are my bone and my flesh" (29:14). This statement suggests a certain attitude that Laban will never demonstrate. For "bone and flesh" is intended to portray the power of the family relationship. It is used literally with Eve created from Adam's bone and flesh and it is the reason Abimelech uses in Judges 9:3 to convince his mother's brothers to support his actions. But as we already know from the relationship between Jacob and Esau, being one's brother, one's "bone and flesh", does not guarantee fair treatment . And Laban, even though he identities Jacob as his bone and flesh, he will not be stopped from cheating him, in spite of this close relation. Ironically Laban will ensure sadness in the relationships of his own עצם ובשר, his daughters, by creating a situation where two sisters end up marrying the same man. The later prohibition of such a union (Leviticus 18:18) only highlights Laban's intentions behind the marriage of two daughters to one husband lie solely in his own interests.

Laban's seemingly warm welcome is enhanced by Genesis 29:19. Laban's states, טוב תתי אתה לך מתתי אתה לאיש אחר, "It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man." But Laban's attitude has an ironic twinge to it. For when it is actually time for the wedding between Jacob and Rachel, after Jacob has served seven years for her (29:20), Laban tricks Jacob. Instead of bringing his daughter Rachel to Jacob's tent, he brings Leah (Genesis 29:23).[38] By bringing Leah into Jacob's tent, Laban has created a new relationship, that of marriage between Jacob and Leah. Because the origin of this relationship is based in deception, Leah will have to spend her entire life searching for Jacob's love, a love that was nowhere in the origins of this relationship.

---

[38] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 177.

Laban's actions have a multi-faceted affect on the future of his daughters and son-in-law. By initially denying Jacob the opportunity to marry Rachel, Laban does open up the possibility of her being married to another man. The implication of this statement is that it would be beneficial for Jacob to marry Rachel and this was often true. Normally cousin marriage seems preferred , "for such a marriage had something to do with the endeavor to preserve property within the family."[39] Laban will eventually alienate his nephew (31:2), and his own daughters from the family (31:14). In doing so he demonstrates an attitude that the normally understood benefit of cousin marriage is not enough motivation for him to maintain good relationships among his daughter and nephew. The negative affect Laban's actions have had on their own lives will later lead Rachel and Leah to regard themselves as outsiders in Laban's eyes. And by putting Leah in Rachel's place because of the law of his land where, לֹא יֵעָשֶׂה כֵן בִּמְקֹמֵנוּ לָתֵת הַצְּעִירָה לִפְנֵי הַבְּכִירָה, "It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn," Laban has made an indelible mark on the relationship (29:26). Laban effects his daughters to such a great degree by prioritizing profit over family and that he will eventually alienate his daughters and son-in-law. The only time Jacob, Rachel, and Leah appear to give a united front in this relationship is when they flee from Laban in Chapter 31. Laban tricks the person who he had once identified as his flesh and bone (29:14), puts his daughters in a competitive situation, and he guarantees that his daughter Leah will never be loved, for her presence reminds Jacob of the deception at Laban's hands he experiences.

Up until there have been no great consequences for the blessing Jacob stole from Esau. Since the deception of Esau he has been assured a promising future by God; met a woman whom he he loves; and found refuge from Esau's death threat. So Laban's response to Jacob, that explains Laban's switch, is the first time that commentary is made about Jacob's deception of Isaac (Genesis 27).[40] "Jacob becomes the victim of symmetrical poetic justice...by having Leah passed off on him as Rachel, and rebuked in the morning by the deceiver, his father -in-law, Laban."[41] This statement after the switch

---

[39] Patai 27.

[40] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 177.

[41] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 45.

is made lets Laban declare that although Jacob had been able to upset the proper balance in his land, it would not happen in Laban's "place" (29:26).

Because of these events, Laban and Jacob will become less familial; the established relationship of love and the intention of marriage between Jacob and Rachel will be obstructed; and a non-existent relationship between Jacob and Leah will now become one of marriage. Westermann writes that this wedding narrative, "is so close to the reality that what one experiences what narration intends to be and can in fact be. Only what is absolutely necessary is said, but what is unsaid speaks with such force..."[42] So the stated and unstated of the wedding scene is also worthwhile in offering further insight to the relationship.

Up until this point, only Jacob and Laban discuss the details related to Jacob's service to Laban in return of acquiring Rachel for his wife. The two daughters who will be affected by this marriage, Rachel, who has already been introduced, and Leah, who is introduced as the older sister in the midst of the dialogue between Jacob and Laban (29:16), have no dialogue in the scene. What is contained in the text at the point of the marriage discussion is a descriptive phrase about each daughter that is noted in Genesis 29:17, ועיני לאה רכות ורחל היתה יפת תאר ויפת מראה, "Leah's eyes were weak and Rachel was beautiful and well-favored."

This comparison of the daughters is so important that it is inserted right in the middle of the dialogue between Laban and Jacob. These names and descriptions "foreshadow... the interconnectedness that will be forced upon them by theirs father's plot to trick Jacob."[43] The importance of such detail is noted particularly because of the infrequent use of descriptive detail in the Bible. When it is used, it can serve as a signpost for "consequences, immediate or eventual in plot or theme."[44] Just as comparisons of Esau and Jacob serve to highlight the differences that led to the tension between them, these characteristics clarify that Rachel and Leah too, are very different and these differences will affect how they are treated by, and react to, Jacob the husband they share.

---

[42] Westermann 467.
[43] Jeansonne 72.
[44] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 180.

The sisters are given "animal" names and the names of animals given to people can serve as "an excellent metaphor for resident aliens and other categories of persons who are neither complete insiders nor total outsiders."[45] Leah means "cow" and Rachel "ewe," two animals associated with fertility. Leah will live up to the fertility expressed in the name, but for Rachel, the name is ironic.[46] Moreover Jacob, who has been given "[b]lessings of fruitfulness" in Genesis 28:13-15, then meets and intends to only marry Rachel, the one who is barren.[47] "The narrative withholds information on the role Leah will play in Laban's plan, indeed the narrator does not record any reaction to Leah on Jacob's part"[48] except for clarifying that she is the older sister which may indicate an awareness of the age issue for "Laban's place" and the need to marry the older sister before the younger (29:26).[49] But both the text and Jacob will be clear about whom Jacob intends to serve Laban for by saying to him, "Rachel your younger daughter." By articulating "younger", Jacob may even be acknowledging that he is aware of the "customs" of Laban's place. Therefore, he is very clear about who he loves and who he is working for, by specifying the younger. In this, he also acknowledges the existence of a sister who is older.[50] But Jacob clearly desires the younger for his wife.

At the point when the text names Laban's two daughters it is also specific about the difference in description between the daughters (29:16-17). Leah is described with עיני רכות , "weak eyes." The root רך is used in Genesis 33:13 in describing the children of Jacob at the reunification with Esau; and is paired with נער in 1 Chronicles 29:1 and 1 Chronicles 22:5. Like the children described with רך, Leah is in need of protection. Although Leah is the older sister who should be married first for the laws of Laban's land (29:26), because of the situation she will placed into with the marriage of Jacob, she will

---

[45] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, The Savage in Judaism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 126.
[46] Jeansonne 11.
[47] Callaway 15.
[48] Jeansonne 72.
[49] Jeansonne 72.
[50] Jeansonne 72.

never have power to change Jacob's feeling for her. Leah will also find she is defenseless in her ability to air her perspective on her relationship with Jacob, and she will have to resort to using indirect methods, like the names she chooses for her children and in confrontation with Rachel, to communicate her plight.

Jacob's reaction to Leah's presence indicates that the weak eyes of Genesis 29:17 are not just a physical feature but they represent Leah as a specific person, who will be ignored by Jacob in their relationship. Her eyes are also weak for she is not easily seen. The unfolding story will show that those related to her are also victims of her status that makes her not easily seen. For example; in Genesis 34, her daughter's rape elicits barely a reaction from Jacob and he seems almost more upset about what his sons have done to the townspeople than what has been done to his own daughter. And although Leah has so many sons, once one of Rachel's sons moves to Egypt, Joseph, the action moves with him.

As for Rachel, the events serving as part of the betrothal-type scene are an indication of the intended future between her and Jacob. Further highlighting the attraction is Jacob's kiss. This kiss takes place before Rachel's beauty is described, as opposed to Rebekah's case, where the reader is informed upon first sight of her beauty (Genesis 24:16). Because Rachel's beauty is not initially discussed as it is with Rebekah, Rachel's beauty, where she is described as יפת תאר ויפת מראה, is "presented as a causal element in Jacob's special attachment to her and that, in turn, is fearfully entangled in t he relationship of the two sisters with each other and in turn their competition for Jacob."[51]

And yet Rachel's looks are mentioned and the description connects her to other significant biblical women like Tamar (2 Samuel 14:27) and Esther (Esther 2:7). Rachel's son Joseph will also be described as יפה תאר in 39:6. Here it describes one good-looking enough to make a married woman become attracted to Joseph. Even though Rachel has been set up as Jacob's intended, her looks are still mentioned suggesting greater depth to Jacob's desire to marry Rachel beyond that she was simply the first woman he came in contact with after escaping.[52]

---

51 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 56.
48 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 54.

Just as the text is specific about the differences between the two daughters, Jacob is specific about which daughter he intends to work for and how long. It is only Laban who does not specify which "her" he understands as being discussed. Again, in Genesis 29:21 Jacob must clarify and keep track of the specifics when he reminds Laban that he has fulfilled the length of seven years he agreed to.[53] At this point the initial familial greeting Laban gives Jacob is lost and the "Stay with me" (Genesis 29:19) that Laban declares is not so much a warm, welcoming statement as a way of making the time of Jacob's service undefined, as the daughter is undefined (for Laban at least). Meanwhile, Jacob is normally one of specifics. For example, when he dupes his father Jacob clearly states "I am Esau, your firstborn" (27:33). Later Jacob will need to know the specifics of the angel he wrestles with in Genesis 32:20. Jacob also needs to direct his attention and love towards specifics, first Rachel, then Joseph, a sharp contrast to Laban who is intentionally vague when he can gain profit, as in this case. Remarkably, after the seven years, Jacob does not mention the specific wife he wants. The text makes it clear that he was working for Rachel (29:20), but now Jacob does not reiterate which wife he now wants in payment for the seven years of service.

As the narrative moves to the wedding scene, many things seemingly established in Genesis 29:1-21 will be mixed up. Rachel as the intended bride, Laban as a family member offering security, and Leah as lacking any sort of connection to Jacob will all turn out to be ideas broken down by the next scene. The relationships that have been established so far in Chapter 29 will be greatly affected. Laban makes the wedding feast for the men of Haran but, as evening falls, Laban brings Leah into Jacob's tent instead of Rachel. It is only in the morning (29:25) that Jacob asks, מה זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל עבדתי עמך ולמה רמיתני, "What is this that you have done to me? Did not I serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

Jacob only voices his complaint in the morning. The text plays out the confusion created in the switch by the use of pronouns rather than names in verse 23, as in, ויבא אתה אליו ויבא אליה ,"he brought her to him and he came to her." The reader is aware

[53] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 177.

of the switch but Jacob is not. The text needs to let the reader know that Jacob is surprised, and to convey this information, "[t]he chronology has been so deformed as to align the reader's viewpoint and the process of discovery with Jacob..."[54] Jacob is more surprised that the woman in the tent is not Rachel, than any reaction to Leah specifically. Jacob's inability to have a satisfactory reaction to Leah begins here. Many times in the bible a character discovers something new and in these "drama[s] of discovery...none ends as unenlightened as he began." But in the discovery of Leah scene, the knowledge received by Jacob is only about Laban's character - it is not important for him to learn anything about Leah. He asks "what is this", מה זאת, more concerned with the deception that has been done to him than that he now has a wife.

The power of the switch is also significant for up until now, Jacob has been able to control the action. He usurps the blessing of his older brother, he escapes Esau's wrath, he dictates the terms of a vow with God and he is able to, or so it seemed, to secure his bride. But this control Jacob seems to have is an illusion

It is important that Leah, the firstborn daughter, is in the tent. Here the older has been switched with the younger but the significance of this reversal and it as mirror image of what he did to his brother Esau seems lost on Jacob. To Jacob, the only goal seems only to acquire Rachel as a wife. Jacob, once again, is focused on the specifics. The consequences of his actions and the presence of Leah should conjure up feelings about what he did to Esau but, instead, he is only concerned with demanding why and he has been deceived and then acquiring what is his. Like the wedding night switch, many stories in the Jacob cycle are noteworthy as "ambiguous situation[s] where right and wrong are not always simple..."[55]

Further insight to Jacob's character is offered in 29:30, ויבא גם אל רחל ויאהב גם את רחל מלאה ויעבד עמו עוד שבע שנים אחרות, "And he went in also to Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years." For

---

[54] Sternberg 243.
[55] Everett Fox, transl., The Five Books of Moses (New York: Schocken Books, 1995) 158.

if part of the intention of the wedding night trickery was for Jacob to see the consequences of his actions with Esau and his inability, beyond a certain degree, to control to events of his life, Jacob has not completely learned the lesson. This statement of verse 30 indicates Jacob's attitude towards what has transpired. If the switching of Rachel and Leah was the repercussion that Jacob had to experience in order to receive a reprimand for what he has done to Esau, Jacob is still somewhat of a victor because he has found the woman he loves, Rachel. So all Leah is to Jacob is a reminder of his punishment, and partly for this reason, Leah will continually complain about the lack of love in her relationship with Jacob. Jacob, despite his punishment, still attains the most important thing to him at the time - Rachel as as his wife. Why else would the one who shows he has the capacity to cheat others, let himself be so easily cheated by Laban? He wants Rachel and will quell that deceiving side of himself, at least for the time being, to acquire Rachel.

As if the descriptions of Rachel and Leah, along with Jacob's reaction to being married to each woman didn't highlight the differences between Rachel and Leah enough, other comparisons are made in Genesis 29:30-31. The text reads ויאהב גם את רחל מלאה , "He loved Rachel more than Leah" (29:30), and וירא יהוה כי שנואה לאה ויפתח את רחמה ורחל עקרה , "God saw Leah was unloved and opened her womb, but Rachel was barren" (29:31). Leah and Rachel are opposites. They are "two sisters married to the same man. However they are not equals... [E]ach has what the other lacks and none is satisfied with her lot in spite of her own advantages in family hierarchy."[56] And so if the reader was unsure that the descriptions of רכות and יפת תאר indicated they were were opposites, it is now clear as described in 29:30-31. For one is loved, one is unloved, one barren , one fertile.

As much as Rachel is loved, Leah is unloved. At this point, Leah's status in the relationship is important enough to note and her relationship with Jacob does not become as nuanced as Rachel's. Leah is consistently unloved and the text has different methods of sharing that with the reader. These methods range from the narrator describing her status as "unloved" to sagas like the mandrake scene in Genesis 30 that make her status clear.

---

[56] Brenner 209-210

But Leah herself is not given the ability to comment directly on the relationship.

Because אהובה and שנואה (29:31, I Samuel 1:5) "were applied so often to a comparison of a favored and unfavored co-wife,...שנואה entered the legal terminology (Deuteronomy 21:15)."[57] The intention of the term defines what kind of wife Leah is, as in Deuteronomy 21:15. In calling her שנואה, legally, the text is able to put a limit on the power Jacob has to treat her unfairly. Echoing Deuteronomy 21:15 is a way of articulating the protection of her rights.[58] "The Hebrew term for 'despised' (or 'hated') seems to have emotional implications, as Leah's words in verse 33 suggest, [along with its role as a] technical, legal term fort the unfavored co-wife."[59] So beyond what the technical status of being שנואה implies, the reoccurring acknowledgment of Jacob's lack of love for Leah, adds an emotional quality to Leah's status as the unloved wife.

The "hated woman" is also referred to in Proverbs 30:23 as one of the things that upsets the order of the earth, as when the שנואה כי תבעל, "unloved woman when she is married." While Deuteronomy 21:15-17 seems to be protecting the rights of the unloved woman, already married, Proverbs 30:21-23 finds the unloved woman "intolerable, presumably because she stands on her rights though her husband does not love her."[60] Proverbs shows an, "imbalance in the order of social values"[61] and the proper order being upset. So Leah, the one who replaces on the wedding night, to ensure the proper order for Laban's land, upsets the order based on undeserved elevation, as with Proverbs 30:23, where the unloved woman is married.[62]

The comparison of Jacob's affection for his two wives (Genesis 29:30) "sounds the end of the narrative. The love between Jacob and Rachel could not be destroyed by

---

57 Patai 40.
58 Olam HaTanakh: Devarim (Tel Aviv: Lior, 1993) 161.
59 Alter, Genesis 155.
60 R.B.Y. Scott, Anchor Bible: Proverbs (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985) 181.
61 R.B.Y. Scott, Anchor Bible: Proverbs (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985) 181.
62 R.B.Y. Scott, Anchor Bible: Proverbs (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985) 181.

Laban's intervention, it persevered. 'But Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah;' and so the way is open to conflict."[63] The tendency to favor one family member over another, that Jacob learned from his own parents, will not change. In spite of the rift favoritism caused in his own family, Jacob still exhibits favoritism with his wives and children, resulting in great pain for his wife Leah and later his children. It is the births and subsequent naming of these very children that will serve as the vehicle for both Rachel and Leah to articulate their perspectives on the relationship each has with Jacob, as well as with each other.[64]

Once Leah and Rachel have been identified as fertile and barren respectively, Leah bears four children. It is the birth of these four children that brings tension to the relationship between Jacob and Rachel.[65] For although Rachel is loved, she expresses dissatisfaction with her barren state, and she confronts Jacob about her situation (30:1).

As discussed above, Jacob has always shown love for Rachel. He kisses her, he loves her, and he will one day favor her children. The text, however, never informs us of her attitude towards him. In the first actual conversation between Jacob and Rachel, we hear of her maternal desire rather than her love towards her husband.[66] In Genesis 30:1-2, Rachel, frustrated by her barrenness and envious of her sister's ability to bear children, approaches Jacob with the statement, הבה לי בנים ואם אין מתה אנכי, "Give me children, or else I die" (30:1). Jacob becomes angered by Rachel's request and asks, התחת אלהים אנכי אשר מנע ממך פרי בטן, "Am I in God's place, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (30:2).

This scene shows a rift between Rachel and Jacob, in contrast to much of the story when they are strongly connected. They both share the position of younger children in the family who receive the privileges normally given to the firstborn. They both steal and deceive, Jacob in terms of Esau's birthright and Rachel in terms of her father's teraphim. But their relationship is not one dimensional and they demonstrate the tension that exists between them.

---

[63] Westermann 468.
[64] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 179.
[65] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 179.
[66] Alter, Genesis 158.

> "In its passion for differentiation...the Bible...explores variety with pairs or groups of subjects who have been acting in unison and would seem to merge into a single or collective viewpoint. But a sudden shift of position along some axis, the narrative opposed man to his own favorite (as when Jacob scolds Rachel...)."[67]

Rachel's extreme reaction to her barrenness may be caused by the connection between the "woman's status in the family [and]...her fruitfulness."[68] Rachel's barrenness, a situation that affects her enough that she states she will die from it (30:1), is exacerbated by Leah's ability to have children. The root קנא, "to be jealous," is used to portray Rachel's attitude towards her sister and is later used in Genesis 37:11 to describe Joseph's brothers' attitude towards him. In the brothers' case, we know that the sentiment behind קנא is powerful enough that they would put Joseph's life in danger.

It is amusing that Leah, the one who will have to hire her husband to sleep with her, would be envied. Rachel's jealous feeling towards her sister combined with the exaggeration of "Give me children or else I die" reflects the importance of having children, that overrides any consolation Rachel may feel in being loved by Jacob. When Rachel commands Jacob to bring her children, it is with the word הבה. This is the same root as when Jacob demands to be brought the wife that he has worked for (29:21). But while Jacob uses this command as a demand for the wife he loves, Rachel has not shown love for Jacob as much as she has shown a desire to have children and a desire to become a competitor in the childbearing contest with her sister (30:8).

Jacob's response to Rachel's demand for children is expressed in Hebrew as ויחר אף. The Hebrew term for Jacob's anger is powerful. Other situations where that degree of anger is expressed are extreme, as in Cain's anger after God did not accept his offering (4:6). This anger was strong enough to lead to Cain's slaying his brother. Jacob's anger towards Rachel is inspired by the idea that she is expecting him to act תחת אלהים, in place of God. In 50:19 the term תחת אלהים, is used by Joseph in response to his brothers who are worried that Joseph will take revenge on t hem once Jacob

---

[67] Sternberg 174.
[68] Patai 42.

has died. Joseph's response to the brothers intends offer comfort , as in "Don't worry I cant hurt you for I am not as powerful as God." Meanwhile Jacob's response gives Rachel less hope. This may also show that although Jacob has done a lot of conniving and switching in his life, the one he cannot be switched with is God.

But does Rachel's merit such a response? Like many elements in the story, the answer is unclear. Rachel's situation is similar to Rebekah's in Genesis 25. In response to Rebekah's barrenness, Isaac does go to God. ויעתר יצחק ליהוה לנכח אשתו כי עקרה, "Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren" (25:21). The text does not clarify if Rebekah told Isaac to pray for her, or if he was inspired on his own. (Although Rebekah will speak to God in 25:23, suggesting "that women could inquire directly of Yahweh and could do so independently of their husbands."[69])

Isaac may have been inclined to have a more sympathetic response to Rebekah because, as his only wife, it was essential that she bear children. But, Jacob already has fours sons by the beginning of Genesis 30. Unlike Isaac, Jacob does not go to God for a solution for Rachel's barrenness. Rather, he becomes part of Rachel's suggested solution by lying with Bilhah, her concubine.

Jacob's response to Rachel, even though he is in a different situation than Isaac, can also be viewed as a further disturbing insight to Jacob's character. This is the "second time Jacob has been confronted by someone who claimed to be on the point of death unless immediately given what he or she wanted".[70] As with Esau, Jacob's response is somewhat shocking because it lacks a comforting or helpful nature.

On the other hand, Rachel's own response to her bareness, in approaching Jacob, may be problematic, and meritous of Jacob's angry response. Proverbs 31:30 reads, שקר החן והבל היפי אשה יראת יהוה היא תתהלל , "Grace is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." As noted earlier, Rachel is

---

[69] Clarence J. Vos, Women in Old Testament Worship (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1968) 156.
[70] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 187.

יפה, but Jacob's comment to her reflects her lack of connection with his God. Even though she is beautiful, if she does not show יראת יהוה by attempting to approach God regarding her bareness and she will not conceive. And Rachel's actions, first with her concubine and then with the mandrakes, show that Rachel will take control of her barrenness without יראת יהוה, the fear of God.

Rachel, with her first spoken words is portrayed as, "impatient, impulsive, [and] explosive."[71] More importantly, in terms of her relationship with Jacob, it is clear that Rachel has a connection with him that both lets her reveal her true feelings to him and him to her. She also can tell him who to lie with as she demands, as in the mandrakes scene, when Rachel commands Jacob to lie with Leah (30:15). And Jacob's seemingly unsympathetic response may be a way of showing the importance of Rachel to Jacob with or without children. Rachel has access to Jacob in her time of need and he will listen to what she has to say. For this reason, his anger at Rachel and his inability to plead with God in response to her barrenness, as his father Isaac did, may indicate that Rachel was not merely another wife to Jacob, whose primary purpose was to conceive.[72]

The story could have progressed without this confrontation between Jacob and Rachel. Rachel, realizing she was barren, could hand over her concubine, as Sarah did (16:2). But this does not just happen. The narrator finds it important enough to portray the confrontation between Jacob and Rachel and the reader observes nuances in the relationship and the expectations Jacob and Leah have towards each other. Alter writes,

> Rachel does not comment directly on Jacob's rebuke with its suggestion of a divine judgment of barrenness against her, but instead drives forward towards her own practical intention...The dialogue is abruptly terminated, giving one the impression that whatever Jacob thinks of the arrangement, he see that Rachel is within her legal right and that compliance might be the better part of wisdom in dealing with this desperate woman.[73]

Eventually Bilhah is handed over to Jacob (30:3-4), but not before this confrontation is

---

[71] Alter The Art of Biblical Narrative 187.
[72] Callaway 12.
[73] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 187.

shared with the reader. As a means for comparison, this emotional moment between Rachel and Jacob only serves to reaccentuate that Leah has no such contact with Jacob, emotional or otherwise. The confrontation also highlights the centrality of the issue of barrenness in biblical relationships.

When a couple has trouble having a child in the Bible it is most often the women's quest for a method to conceive that is focused on.[74] Rachel is esteemed biblical company at this point in the story, as Sarah and Rebekah were also barren. Like Sarah, Rachel offers up her maid to her husband in order to obtain a "legal son," the only two places this happens in the Bible.[75] And like Rachel, Sarah does not ask God to open her womb; "the long desired pregnancy occurred because of divine plans rather than human maneuvering."[76]

A significant point about the process through which the reader is informed about Rachel's bareness is that it is not the first pieces of information offered about her. From the moment Sarah us introduced, as Sarai, in Genesis 11:30, one of the first pieces of information about her is that she is barren. Rachel, on the other hand, is described as beautiful and loved before anything is known about her childbearing capabilities. Jacob is in love with the entire Rachel, not any part of her that can or cannot bear children. It is Leah that is insignificant as a person to Jacob, first indicated in the מה ראית in reaction to Leah in the wedding scene (29:25). It is only Rachel who places the issue of her barrenness at the center of her identity and it brings Rachel and no one else pain.

Jacob's union with Rachel's maid Bilhah produces two sons. Leah also brings her maid to Jacob, and Zilpah , Leah's maid also has two sons. But the lingering issue of Rachel's barrenness, expressed in her confrontation with Jacob in 30:1-2 has not yet been resolved. What is clear is that in Jacob's relationship with Rachel, the lines of communication are open and emotions are shared. Meanwhile, Leah remains unloved and has seemingly little contact with Jacob outside of the children he has fathered.

But Rachel and Leah are sisters and would be expected to have a well-developed

---

[74] Callaway 16.
[75] Callaway 28.
[76] Callaway 28

relationship in their own right dating to long before Jacob arrived on the scene. Yet the way the next scene, the first interaction portrayed between Rachel and Leah, progresses, the sisters' priorities indicate the importance of Jacob's attention and their own ability to bear children as more important than any sibling relationship that exists between them.

In 30:14 Leah's eldest son Reuben, finds mandrakes in the field, and brings them to Leah. It is significant that Reuben brings his mother mandrakes, the plant with aphrodisiac qualities and "erotic connotation."[77] The reader can speculate on why Leah would need such a plant, based on Leah's hopes that her husband will love her (29:32, 29:34) or because she has stopped bearing (29:35). Perhaps for her own barrenness, Rachel asks Leah to give her some of the mandrakes (30:14). In requesting the mandrakes, Rachel may be searching for another way to conceive.

In verse 15, Leah responds to Rachel, המעט קחתך את אישי ולקחת גם את דודאי בני, "Is it a small matter that you have taken my husband? And would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" In return for the mandrakes, Rachel promises that Jacob will lie with Leah that evening and sure enough, when Jacob returns from the field, Leah meets him, and commands him to lie with her for her has hired her for the evening (30:15-16). Leah calls her acquisition of Jacob hiring. The use of the root שכר may indicate that the relationship between Jacob and Leah more resembles a relationship of a temporary nature than that of husband and wife. For in the bible, the hiring of one person by another often refers to the hiring of a servant, soldier or prostitute.[78] It seems strange that a wife would have to have to hire a husband to spend the night with her, particularly because this may have been an obligation of husband, to spend time with all the co-wives.[79]

After Leah approaches Jacob, he does not respond to her verbally (30:16). Again this fits into the pattern established at the beginning of the story when Leah's presence elicits no reaction from Jacob. No rock is rolled from a well to impress Leah; no child of hers is favored and here she gets no response from Jacob. This scene clarifies attitudes in

---

[77] Speiser 231.

[78] A servant is hired, as in Leviticus 25:40, Deuteronomy 24:14; a soldier as in Chronicles II 25 and I :19; or prostitute as Micah 1, Ezekiel 16.

[79] Patai 44.

the relationship, particularly of and towards Leah. Leah's response in verse 15 further defines the nature of the relationship between Leah and Jacob and it is sorely lacking. Leah feels as if her husband has been taken away from her. There had been interaction between Jacob and Leah early in the marriage, as the birth of Leah's first four children shows. But at this time in the relationship, Leah has maintained, not by her choice, some distance from Jacob, and must use means of business to get him to be with her once again.

This scene is important for the character of Leah , because outside of the naming of her children, this is the only evidence regarding Leah's feelings about her relationship with Jacob. Leah takes advantage of this time alone with Rachel to reveal her true feelings directly to Rachel.[80] Leah's response to Rachel's request for the the mandrakes may also be an opportunity for her to trick Rachel into giving her access to Jacob. We know that Leah has already been a part of the wedding night deception, though whether as a willing participant or not is unclear, so Leah's accusatory questions of Rachel, particularly, "Is is a small matter that you have taken my husband?" suggests that the return of her husband would remedy the problem referred to in this question.

Leah's rhetorical question about Jacob to Rachel may be the only method of control Leah has. For Leah is clearly portrayed by the text as weak, from the moment she is introduced to the reader as רכות, "weak," and her status as firstborn has not brought her any strength or power. Marcus says "the function of deception in the Bible has been explained as a narrative technique to reveal character, add humor or create suspense, or in a military context, help the weaker party in conflict."[81] If deceit is the weapon of the weaker against the stronger, it may be the method Leah uses here.

At this point Rachel may have faith in the mandrakes as a solution, but not yet in God. Her desire to have a son is so great that it clouds her ability to go to the proper place for help. Once the mandrakes scene ends, the text indicates that Leah bears three more children before Rachel has Joseph. The purpose of this story is far from illustrating the power of the mandrakes. If they were supposed to aid with conception, it still took Rachel

---

[80] Yair Zakovitz, Mikraot B'eretz HaMarot (Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible) (Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd., 1995) 16.
[81] David Marcus, "David the Deceiver and David the Dupe," Prooftexts 6 (1986) : 163.

several years before she conceived, as Joseph is, as listed, born after Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah (30:24), highlighting the inability for, first Jacob (30:1-2), and then the mandrakes, to help her. As indicated in Genesis 30:22, it will be God that finally opens her womb and allows her to have a child.

More important in this scene than the mandrakes they barter for is that this is the first dialogue between the sisters. The conversation vividly etches the bitterness between the two, unloved Leah and barren Rachel. The romantic love Rachel gets from Jacob is not enough to satisfy her desire for children while Leah's ability to have children is not enough to grant her continual accessibility to her husband, nor move beyond her role as the unloved wife.

> [W]hereas men were basically at strife over living space and means of subsistence, women clashed basically over position and status in the community, here it was still in the simple realm of the family but the husband and the birth of children were decisive for them.[82]

Jacob's presence is central to the interaction between these two sisters. Leah wants to have more of Jacob's love and Rachel wants to have more of Jacob's children. The relationship between the two sisters does not move beyond these two desires and there is no indication of what was important to them as sisters before Jacob came into their life. Their relationship in this scene expresses desperation in each woman.

Once Rachel finally does have a child (30:23), Jacob informs Laban of his desire to leave and return to his own homeland (30:25). Because this desire to leave is expressed right after Rachel's childbirth, it seems their lives were on hold until Rachel had a child and Jacob's plans were almost suspended until she gave birth. Furthermore, Rachel had finally turned to God for her barrenness, as the text indicates "God listened to her" in 30:22. Perhaps Jacob could not return to his father's land until both sisters acknowledged his God. Jacob tells both sisters that the departure will not be easy and shares his concern about their father with his wives in 31:4-9. Rachel and Leah have also been victims of their father's deception, starting with the wedding night switch, and continuing with wealth he has denied them, as they state in Genesis 31:14-16. The departure will not be smooth but it

---

[82] Westermann 477.

will be one of the few times the family shares sentiments and acts together.

Jacob's faith in God is revisited and he lets his wives know of his dream that illustrates his connection with God. The God of Jacob's father has been with him as he was promised in 28:10-22. Jacob has not been harmed and he has children "The intended implication is that God has now granted all of Jacob's requests except the safe return to Canaan, and this is now at hand. The story is connected and the vow is woven throughout."[83] It is also notable that Jacob shares this dream with Rachel and Leah. It is an honest, open account that Jacob offers, as well as an acknowledgment that God is aware of Laban's treatment of Jacob.

The sisters' response to Jacob accuses "their father of violating the family laws of their country"[84] by denying them part of the "bride payment normally reserved for the woman as her inalienable dowry."[85] This is the only time that Rachel and Leah are shown by the text cooperate for "they feel that Laban has robbed their children of their rightful inheritance [and] they act with their husband against their father."[86] They air their perspective on Laban's treatment of Jacob and how this has affected them. They also bear witness to the work Jacob has done by saying, כי מכרנו, "he has sold us," (31:15) and they acknowledge Jacob's right to them.[87]

Although the greatest motivation may lie in the desire to protect the rights of their children, this leaving scene demonstrates that, even if only temporarily, the threesome has the ability to act as a family.[88] Jacob displays no favoritism in discussing leaving with his wives and the wives' sentiments express the same concerns of protecting their children. Jacob is also now ready to face the events of his past, shown in his willingness to return to the land of his father. Rachel and Leah also demonstrate a trust in the God of Jacob, since they are willing to support this idea of leaving.

Both Rachel and Leah agree with Jacob about Laban's poor treatment of their

---

[83] Cartledge 173-4.
[84] Speiser 245.
[85] Speiser 245.
[86] Brenner 210.
[87] Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 181.
[88] Brenner 210.

family but it is only Rachel who takes action that returns her to the center of the story.[89] Rachel steals Laban's teraphim (31:19), as they are preparing to leave. Rachel, aware that Jacob may be, "entitled to a specific share in Laban's estate,"[90] knows her father well enough to know he would withhold what his relatives are entitled to.[91] So she sees fit to try and "undo what she regarded as wrong."[92] She may also be taking the idols as a "symbol of fertility which she wished to take with her as an assurance that she would bear another child."[93] This scene also forges another connection between Jacob and Rachel, as both steal in order to ensure personal compensation, whether entitled or not.

Rachel also shows her tendency to react when she seems wronged. In Chapter 30 she feels wronged in her barrenness and reacts first by approaching Jacob and then, offering up Bilhah in her place. In the mandrakes scene too, Rachel takes action to solve her problem. Again, in the stealing Laban's teraphim, Rachel refuses to sit idly by and takes what she feels entitled to. So here too it makes sense that Rachel "secures herself against the injustice done to her," and takes the idols.[94]

Jacob is described as allowing Laban to search the tents by saying anyone found with the idols, לֹא יִחְיֶה, "will not live" followed by a change from Jacob's point of view to the narrative saying, וְלֹא יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל גְּנָבָתַם, "For Jacob did not know Rachel had stolen them." (31:32) The statement shows that Jacob did not know Rachel had stolen the idols. By stating Jacob did not know it is made clear that Jacob would have never made this vow if he knew Rachel had the idols. "The crowning touch of drama and irony is Jacob's total unawareness of the truth - the grim danger implied in his vow assure that the guilty party would be out to death."[95] The power of the vow shown here is reaffirmed in an episode like that of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:30-40), where the warrior Jephthah,

---

[89] Westermann 493.
[90] Speiser 250.
[91] Speiser 250.
[92] Speiser 245.
[93] Claire Gottleib, Varieties of Marriage in the Bible: And Their Analogies in the Ancient World, diss., New York U., 1989 (New York: NYU, 1989) 138.
[94] Westermann, 493.
[95] Speiser 250.

vows that if he is victorious over the Ammonites, "whatever comes of the door of my house" (11:30). When he goes return home in victory, in sadness he sees his daughter, is the first to greet him (11:34-35). Although each vow of death was made for a different reason and one was to God and one was to another human, both scenes have the potential for tragic irony for the most beloved is put unknowingly in peril.

In response to Jacob's vow, Laban goes first into Jacob's tent, and then into Leah's tent, and the two maidservants' tents to look for the idols (Genesis 31:33). In verse 34 we are told Rachel has taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel's saddle. She now sits upon them and tells her father she cannot rise because כי דרך נשים לי ,"the way of women is upon me" (31:35).

The power of Jacob's vow would lose its tragic irony if Leah had been the one hiding the idols, for the drama of losing the most beloved wife is more powerful than losing Leah, who Jacob has never really properly treated anyway. Leah again lives up to her "weak" name in this scene as she, unlike Jacob and Rachel, has no response to her father's accusation against her family. Leah is not even empowered to speak, while Rachel is so empowered that she can speak and even deceive with confidence. Laban's accusation of Jacob elicits the recurring message that even members of the same family cannot trust one another. Laban suspects not only Jacob, but his own daughters. Laban finds nothing and the man who has cheated his own family is tricked by them. The text even serves as, "a gentle mockery, presupposed that Rachel was conscious that she was in the right when she took her father's teraphim."[96] But as much as the relationship between Jacob, Rachel and Leah can be tortured and complex, there is never any mocking of one by another. Rachel may be mocking only her father by hiding the idols under herself, as her father hid the true identity of Jacob's first wife. (29:23)

On the heels of this tense scene with the man who has called Jacob "bone and flesh," his uncle Laban, Jacob is now reunited with the one who truly is his "bone and flesh," his twin brother Esau. In preparing for the reunion with Esau the family's dynamics are clarified. The way Jacob lines up the family to meet his brother shows that the apparent equality of the sisters exhibited in the unified front against Laban was only

[96] Westermann 495.

temporary. In arranging the family to meet Esau "[t]he division into three groups corresponds to the order of rank as in the court ceremonial, even though here it is the family circle."[97] When the family does line up, Jacob, who is worried about the encounter, puts Rachel and Joseph in the most protected place and Joseph is worth mentioning while the other children are not. Jacob's intention of treating his brother Esau like royalty may reflect part of Jacob's constant consciousness of power and rights one merits. This scene shows that Jacob does not seem to recognize consistently that he has obligations to his entire family. Jacob is unable to serve as an unconditional protector of all the members of his family, by arranging his family in a way that is less protective of some members and more protective of those who have the status of most beloved.

Jacob's response to Esau also shows his preoccupation with status. In Jacob's greeting of Esau he bows to the ground seven times while coming closer to his brother while Esau runs to meet him, and embraces him and kisses him (33:4-5).
He greets Esau as one would greet royalty as if trying to elevate the very brother whose birthright he stole.[98] Also, Joseph is the only named child in this scene, reflecting Jacob's narrow perspective of who he loves in his family. It is only Esau who can let go of the past and greet his brother, not with the reminder of his threat to kill him (27:41), but as "one brother would greet another after a long separation."[99] And it is Esau who asks, מִי אֵלֶּה,"Who are all of these?"(33:5) as Esau is able to view all the wives and children as equal, while it is Jacob's treatment that causes the differences in the family.

Just as the reunification with Esau highlights certain characteristics of the relationship, Jacob's reaction to the rape of Dinah serves the same purpose. The relationship among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah does not take place in a vacuum and interactions with characters outside the relationship can provide insight to attitudes within the relationship. For example, although Leah does not appear in the story of the rape of Dinah (34:1-31), Jacob's reaction to the rape clearly provides further insight to the relationship between Jacob and Leah. When the characters Jacob, Rachel, and Leah are

---

[97] Westermann 525.
[98] Westermann 524.
[99] Westermann 524.

separated, sometimes each of them reveals more about their attitude towards others in the relationship. For example, in the mandrake scene, part of the reason Leah may feel comfortable confronting Rachel about her relationship with Jacob and articulating the pain this has caused her, is because Jacob is absent. Genesis 34, the Rape of Dinah, provides another such opportunity to view the "real Jacob" in the absence, at least it seems according to the story, of his wives. In Jacob's inadequate response to the rape of Leah's daughter, Jacob shows how little he can offer to those children who are not of his beloved wife, Rachel.

Jacob reaction to the rape is ויעקב שמע כי טמא את דינה בתו ובניו היו את מקנהו בשדה והחרש יעקב עד באם, "And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the field; and Jacob kept still until they came"(34:5). The response of Jacob to the Rape of Dinah is "conspicuous by its absence," indicated by 34:5, (חרש) והחרש,"kept still". "In the Bible's usage, this verb often has the pejorative connotations of inertness or neglect." [100] This response indicates no reaction of the senses of Jacob. In sharp contrast, Jacob uses his senses to clearly recognize Joseph's coat in 37:33 and this prompts an emotional response to Joseph's death on his part. This emotional response seems absent in response to his daughter's rape, much as he has never been portrayed as responding emotionally to Leah herself (29:32, 29, 34, 30:16).

Although a rape is clearly not death, it is still a dramatic event and for Jacob lack of reactionary or sensory response is outstanding. This reaction contrasts with King David's response to the rape of Tamar.[101] The text reads, "King David heard all these things and he was very angry (2 Sam 13:21)." Jacob exhibits no such reaction. Even Jacob's own sons react to Dinah's rape, "When they heard the men were grieved and angry" (34:7). Yet Jacob himself has a more powerful reaction to the possibility that he will be held accountable for his sons' actions (34:30) of destruction of Shechem's town than he does to the rape. The text itself acknowledges the inadequacy of Jacob's response to his daughter's ordeal by changing the way she is referred to. Sternberg writes,

---

[100] Sternberg 448; as in 2 Samuel 19:11, Habakkuk 1:13, Esther 4:14.
[101] Sternberg 447.

> The story ends ('our sister') just as it began ('Dinah, the daughter of Leah whom she had borne to Jacob'), with a kinship term referring to the same character. In view of the intervening developments in plot and rhetoric, however, it is no accident that the character thus indicated should take her reference from different kinsmen...[Simeon and Levi] wrest her out of the father's guardianship: she may not be your daughter, but she certainly is 'our sister' and no one will treat her like a whore.[102]

Jacob's favors Rachel and her children and Leah is left with her sons to defend the honor of herself and her children.

The next time either of the wives are named after the rape of Dinah, is when Rachel gives birth to Benjamin along the journey of Jacob's family. It is a difficult labor and Rachel dies in childbirth (35:16-18). Rachel, on the verge of death, is informed that she is giving birth to another son (35:17), fulfillment of the name of the first (31:24).[103] "The child lives, but Rachel pays dearly for her continuing fight with her sister."[104] Rachel's greatest concern, to bear children as her sister has, is more important than any other aspect of her relationship with her sister Leah, and more important than finding peace and satisfaction with the love Jacob feels towards her, with or without children.

With Rachel's death, the story will now focus on the next generation, and the sons of Jacob will experience the struggle among siblings their parents did. But before this begins, in 35:29, Jacob and Esau reunite to bury their father Isaac. The reunification that takes place between Jacob and Esau only highlights further Rachel and Leah's dissatisfaction in their relationships with Jacob and each other. Rachel is concerned with having children and this overrides the satisfaction of being Jacob's beloved and having one child (30:24). Leah continually seeks Jacob's love and is convinced that it has been her sister that has taken her husband away from her (30:15). The attitudes the two sisters have towards each other are totally wrapped in the emotions about Jacob and their duties as his child-bearing wives. Nearly every time these women are given dialogue in the biblical text it is to express one of the above frustrations. (29:32-34, 30:1, 6, 8, 15, 20, 24) This refusal to reconcile is only made more dramatic by the ability of their husband Jacob and

---

[102] Sternberg 474-475.
[103] Westermann 554.
[104] Brenner 210.

his brother to reconcile. Esau, who had sworn to kill Jacob as soon as their father dies (27:41), does the polar opposite and the two brothers come together to bury their father. No favoritism is shown in the description of this second reunion, as Esau is listed first, as he is the firstborn and Jacob is listed second. When Isaac and Ishmael come together to bury Abraham, Isaac is listed first, not Ishmael, the firstborn. (25:9) Jacob's and Esau's reunion for the sake of their father's burial reaffirms the success of their initial reunion.

And once Rachel has died, because Leah's story is connected to Rachel's, Leah does not have a part in the continuing story, and is mentioned only in reference to her children (46:15), or in relation to her burial (49:31). Even in death the sisters are separated, buried in separate places. And their separation may mean the full potential of each is never realized. Rachel does not lose the beauty that distinguished her, as she never achieves old age, instead she dies in childbirth. Perhaps Leah's greatest attributes would have been apparent in old age but the reader will never know because she no longer has a sister to prompt her mentioning.

While Rachel and Leah do not reconnect, perhaps there is a sign of connection finally between Jacob and Leah. Jacob requests to be buried with Leah, along with his parents and grandparents, and in his last words which are his deathbed instruction to his sons, the last name he mentions is that of Leah's (49:31).

The goal of this chapter has been to examine the the significant points along the relationship between Jacob, Rachel and Leah. The future chapters will concentrate on specific elements of this relationship like the jealousy exhibited by one sibling towards another, or the ability of women to narrate their struggles through naming. Jealousy does not end with this story. Barrenness does not cease with Rachel. Leah is not the only unloved woman, and Jacob is not the last deceiver. The lessons learned and the power of the relationship within its contexts is reflected beyond this story. These ideas will be used to analyze the story of Hannah and the story of Ruth.

Chapter 2

As discussed in Chapter One, the significant issues that affect the relationship of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah are alluded to in other parts of Genesis. But the reflections of this relationship are not limited to the book of Genesis. Alter points out that one of the characteristics of biblical narrative is that "more or less the same story seems to be told two or three or more times about different characters..."[105] An issue or idea that is repeated in several biblical books emphasizes its significance. Furthermore, a comparison of the ways different books report similar situations highlight different ways characters react to one another.

Two of those repeated themes are,

> ...the recurrent story of bitter rivalry between a barren, favored wife and a fertile co-wife or concubine. That situation, in turn, suggests another oft-told tale in the Bible, of a women long barren who is vouchsafed a divine promise of progeny, whether by God himself or through a divine messenger or oracle, and who then gives birth to a hero.[106]

It is clear that there is tension and complexity in the relationship among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, even before the time Rachel is identified as barren (Genesis 29:31). But Rachel's barrenness, once raised, influences Rachel's relationship with her husband and her fertile sister. The compelling need for a woman to have children was based on the view of her primary role as a mother.[107] "The first words spoken by God to Adam and Eve were 'Be fruitful and multiply' (1:28)...Thus the ancient Hebrews projected the imperative of fruitfulness back into the very first day on which man was created."[108]

The story of Hannah in 1 Samuel shares specific elements with the Jacob, Rachel, and Leah story. This chapter will analyze the biblical story of Hannah through the lens of those shared elements, particularly the rivalry between co-wives and barrenness. A greater understanding of both stories can be achieved by studying how the characters in each story

---

[105] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 49.
[106] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 49.
[107] Patai 42.
[108] Patai 71.

treat one another and using those comparisons to highlight recurring and unique aspects of the different relationships. A comparison of similar situations that the characters are placed in and how they react to these situations lets the reader gain new perspective on both stories.

In an examination of the timeline of Hannah's story in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel, there are several scenes that serve as clear reminders of the events of the relationship among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. Furthermore, seeing these events in the context of the Hannah story can also help clarify certain elements of the Genesis story itself. There are four separate elements that will be highlighted in the examination of Hannah's story; the relationship with Peninnah; Elkanah's treatment of Hannah; Hannah's vow as a response to her barrenness; and Hannah's song after she has conceived and given birth.

1 Samuel begins with an introduction of Elkanah and recounts his genealogy. In verse 2 Elkanah's co-wives, Hannah and Peninnah are introduced similar to the way Genesis 29:16 introduces Laban and his two daughters, ולו שתי נשים. After mentioning the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh and Eli the priest and his sons who will be significant, later, the text moves to the meal offering the family members receive. The important issues for this section are introduced in this scene; Hannah's barrenness, Peninnah's fertility, and Elkanah's love for Hannah.

The introduction of the issue of bareness is intentionally early in the text ."[T]he information comes in advance of developments rather than in retrospect, focusing attention on the narrative future (in the interests of suspense) rather than the past (with an eye to curiosity or surprise)."[109]

Not only is Hannah barren, but her co-wife, Peninnah, seems to remind her of it, as 1 Samuel 1:6 indicates. Her husband also responds to Hannah's bareness, kinder than Peninnah, by appealing to her and asking in 1 Samuel 1:8 ; למה תבכי ולמה לא תאכלי ולמה ירע לבבך הלוא אנכי טוב לך מעשרה בנים, "Why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Hannah, rather than responding to her husband's questions, takes it upon herself to

[109] Sternberg 310.

offer a vow to God that outlines her intentions to dedicate a male child to God, if she conceives. She says , ונתתיו ליהוה כל ימי חיו ומורה לא יעלה על ראשו, "Then I will give him to God all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head" (1 Samuel 1:11). She makes this vow in a manner that is noted in 1 Samuel 1: 13. וחנה היא מדברת על לבה רק שפתיה נעות וקולה לא ישמע, "And Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard."

In response to her demeanor, Eli accuses Hannah of being drunk. Hannah must explain to him that she is not drunk, but rather, "pouring her soul out to God" (1:15). Eli, without knowing what she has requested from God, tells Hannah that her request will be granted and Hannah returns to her husband, and in time, bears a son, Samuel. When Hannah deems the time appropriate, she brings that son up to Eli the priest, fulfilling her vow that the male child she bears will serve God. The beginning of I Samuel 2 is a song that Hannah offers once she brings the child up to serve God.

Although the story's initial focus is on Elkanah, the text quickly moves to the two co-wives and it is their relationship that will set the scene for Samuel's birth.[110] As a consequence of having children, Peninnah receives enough portions for every single son and daughter (1:4), whereas, Hannah receives just one portion. This clarification of who receives what at the meal serves as a tangible reminder for Hannah that no matter how beloved she is, because she is barren, her portion will be one alone, until she can have children.[111]

The wife who is barren and beloved is immediately associated with Rachel. The introduction of theses two states, being beloved and being barren, that are introduced so early on, also signal to the reader that, like Rachel, the state of bareness will change. All the more so, the child that evidences the end of barrenness will be important to the story in their own right. In both cases, Rachel's and Hannah's, this is the case.[112]

But in spite of the early connection with the situation of Rachel that seems evident,

---

110 Lyle M. Eslinger, Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1-12 (Decatur, Ga.: Almond Press, 1985) 66-67.
111 Eslinger 71.
112 Cartledge 187.

the connection with Leah, found in Hannah's rival co-wife, is not as dramatic. This is because Elkanah does not display an imbalanced favoritism that causes lifelong pain for the unfavored wife, highlighting Leah's poor treatment at Jacob's. Even indications that Elkanah shows favoritism towards Hannah are not definitive.

For example, the portion that Elkanah gives Hannah is described as מנה אחת אפים (1:5). It is unclear if the portion is significant for it size being greater than expected or if it is just the solitary portion given to Hannah that she merits as a wife alone and without children.[113] The question is raised, "Did Elkanah give Hannah *only one portion* because she had no child, although he loved her; or did he give her the *best portion* because he loves her, although she had no child? The MT and LXX suggest the first."[114] Whatever the answer to this question is, Peninnah herself also received portions and more in number that Hannah because she has children (1:4). Elkanah has good relations with this wife Peninnah that he feeds her fairly and that the text calls her אשתו, "his wife "(1:4), emphasizing the relationship between them.[115] The parallel between Rachel and Hannah does not transfer easily to Leah and Peninnah, as the second wives in both cases, because Peninnah seems to receive fair treatment from her husband and lodges no complaints against him.

In addition to the serving of portions that reminds Hannah of her barrenness, verse 6 describes Peninnah taunting of Hannah because of her situation. Clearly Peninnah is so comfortable with her role in the household that she feels free to taunt Hannah about her inability to have children (1:6). "The motif of female rivalry is intertwined with the motif of motherhood in the story of Hannah and Peninnah.. It is rare to find a biblical narrative presenting mutually supportive mothers."[116] The intensity of this rivalry is demonstrated in the words used to describe the tension between the co-wives in verses 6 and 7. Peninnah is identified as צרתה. The verb form of this is used in Leviticus 18:18, לצרר

---

113 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1982) 28.
114 Callaway 45.
115 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 28.
116 Esther Fuchs, "Who is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism." Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1985) 131.

ואל אחתה לא תקח,"Neither shall you take a wife to her sister as her rival..." Like Rachel and Leah, true sisters, who are married to the same man, the relationship between Hannah and Peninnah reflects the tension that could be found between rival co-wives that are sisters. Also significant is the use of the root כעס three times in verses 6 and 7. The use of צר and כעס, "seem to echo some of the psalms of individual lament, in which the חסיד cries out to Yahweh in distress."[117] These words show the harsh nature of Peninnah's taunts. The nature of the fertile wife's treatment of the barren wife is unique to 1 Samuel 1.

In Rachel and Leah's case, the jealousy and pain of each wife is provoked more by Jacob's treatment of the wife than anything that the sisters have done directly to one another. "In the stories of the conflict between Sarah and Hagar and between Rachel and Leah, the beloved but barren wife was not the victim of her child bearing rival."[118] Even when Rachel and Leah name some of their children with the intention of expressing the frustration they feel towards the other sister, the naming was probably done in private.[119] Furthermore, the treatment of Hagar and Leah cast them as "the object of the reader's sympathies."[120] There is no such sympathy for Peninnah.

Hannah, along with being barren like Rachel, is loved by her husband, אהב (1:5). But unlike Leah, Hannah's rival co-wife, is not identified as שנואה. The the serving of food may be an indicator of the fair treatment of Peninnah as she is given in the serving of portions (1:4). "Elkanah gives portions of the sacrifice first to Peninnah and to al her sons and daughters. To Hannah he givers only one portion 'for though beloved Hannah, Yahweh had sealed her womb'. Elkanah is fair in his dealings with his wife..."[121] The fair treatment Peninnah receives seems much less traumatic than the treatment Leah receives from her husband, Jacob. Among other things that indicate the poor treatment Leah

---

[117] Callaway 46.
[118] Callaway 41.
[119] Vos 163.
[120] Callaway 41.
[121] Eslinger 71.

received, is the bargaining Leah has to do to acquire access to her husband with the mandrake scene in Genesis 30:14-16; or the lack of reaction Jacob offers to the rape of Leah's daughter Dinah; or the names of her first three children that express the hope that Jacob's attitude towards her will change for the better (Genesis 29:32-24).[122] Similar assumptions cannot be made about Peninnah. Peninnah never complains about Elkanah's treatment of her like Leah does. But the minimal insight offered to Peninnah's nature does not paint her in a very positive light. Perhaps because of her unsympathetic response to Hannah's plight, in spite of the fair treatment she receives from her husband, her character is not fully developed.[123]

Although Peninnah has an effect on Hannah by reminding her of her misery (1 Samuel 1:6), the "confrontation" of Hannah and Peninnah is not "allowed to develop into a scene; that is why Peninnah's nasty remarks are alluded to, not quoted, and why Hannah weeps and does not eat, but does not say anything either."[124] This contrasts with Rachel and Leah, whose relationship needs both sisters to sustain. As discussed above, once Rachel dies, Leah actions are no longer noted by the text. Even though their husbands treats them differently, the text views Rachel and Leah both essential to sustain the story. But in Hannah's case, the indicated tension continue even after the interactions with Peninnah are no longer mentioned. So if the relationship with Peninnah is not needed to continue the story of Hannah, it is now the relationship with Elkanah that is developed

Because the primary, "aspiration which informs these women's being as delineated by the narratives, is biological motherhood and its benefits,"[125] the interaction of the barren woman with her husband is important in fulfilling this aspiration.[126] The husbands of Rachel and Hannah both engage in a dialogue inspired by their barren wife's agitated state. Perhaps by talking with their wives barren states, each one is acknowledging his wife's feeling about her situation.

---

122 Nehama Aschkenasy, Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986) 84.
123 Jacob Licht, Storytelling in the Bible (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986) 114.
124 Licht 114.
125 Brenner 212.
126 Brenner 212.

While Jacob and Elkanah are connected in their capacity to respond to their wife's plight, Jacob's response is the less sympathetic of the two. When Rachel declares herself on the verge of death because of her barrenness (Genesis 30:1), Jacob replies with what is understood as an angry response.

Elkanah's response, on the other hand, seems more gentle than Jacob's. No anger is indicated and he attempts to console Hannah with the promise of security he offers to her. He expects this promise is great enough to replace Hannah's desire for a child (1 Samuel 1:8). "Elkanah's threefold repetition of למה, "why," stresses that in terms of their marriage she has nothing to worry about."[127] But if Elkanah and his clearly expressed love for Hannah had been enough for Hannah, she wouldn't be weeping and crying. Elkanah's inadequate response is noted by Fuchs, as one reaction along a continuum of barrenness stories that begin with birth of Isaac. Fuchs point out that the husband's role in dealing with his wife's barrenness becomes continually decreased over the course of the bible, with Hannah, as a later barrenness story, as "the incontestable heroine," whose husband demonstrates a "lack of insight"[128] to her plight.[129]

Upon initial comparison to Elkanah, Jacob's response to Rachel in Genesis 30:2, may seem unsympathetic. But further comparison shows Jacob's response as a true understanding of what Rachel wants, children. He acknowledges that Rachel lacks פרי בטן, "fruit of the womb," as well as the limits of his own power to determine her ability to bear children. Jacob is clearly acknowledging an understanding of what Rachel wants and needs while Elkanah is trying to offer himself as a substitute for Hannah's true desire.

The second man that Hannah interacts with, Eli the priest, also gives an inadequate response to her plight. "Hannah is is in distress but Eli offers no help. Even when she takes matters into her own hands by making a vow, Eli mistakes her for a drunken woman."[130] And after Hannah explains to Eli that she was not drunk but pouring out her thoughts to God (1 Samuel 1:15), Eli quickly answers that her petition will be answered,

---

127 Eslinger 75.
128 Fuchs 126,
129 Fuchs 126,
130 Cartledge 192.

when he has no idea what that petition of hers is about.[131]

In spite of the different responses these women get, both Rachel and Hannah move on to their own self-motivated attempts to remedy their barrenness. Rachel's temporary solution of using Bilhah may be partly motivated by her husband response that recognizes the specific need for having children. Hannah, meanwhile, does not offer a direct response to her husband's question[132] and seems to humor him by eating in verse 9.[133] Then, "Hannah circumvents the authority of both Elkanah and Eli by making a vow to Yahweh on her own initiative."[134]

Hannah's vow is made independently of her husband, who seems not to understand her plight, as his earlier response indicates (1:8). On a more positive note, Hannah's actions may be an "indication of a good matrimonial relationship and of Elkanah's respect for Hannah's piety...Hannah may have known her husband so well as to realize that he respected her wishes and judgments in this respect."[135] Her husband, to whatever degree he understands her plight, is willing to let his wife control matters. This attitude of Elkanah recurs later in story when Elkanah allows Hannah to decide when it is time bring Samuel to Eli (1:23). This caring, if inadequate, response is in contrast to Jacob's response to Rachel. Besides being angry, Jacob's response also mocks Rachel's understanding of God (Genesis 30:2). He assumes her understanding of God is so limited that she has thought she could go to Jacob in God's place. Sadly, Jacob is correct to some degree. Rachel's own attempt to use her handmaid, the mandrakes, and perhaps even her father's idols to aid in her own fertility further clarify the piousness of the actions Hannah is able to take in her attempts at communication with God and the promise she makes to God directly.[136]

Because the text notes that both these women were loved, the husband's response, whether angry or not, inadequate or not, reflects the husband's attitude that children are not

---

131 Fuchs 126.
132 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 83.
133 Eslinger 76.
134 Fuchs 125.
135 Vos 153.
136 Vos 152.

necessary for the wife to maintain that beloved status. Aschkenasy views Elkanah's action in a favorable light, as a husband who adds, "an egalitarian, non-patriarchal; tone to the story [by viewing]...himself as the loving partner whose duty it is to make his wife happy, He does not define his relationship with his wife in terms of her familial or sexual duties, but in terms of his contribution to her contentment."[137]

The nature of the response of men to the plight of barrenness in the case of Rachel and Hannah seems to serve two purposes. One is to highlight the true determining power of barrenness and fertility that lies in God. "Physical appearance or prowess and social status do not begin to assume the importance they enjoy in epic and saga, romance and novel of manners, Both are not only bestowed by God but also subject to neutralization or reversal at will."[138]

Secondly, the responses of the two husbands, Jacob and Elkanah, demonstrate that any amount of love from a husband cannot replace even the most beloved wife's desire for children. "While Hannah, like the other mothers, is barren, her desire for a child is expressed more fully and deeply than in the other narratives. The only matriarch whose intense longing for a child was expressed in the narrative is Rachel (30:1)."[139] The only one who can appreciate these longings and desires is the barren mother herself.

While the response of the barren woman's co-wife and husband are significant in shaping the narrative, the barren woman's response to her own plight is dramatic itself and "...women like Rachel and Hannah ... almost [undergo] character transformation when gripped by the misery of barrenness."[140] God was regarded as the one who controls barrenness, as Sarai indicates in Genesis 16:2.[141] "It was thought to be relieved by the mercy of God in response to prayer, either by the barren woman herself or by someone else on her behalf."[142]

---

[137] Aschkenasy 12-13.
[138] Sternberg 327.
[139] Callaway 41.
[140] Aschkenasy 81.
[141] Patai, 74.
[142] Leila L. Bronner, From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 88.

In comparing the events of the relationship that develops among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah and the story of Hannah and the birth of Samuel, the most obvious comparison comes in the connection shared by Hannah and Rachel. Both women are beloved and barren and how both of their stories unfold is part of "the birth of a hero" paradigm which tells how a hero is born despite earlier difficulties in conceiving.[143] As barren wives whose fate can only be changed by God, their quest for a solution is touching and the meaning of the children to them is made greater by the dramatic life their children (i.e. Samuel and Joseph) will lead.[144]

But Hannah's story is also different from other biblical stories and;

> ...two characteristics of Hannah stand out. First, the motif of Hannah as a victim of deprivation and humiliation, which is accomplished through Peninnah's material, and secondly, the motif of Hannah as faithful and pious, which is woven through the first two chapters.[145]

This faith is demonstrated in Hannah's actions. Unlike other barren woman, Hannah goes directly to God regarding her plight and so the reader "is being allowed to share the narrator's knowledge that, ironically, Hannah is seeking help from exactly the right source."[146] Her barrenness has caused her sorrow and for her it seems an issue worthy of being brought to God's attention.[147]

It is unclear whether Hannah's ability to offer this vow was because Elkanah had a "respect for Hannah's piety," or if Hannah was independent in the ritual sphere and in life in general.[148] Numbers 30:4 indicates that women did have the ability to, "undertake on their own initiative binding obligations of a religious nature." But the ability of a woman to make a vow was not unconditional, and a woman's vow could be annulled by her father or

---

[143] Brenner 205.
[144] Brenner 204-205.
[145] Callaway 42.
[146] Elsinger 77.
[147] Vos 152.
[148] Vos 153.

her husband.[149]

Although there may have been limitations set for the women's vows, Hannah does not seem to feel restricted by the essence of Numbers 30:4 and exhibits total control over the offering of the vow and the timing of its fulfillment. "The text implies support for her initiative by pointing out that Elkanah fails to understand his wife's misery (1 Samuel 1:8) and by satirizing Eli as an obtuse old man who misinterprets Hannah's chagrin for drunkenness."[150] And as 1 Samuel 1:22-24 indicates, Hannah, not Elkanah, will decide when it is time for the vow to be fulfilled by bringing the child to Eli the priest. "At no point is any question raised as to her right to make her own vow to Yahweh regarding this child, and to carry it out."[151]

Yet Rachel takes a different approach to her situation. In response to her barrenness, Rachel connects her attempts to understand and eventually remedy her situation with power found in other human beings, not in God. She envies her sister (Genesis 30:1) and reveals her feelings to Jacob, whose angry response reveals her misunderstanding about who to approach (30:2). Even the solution of her handmaid, Bilhah, that Rachel offers in Genesis 30:4 is using people to remedy her barrenness. When Bilhah does give birth to a son, the response contains the same root that will be connected to Samuel's name, שמע, declaring דנני אלהים וגם שמע בקלי ויתן לי בן, "God has judged me and also heard my voice, and has given me a son" (30:6). But Rachel's declaration seems empty as compared to Hannah's. She has not spoken with God up until this point, using only humans to remedy her situation, so there was nothing for God to hear from her. Furthermore, if God had actually heard her, she could have conceived and this only happens in Genesis 30:22, וישמע אליה אלהים, "God heard her," in regards to the birth of Joseph.

Hannah's connection with Rachel seems lessened at this point because of the

---

[149] Phyllis A.Bird, Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1997) 30.
[150] Fuchs 125.
[151] David Jobling, "Ruth Finds a Home: Canon, Politics, Method," The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Klines (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 129.

different paths they have taken to remedy their barrenness. On the other hand, at this point, echoes of the way Leah has handled her relationship with Jacob, are also in Hannah's response. Leah experiences her own kind of barrenness, not of children, but of love from her husband. Both Hannah and Leah label their situation as עני, "affliction," suggesting an affliction or oppression beyond their control that they experience. Leah's עני is certainly not barrenness, as she articulates the term after the birth of her first son, כי ראה יהוה בעניי כי עתה יאהבני אישי , "Surely God has looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me" (29:32). Leah's second son is called Simeon, reflecting the root of שמע (29:33). Using this root is Leah's acknowledgment that God heard of her plight, though it is unclear if this hearing was through the methods of Leah, who may have had the confidence like Hannah, to reveal her sentiments directly to God.

Sadly, Leah's hope that her affliction will be seen and remedied is at the very beginning of her relationship with Jacob. As the names of Leah's children progressively indicate, it will be only God and not Jacob who will hear her. "When Judah comes to the world, Leah ignores her husband altogether and simply thanks God for giving her a fourth son" (29:35).[152] By the time of the mandrakes scene, the affliction is such that Leah must use an interaction with her sister as a way to regain access to the husband who does not love her. But for Hannah, the affliction will be lifted. She will not only have a child but the "emphasis on uniqueness and distinction of the requested child is made even stronger by the way Hannah phrases her vow in terms drawn from Exodus 3:7. "Samuel will be the answer to Hannah's affliction as Moses will be the answer to the Israelite's affliction in Egypt."[153]

Hannah's vow also connects Hannah to Jacob, who made a vow himself in Genesis 28. Hannah's vow is closest to the vow of Jacob because of its similar structure, its beginning with אם, and its conditional in nature in that the vow can only be fulfilled if God provides what the vowing person asks for.[154] Furthermore, each vow contains an act

---

[152] Aschkenasy 85.
[153] Eslinger 77.
[154] Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 29.

connected with sanctification. Jacob sanctifies the ground with a pillar and oil (Genesis 28:18). And Hannah offers to devote her son to serve God in her vow.[155] "The vow is a believable, heartfelt prayer of a woman in distress whose apparent brashness is tempered by recurrent expression of reverence and humility. Thus, as with Jacob, the vow serves both to portray the postulant character and to set the stage for the important story to follow."[156]

But the characteristic traits highlighted by the two vows are very different. Jacob's vow in in Genesis 28, "paints a picture of Jacob...[that] expands upon his known distrustful and conniving character,"[157] while the vow of Hannah, "reveals the character of Hannah, who is overflowing with both humility and brashness, both despair and determination."[158] Jacob's vow highlights points about his personality that will later come out in the relationship with Laban's family, like his continual concern with often selfish needs, that alienate or isolate other members of his family.[159] In Hannah's case, by the time of the vow, the relationships have already been established by the narrator, and the vow serves mostly to enhance the development of Hannah's character and portray her in a positive light. "Throughout the exposition she remains a silent, suffering figure, addressed for evil and good by Peninnah and Elkanah respectively; when she herself finally speaks, it will be first to God, a formal mark o f her dignity and destiny."[160]

Sometime after this vow, Hannah has a son (1 Samuel 1:20). Once she fulfills the promise of her vow by bringing her son Samuel to Eli the priest, she prays once again, but this time it is to express her response to the fulfilled vow (1:27-2:1). Hannah's song may have "made use of an existing psalm."[161] The song has a tone of someone speaking after "a national military victory...In the present redactional context the 'I' of the speaker refers to Hannah and the enemies would be those people, like Peninnah, who mock her

---

155 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 29.
156 CartledgeFN, 143.
157 Cartledge 168.
158 Cartledge 192.
159 Cartledge 169.
160 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 83.
161 Vos 155.

sterility and interpreted it as evidence of her impiety."[162] How wrong those who mocked Hannah's impiety were. Hannah knew to approach God, while Rachel , who is never mocked, certainly exhibits what could be construed as impiety. This is shown in Rachel's attempts to use Jacob, Bilhah, and then the mandrakes, to fulfill a desire that is portrayed as largely dependent on the will of God.

If the barren mother's greatest concern is to have a child, one would think that the eventual birth of a child would take away any motivation the barren mother had to be vengeful. But even after the birth..."the fight to ensure the economic status of the son assumes central place...Therefore, the conduct of the women involved should be judged as...an act born out of calculations of power politics rather than mere emotion or similar consideration."[163] Whether politically, economically, or emotionally motivated, the response of both Hannah and Rachel to the birth of their children acknowledges a desire for more. The name of Rachel's first son Joseph expresses the hope for another child (Genesis 30:24). And Hannah's song, whatever its origins, portrays the tensions between Hannah and Peninnah as a battle and Hannah now emerges singing in victory.

After they have a child, both Hannah and Rachel share this desire for more children. "While I Samuel speaks of Hannah as mother of six children (Samuel, plus the five children mentioned in 1 Samuel 2:21), the song itself speaks of a barren woman who has seven children (v.5)."[164] Rachel expresses a similar sentiment in Genesis 30:23-24. In seemingly the same breath she acknowledges God's role in the birth of her son, a moment later she declares, יסף יהוה לי בן אחר,"God will add to me another son" (1 Samuel 1:24). Even her concubine's son gives empowers Rachel to declare, נפתלתי עם אחתי גם יכלתי,"A fateful contest I waged with my sister; yes, and I have prevailed" (Genesis 30:8).

As both stories show, the birth of the child is inadequate both to resolve the tensions between the rival co-wives and inadequate to meet the needs of the barren mother.

---

[162] Ralph W. Klein, Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Samuel (Waco: Word Books, 1983) 15.
[163] Brenner 212.
[164] Klein 14.

Both Rachel and Hannah articulate vengeful responses. In these responses the barren woman, whose situation has been completely reversed, now hopes the fertile wife will have a reversal of fortune and lose her own ability to bear (or even lose the children she already has). The hope is that the one who once had פרי בטן, "fruit of the womb", now becomes as dried and withered like once fertile vines (Isaiah 16:8) and figs that are now in an arid field (Joel 1:12). The hope is expressed in Jeremiah 15:9, ילדת השבעה אמללה. This Jeremiah passage eerily alludes to to both rival wives. Leah has literally borne seven (six sons and one daughter) and Peninnah who has a number of sons and daughters. Hannah, who says ורבת בנים אמללה, "The mother of many is wretched," (1 Samuel 2:5) may being wishing the destruction portrayed in Jeremiah upon her rival wife.

The inspiration for a reversal of status demonstrated by Hannah and Leah may reflect an inspiration traced to the actions of Jacob. Like Jacob, who was able to deprive Esau of what was entitled to him, so the barren wife has the same hopes to deny the fertile wife. And in some ways these beloved and once barren wives succeed. "Peninnah, a mother of many, could be said to languish after the birth of Samuel. She is not mentioned in the book of I Samuel after Chapter 1."[165] And the son of Rachel does overcome his birth order by becoming Jacob's favored son. With Jacob as their model reverser of fortune, both Hannah and Rachel succeed at reversing the initial fate of bareness through the child granted by God.

Hannah herself, "...[who] seems at first very much defined by her family situation as the favored but barren wife; not only finds her trouble but also her eventual reward are within this framework - we last hear of her as the mother of six (2:21)."[166] Sadly, Rachel in her own move from barren to fertile wife, dies in childbirth, never being satisfied in the knowledge that she was Jacob's preferred wife. Rachel and Hannah are alike in this way. "Despite her awareness of Elkanah's love and devotion for her, Hannah is desperate and bitter over barrenness. Deftly and effectively, the Bible presents what it values as something moment themselves value most."[167]

---

165 Klein 17.
166 Jobling, 129.
167 Fuchs 133.

Like the Jacob, Rachel, and Leah story, the main purpose of Hannah's story is to establish the lineage of children, as well as put the story within the framework of the "birth of the hero" paradigm.[168] And also like the Jacob, Rachel, and Leah story, there are many elements to Hannah's story that have no clear bearing on the future and serve to better develop the characters before Samuel's birth. Hannah is the mother of the"hero" that will be borne and, "...though the larger context of this narrative does not require it, the narrator has painstakingly etched a character of great strength and forcefulness."[169] A comparison of Jacob and Elkanah in their respective relationships highlights the power of emotions in the biblical relationships. Jacob and Elkanah both need to be concerned with having heirs. Yet both husbands, because they love their wives, respond with some degree of sensitivity to their wives' barrenness. This comparison also shows that Jacob's treatment of Leah was much more severe than Elkanah's interactions with two wives. Peninnah never complains about the treatment by Elkanah and the interaction with Peninnah in the text, though small, is fair. Another insight is in the complexity of emotions tied to being a barren woman. Rachel and Hannah, are at one point, obsessed with the quest of having a child, and at another point are wishing the painful state of barrenness on their own rivals, once they themselves conceive.

None of these biblical characters are one-dimensional in their own stories. But in comparison with other biblical characters who find themselves in similar situations, the characters can be held accountable or more clearly understood for how they have responded to the same situations. By acknowledging the development of this relationships among Hannah, Elkanah, and Peninnah and using the ideas expressed in the relationship between Jacob, Rachel, and Leah to analyze the events of 1 Samuel, greater insight into both relationships is achieved.

---

168 Brenner 204.
169 Aschkenasy 12.

Chapter 3

There is a strong connection between the stories of Genesis and the Book of Ruth. They share a "realistic psychology... treatment of actual social institutions [and] historicized fiction."[170] Although the circumstances are very different, there are compelling connections between the betrothal types scenes of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, and Boaz, and Ruth. Events that occur in the stories in Genesis and in Ruth highlight how biblical characters react to the the kindness and generosity of individuals and and how female characters in action and in name convey "a complex of narrative elements into a literary motif which may occur in several biblical contexts."[171] As with the story of Hannah, the lens of the relationship between Jacob, Rachel, and Leah will be used to examine the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Ruth is portrayed as being a part of several situations that Rachel and Leah find themselves in over the course of their relationship with Jacob, most importantly a betrothal type-scene and events leading up to marriage. The potential resolution of each obstacle in the course of the Genesis relationships rarely has a successful outcome often because of self-satisfying and jealous impulses. But Ruth, rather than being limited by the relationships she has with Naomi and later develops with Boaz, becomes an active character whose actions lead, "directly to the solution of the stories problems."[172] Ruth serves as the main connector of the relationships in the book of Ruth and has the ability to bring people together. This is as opposed to Jacob who continually drove people apart, at all stages of his life, starting with his parents' house and ending with his childrens' jealousies. There are moments of cooperation among Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, particularly against Laban, but this cooperation is not enduring enough because it rarely goes beyond of personal gain.

Like the Genesis story, the characters in Ruth are not introduced all at once, but over the course of the story. First Naomi and her husband Elimlech leave Bethlehem

---

170 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 34.

171 Claudia Camp, Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs (Decatur, Ga.: Almond Press, 1985) 76.

172 Jon L.Berquist, "Role Dedifferentiation in the Book of Ruth," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 57 (1993) : 35.

because of famine. They go to Moab with their two sons, who marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. The events that will bring Naomi back to Bethlehem center around the loss of her husband and her sons. According to the text, Naomi and the two daughters-in-law start the journey back to Bethlehem together (Ruth 1:6). Along the way, Naomi entreats her daughters to return to their respective households. Naomi thanks Ruth and Orpah for their kindness but knows she can no longer provide them husbands. Ruth stays with Naomi and returns with her to Bethlehem. Once in Bethlehem, Ruth meets Boaz in her attempts to find work to support Naomi and herself. The path of Ruth's life is very similar to Jacob's up until this point.

Before meeting their future mates, the second for Ruth, both Ruth and Jacob belong to families that are torn apart, Jacob's by deception, Ruth's by death. Both travel to a strange lands in the hopes of repairing the damage that has been done to their lives. Finally, both encounter by chance, the person who will be important as a relative and eventually as a spouse.

Boaz will become Ruth's second husband, but her marriage to her first husband Machlon is important more as an establishment of the connection between Ruth and Naomi than a well-developed relationship in itself. Boaz is initially introduced as a member of the family of Elimelech, Naomi's dead husband. The phrase אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִל used to describe Boaz in Ruth 2:1 can refer to his wealth, military prowess (2 Kings 15:20), or good behavior(Judges 6:12), or class.[173] Ruth ends up gleaning in the very fields of the relative of Elimelech and when Boaz sees her, he inquires, לְמִי הַנַּעֲרָה הַזֹּאת, "Whose girl is that?" (Ruth 2: 5). Like Jacob, Boaz watches at work the woman he will later marry. Also like Jacob, Boaz facilitates Ruth's work. Boaz offers her advice, water, and food, like Jacob who rolls the stone from the mouth of the well for Rachel (Genesis 29:10). The actions of Boaz seem generous.[174]

Ruth, with Naomi's urging, hopes to expand the nature of that special treatment to that of a husband for a wife. The move from a kind man watching out for a young woman

---

[173] Edward Jr.Campbell, Anchor Bible: Ruth (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985) 90.

[174] J.M. Sasson, Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 47.

to that of a potential husband is inspired by Ruth's time alone with Boaz on the threshing floor. Like Jacob, and with seemingly less trouble, Boaz marries the woman he has seen at work. They have a child and the parting message of the book of Ruth is that this son is the grandfather of King David. So unlike the story in Genesis, the book of Ruth focuses primarily on events leading up to and immediately after the betrothal.

The initial meeting of Boaz and Ruth that starts the path to eventual betrothal, contains elements that are identified as typical of the biblical betrothal type-scene (see Chapter 1). Ruth is described as נערה, the pair meets in what is, for one of the them, a "foreign land", water-drawing takes place, and a meal is shared.[175] The betrothal type-scene and the portrayal of its results occur in many biblical stories. Adjustments are made for different scenarios and these type-scene characteristics are "both faithfully followed and renewed for the specific needs of the hero under consideration."[176] The betrothal types scenes of the Jacob story and the Ruth story both offered variations on the "convention" and from both men's initial inquiry that connects them to the woman, both scenes do not proceed as would be expected.

In Genesis, the betrothal does not initially lead to the expected results. The woman that Jacob finds himself in the betrothal type-scene with, Rachel, is not the one he will actually marry first. This is a result of the Laban's deception. There are also variations in the betrothal type-scene in Ruth. But in Ruth's case the variations do not suddenly appear on the wedding night. The variations are clear from the moment Ruth and Boaz meet. These variations are based on the fact that in the book of Ruth, the betrothal scene is, "...rotated the betrothal type-scene 180 degrees on the axes of gender and geography."[177] The woman, not the man, is the foreigner in the land of the intended spouse and, the water is drawn by men (Ruth 2:9).[178] Furthermore, it is the woman, not the man, as in Jacob's case, whose presence prompts the idea of marriage, not an independent thought of Boaz's. Until Ruth comes to his bed, Boaz seems to have no intention of marrying Ruth. He

175 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 52.
176 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 58.
177 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 58.
178 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 59.

expresses surprise at Ruth's presence in the night (2:8) and up until this point has addressed Ruth in terms in terms like נערה and daughter that suggest her comparative youth, painting him more as a father figure.[179] So it is not initially clear that this would be a relationship that would lead to marriage between Ruth and Boaz.

Boaz, surprised by Ruth, is still aware of the woman in his presence and asks her to identify herself. [180] But Boaz, in spite of his initial surprise, is able to move quickly to acknowledge her character as a אשת חיל , "a woman of valor," (Ruth 3:11) express concerned for her welfare and reputation, and if necessary will provide for her future. Boaz continues to be engaged in conversation by Ruth, while Jacob, in a similarly surprising situation, will not be as cooperative. Once he discovers the switch that was made, Jacob shows no concern for Leah. Like Boaz, Jacob is surprised in bed by an unexpected woman, Leah, but rather than inquiring about her welfare, he ignores her as a person. He asks Laban מה זאת (Genesis 29:35) and turns the conversation with Laban to the wife Jacob expected, Rachel.

In both cases, the intended groom loses some degree of control over who they will marry. Ruth has a clear hand in enhancing the potential for marriage. Leah's role in her marriage in less clear. But Leah and Ruth are not alone in acting to create these surprise marriages. That control is also greatly affected by a relative, Laban in Genesis and Naomi in Ruth. Laban and Naomi, father and mother-in-law respectively, both attempt to control the betrothal by having the groom marry someone not initially contemplated as a bride. Both Laban and Naomi say the marriage is not for their own benefit but the benefit of the daughter and daughter-in-law respectively. Both introduce their intentions with a rhetorical question.[181] And both make sure that the woman is presented only after the intended bridegroom has had food and drink. But from this point on, the relatives differ from each other and only Naomi truly is concerned for the welfare of her daughter-in-law above herself.

---

179 Campbell 116.
180 Campbell 122.
181 Campbell 116.

Laban's rhetorical question to Jacob טוב תתי אתה לך מתתי אתה לאיש אחר, "It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man," (29:19) seems to have the intention of assuring Jacob that it makes absolute sense for Laban to offer his daughter to Jacob, and even in Jacob's best interest. In fact Laban does not truly stand behind the intentions of his question. By initially preventing the cousin marriage, Laban does create the threat for an outsider to marry Rachel, instead of a cousin.

Naomi's own intentions for the marriage are also expressed in a rhetorical question to Ruth. Ruth 3:1 reads בתי הלא אבקש לך מנוח אשר ייטב לך, "My daughter, shall I not seek a home for you, that it may be well with you?" But Naomi's rhetorical questions, unlike Laban's, seems to express genuine heartfelt concern. Her actions consistently indicate that the welfare of Ruth is very important to her. Naomi contemplates not only the immediate survival of herself and her daughter-in-law, but suggests a true rest for this hardworking woman with the use of the term מנוח and the creation of a better, more secure future.[182] מנוח seems to indicate a rest for the most weary, as in Genesis 8:9 with the dove who could not find a place to rest or the punishment of having not place to rest their feet that will come upon the children of Israel if they do not follow the words of Torah (Deuteronomy 28:65). Naomi's concern for Ruth both acknowledges the long journey both women have taken and the desire for security she wants to find for her daughter-in-law. The intentions of the controlling relative, negative in Laban's case and positive in Naomi's case, affect not only the origins of the relationship between each couple but will have bearing on the future treatment of the husbands towards their wives.

Naomi's kindness only makes the actions of Laban seem more abusive. With Laban's treatment as a model, Jacob ends up treating Laban's daughter with indifference and even contempt, perhaps partly in response to the way Laban has used Leah as a pawn to advance his own gain. Even the way Leah is brought into Jacob, ויקח את לאה בתו ויבא אתה אליו ויבא אליה, "He took his daughter Leah and brought her to him" (Genesis 29:23), shows an absolute lack of confidence or recognition of the abilities of

---

[182] Jon L.Berquist, "Role Dedifferentiation in the Book of Ruth," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 57 (1993): 31.

Leah as a person in her own right. To Laban, she is merely a method to achieve his means and to Jacob she will be a reminder of Laban's treatment. Because of the way Leah has been brought into his life and her own father's treatment of her , she elicits from Jacob a reaction of "what is this" in Genesis 29:25.

This response to Leah's presence stands in sharp contrast to the מי את, "Who are you?" that Ruth's presence elicits from Boaz in Ruth 3:9. While Jacob's question in response to Leah's presence expresses no concern for her or curiosity about her intentions, Boaz is specifically interested in Ruth and her story. This is the second time he has asked her identity, the first time when she was working in his fields in Ruth 2:5.[183] And Boaz has a model for the fine treatment of Ruth found in the clear concern for her daughter-in-law Naomi herself demonstrates. Jacob never seems to move beyond Laban's own treatment of Leah, as Leah's expression of frustrations will continually indicate an absence of love in the relationship.

In comparison with Jacob, Boaz's actions seem kind and caring but there are also several indications that Boaz's actions may not have been totally selfless. Ruth has identified Boaz as a redeeming kinsman in Ruth 3:9. Naomi in words and Ruth in action have recognized Boaz's ability to serve as a husband for Ruth and provide for a secure future. But in Ruth 3:12 Boaz states, כי אמנם כי אם גאל אנכי וגם יש גאל קרוב ממני, "But while it is true I am a redeeming kinsman, there is another redeemer closer than I." It is unclear if his intentions are to explain why he has not taken Ruth as his wife up until this point[184] or an expression of reluctance at the idea of taking on the role of redeemer.[185] Boaz's attempts to conceal Ruth's departure may also illustrate attempts to distance himself from Ruth.

In Ruth 3:14, Ruth needs to leave in secrecy and Boaz addresses her only as האשה, "the woman". "Content and form merge to signal the dissolution of intimacy and

---

183 Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth," Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis. Vol. 2. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982) 178.

184 Trible 179.

185 Berquist 33.

the departure of Ruth...."[186] Finally, it is Ruth, not Boaz, who understands the importance in expressing concern not only for Ruth's fate, but for Naomi's fate as well. When Ruth returns to Naomi to report on what has happened, she amends Boaz's departing words to her with אל תבואי ריקם אל חמותך, "Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed," (Ruth 3:17) and with these words adds a greater degree of compassion to Boaz's words than he himself expressed.[187]

This scene between Boaz and Ruth not only reflects the marriage between Jacob and Leah, it also provides insight to another scene between Jacob and Leah, the access Leah acquires to Jacob through bartering mandrakes with Rachel in 30:14-16. The straightforward behavior both Leah and Ruth use to acquire access to a man are illustrated in both of these scenes, through the actions of the "aggressive sexual women"[188] of the Bible. "These are woman who...use indirect methods of "subtleties, indirection, and even trickery to effect some purpose when they would otherwise have been stymied by their lack of authority of position."[189] The approaches these women use have a powerful affect and although the, "action [is] taken by the woman is done without any instruction or aid from Yahweh and yet nonetheless serves to effect the deity's purpose."[190]

When Ruth goes to Boaz in the middle of the night, she is controlling the action with a man who would normally have power over her, a position reflective of many women's political and social reality at the time.[191] Boaz is her overseer and it is his land that provides sustenance for her and Naomi. Her future security, Naomi believes, is also tied to Boaz (3:1-2). Yet its is Ruth who decides to sneak into his bed.[192] "[T]here are many biblical examples of women using subtleties, indirection, and even trickery to effect some purpose when they would otherwise have been stymied by their lack of authority or

---

186 Trible 180.
187 Frederic W. Bush, Word Biblical Commentary: Ruth, Esther (Waco: Word Books, 1996) 147-148.
188 Camp 133.
189 Camp 132-133.
190 Camp 133.
191 Fuchs 137.
192 Trible 178.

position."[193] The text does not seem to punish these women for their use of trickery (while Jacob does seem to suffer to some degree for what he has done to Laban, as Laban's reminder of the not marrying the younger before the older seems to indicate).[194] Ruth's action highlights the ability for women, whatever negative associations there were with aggressive sexual behavior, to "suggest that less-priveleged and under-protected members of society may use any means available to claim what is rightfully theirs."[195]

Ruth's behavior also reemphasizes the ability of Leah to use whatever forum she can to advocate for her own position. Like Ruth and other "aggressive sexual women"[196] in the Bible, Leah goes to great lengths to survive and even thrive. The names of her first three children are all Leah's forum expressing things missing from the husband, particularly love and companionship. (Genesis 29:32-34). And almost like a renewal of vows, the contact between Jacob and Leah prompted by the mandrake scene does not end with the one night reward of sexual relations but the birth of several more children to the couple, with Jacob's name now linked in the text to these births.

The intention of the woman's straightforward approach seems nuanced. On the personal level each women pins her hopes on the man she orchestrates the sexual encounter with. Ruth, and also Naomi, have faith in the "permanent solution" to their worries that a wedding with Boaz could ensure.[197] Leah hopes for a renewed relationship in which she will finally be recognized by her husband (30:20). But the text never gives any indication that Leah receives the love or acknowledgement from Jacob she so yearned for. Ruth and Naomi have greater success. "A dangerous and delicate scheme on the part of two women has resulted in kindness and blessing from a man. Not one word of censure does Boaz utter or intimate."[198] Boaz will be willing, if necessary, to take on the role of redeemer. So when the time does arise and the closer relative refuses Ruth (Ruth 4:6), Boaz acquires Ruth as his wife, along with the land of Elimelech (4:10).

---

193 Camp 132.
194 Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 177.
195 Camp 137.
196 Camp 132-133.
197 Berquist 31.
198 Trible 179.

Beyond personal benefit, these episodes of betrothal and marriage serve to highlight a biblical lesson. These stories are not "...only those of personal gain but are...concerned with larger issues of social justice and social order."[199] The episode between Ruth and Boaz also, "points to an essential content of the Torah. Its central characters are literally the poor the widow the stranger those whom the Torah calls us to care for, continually reminding us that our care should arise from empathy."[200] Leah's articulation, in the mandrake scene, of the lack of contact she has had with Jacob highlights the obligation a husband has to fulfill marital relations with all wives.[201] "These stories advocate for the disenfranchised members of the community...," like Ruth, Naomi, and Leah and "the strengthening of family unity and hence, both actually and symbolically, of the whole community social structure."[202] And the shared message between these stories is the power of God's to determine the future of the Israelites and the power beyond any single person to disturb the greater destiny of God's intentions.[203] In this vein, Ruth can be the grandmother of King David and the neglected Leah can have God's destiny guarantee her the honor of being the mother of Judah from who the line of King David will descend.

Sadly, although God's message is conveyed to the greater audience in both cases, it seems to be lost on Jacob. Jacob will exhibit the same disregard and favoritism towards his sons that cause so much pain to his wife Leah. Meanwhile, Boaz comes across as even more righteous. Unlike Jacob who has shirked obligations, Boaz will go out of his way to take on the obligation made to Ruth in Ruth 3.

The next place to examine the relationships of Genesis and Ruth side by side is with Ruth's wedding blessing where Rachel, Leah, and perhaps even Jacob are referred to by name. The wedding blessing reads:

ויאמרו כל העם אשר בשער והזקנים עדים יתן יהוה את האשה הבאה
אל ביתך כרחל וכלאה אשר בנו שתיהם את בית ישראל ועשה

199 Camp 143.
200 Judith A. Kates, "Women at the Center: Ruth and Shavuot," Reading Ruth, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 198.
201 Patai 44.
202 Camp 136.
203 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 60.

> וכל העם אשר בשער והזקנים עדים יתן יהוה את האשה הבאה אל ביתך כרחל וכלאה אשר בנו שתים את בית ישראל ועשה חיל באפרתה וקרא שם בבית לחם ויהי ביתך כבית פרץ אשר ילדה תמר ליהודה מן הזרע אשר יתן יהוה לך מן הנערה הזאת
> And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, 'We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, who both built the house of Israel. May you prosper in Efrata, and be famous in Bethlehem. And may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give you of this young woman.' (Ruth 4:11-12)

The mentioning of these characters from Genesis is an incentive to the reader to examine the links set up by such a comparison.[204]

The townspeople's expression of hope that Ruth will be like Rachel and Leah is interesting in light of the content and symbolism connected with the life of Rachel and Leah. Initially it may seem puzzling to bless someone with a wish that they be like these sisters, one obsessed with barrenness and one virtually ignored by her husband. But there are elements associated with the lives of Rachel and Leah that make such a comparison meaningful.

One of the first issues modern commentators address in an analysis of the blessing is the order of the sisters. Because favoritism and tension are a large part of the relationship between Rachel and Leah, even the order of their names in a verse is seen to have great meaning.[205] Different theories seem to find honor in being placed both in the first or second position. Rachel could be considered honored with being first because of her strong connection to Ruth as someone who has taken many years to bear children.[206] Or "[s]ince Leah was the mother of Judah, hence ultimately the progenitress of Boaz and David, it might be that she was accorded the second slot precisely because the remaining portion of the blessing are concerned with Leah's descendants and not those of Rachel."[207] And if it being second does indicate the more exalted position being given to Leah, this reinforces the notion that the one favored by man is not always the one necessarily favored by God. Perhaps Ruth 4:11 is intended to have an equalizing effect on the reader's

---

[204] Ellen Van Wolde, "Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the the Ruth and Tamar Narratives," Biblical Interpretation 5.1 (1997) 17.
[205] Campbell 153, Sasson 154.
[206] Chamesh Megillot, (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1973) 32.
[207] Sasson 154, Chamesh Megillot 32.

perception of the legacy of Rachel and Leah, with references that make connections to both.

This attempt at equality in the blessing is also suggested in the mention of Efrata and Perez. Efrata is a place on the way to where Rachel was buried in Genesis 35:16. It is also located in territory of Benjamin, so Rachel's connection continues later on in the blessing. Meanwhile, Leah is connected to Perez, also named later in the blessing, because she is his grandmother. Along with his wives, Jacob himself may be alluded to in this blessing.

> In view of the mention of the household associated with Judah and Perez (verse 12), it may be that Yisrael is also to be taken as the covenental name of Jacob, rather than those of a nation. That the Targum understood it as such is clear from its addition, 'our father,' after the mention of this name.[208]

But beyond speculation as to the significance of name order, the greatest intention of the blessing and the specific referral to Rachel and Leah seems to embody a hope for children.[209] This blessing has at its essence a wish for fertility and offspring. This concern for Ruth's fertility, especially since she did not conceive during her ten years of marriage to Machlon (1:4), seems a more likely reason for the prayer than the desire for various elements of the life of Jacob's wives, to be played out in Ruth's own life. For many of the issues that colored the life of Rachel and Leah went unresolved. Rachel died in childbirth in her quest to bear multiple children like her sister. And Leah never received the love or acknowledgement form Jacob that she so craved. Of course Naomi and Ruth have known pain in their own lives, in the loss of their husbands and their continual pursuit of survival.

The expression of Naomi and Ruth's own pain is expressed in a theme of moving from emptiness to fullness. In Ruth 1:21, Naomi declared אני מלאה הלכתי וריקם והשיבני יהוה, "I went away full and God has brought me back empty." Naomi once had sons and wealth and now she has neither.[210] It is Ruth who becomes the key to finding a

---

208 Sasson 154.
209 Bush 241-243.
210 Chamesh Megillot 13.

solution to this emptiness, as Naomi own age and inability to marry and bear children (Ruth 1:11-12) prevents her healing this emptiness. Their emptiness will be assuaged, alluded to first in Boaz's filling of Ruth's dress with grain after the threshing floor encounter (3:15) and then completely with the conception and birth in Ruth 4.[211] "The fertility of Ruth and the fruit of her womb are triumphant rejoinders to the bareness which darkened the first chapter."[212] Even Naomi's emptiness is healed by the birth of Ruth's child and by the love her daughter-in-law has provided her with.[213]

As will be discussed in the Chapter 4, Naomi is very clearly associated with the birth of this child Obed as his nurse (4:16). The women of the town even go as far as to call the child Naomi's. Like other "birth of a hero" paradigms, Ruth and Naomi to some degree are "paired-off mothers" with the odds stacked against them. But not only do Ruth and Naomi overcome these odds, they do so while recreating a family and creating a joyous ending for the book of Ruth.[214]

These women experience their own set of stresses but "because of Ruth's generous and unselfish behavior,"[215] the women are able to unite and beyond merely surviving they "ultimately...[save] the family line from extinction...And...[be an ancestor] of ...King David, [who] will turn out to be a superhero who changes the course of Israelite history."[216] Rachel and Leah do not know such short term peace.

Rachel dies after years of bareness and will not know her second son. Leah complains of about the lack of love on Jacob's part and is not satisfied before she ceases to be mentioned as part of the story. The legacy of their children, not their own lives, (also only after much pain and suffering) sustain the memory of their lives. Brenner is referring to just such a difference between the two books when she writes,

In Genesis and 1 Samuel the paired-off women destined to be

---

211 Aschkenasy 87.
212 D. F. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth," Journal of Biblical Literature 89 (1970): 34.
213 Chamesh Megillot 34.
214 Campbell 168.
215 Brenner 215.
216 Brenner 215.

> heroes' mothers are depicted as maladjusted to their social roles, for they are unable to conform to family needs. Outside these sources, women described as pairs within a related paradigm are different: they are capable of correct social attitudes and social behavior rightly dictated by family priorities.[217]

This blessing may also indicate extra prayers offered in regards to Ruth's ability to bear children. For as the use of הנערה הזאת in verse 12 serves to remind us, "...Boaz is a generation older than his bride and there can be some doubt as to his ability to sire children."[218]

Although this chapter has concentrated on the connection that exists between the Book of Ruth and the relationship between Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, this blessing refers to another episode in Genesis that Ruth's saga is often compared to, the story of Tamar (Genesis 38).[219] As the rest of the wedding blessing indicates this connection is strong enough to make it part of the wedding blessing, ויהי ביתך כבית פרץ אשר ילדה תמר, "May your house be like the house of Perez whom Judah bore to Tamar" (Ruth 4:12). As with Ruth, Tamar is joined in marriage to the family of Judah.[220] When Er, Judah's son and Tamar's husband dies, Judah commands Onan, another son, to marry Tamar. Onan, not wanting Tamar to bear his children, spills his seed and also dies (Genesis 38:6-10). Although Judah tells Tamar he will give her to his son Shelah when he grows up, he does not, out of fear this son will die as well (38:11). Tamar tricks Judah into laying with him by dressing as a prostitute. Judah does not know the encounter was with his daughter-in-law, and three months later, he receives proof that she is carrying his son. The product of this union are the twins Perez and Zerah. In both stories, the women could have been shuttled back to their parents' house as childless widows who end the connection with their husband's family (Ruth 1:8, Genesis 38:11). Instead, both women take measures both to ensure they will remain connected to their original husbands family and even bear children. Both accomplish this by making a surprise visit. The child that results either directly or

---

217 Brenner 220.
218 Campbell 154.
219 Campbell 133, Sasson 232, Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.
220 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.

indirectly from this surprise visit share the same family tree and both are in the ancestry that leads to King David.[221] Both women merit this connection to King David in spite of their deceptive means of establishing this connection. The strong connection between these two stories accentuates that some biblical women take control of their fate by using those around them that could help better their situation . Ruth and Tamar's action also provide insight to the actions of Leah and Rachel.

Leah, the one who has been deprived of a caring husband, does not take action to remedy her situation in the same way Ruth and Tamar do. Even the mandrakes scene, where Leah arranges to be with Jacob without his opinion of the matter, was initially Rachel's idea. It is Rachel that comes up with the plan,that promises Jacob will lie with Leah that night for Leah's son's mandrakes. (Genesis 30:15). And it is Rachel who takes matters into her own hand in the quest to bear children, in the spirit of Ruth and Tamar.

Along with the similarities noted with the story of Judah and Tamar there are characteristics that create a connection between the encounter with Ruth at the threshing floor with the incidence with Lot's daughters (19:30-38).[222] Lot's daughters, having just witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (19:24), think that there are no men left on earth except their father. In their desire to maintain life (19:32), they make their father drunk and then lie with him. One of the products of this union is Moab, father of the Moabites. Like Ruth's story, trickery is used to create a union. Furthermore, Ruth is personally connected to the story of Lot's daughters as she is a Moabitess.[223]

Several of the similarities are also shared with elements of the betrothal and the ensuing drama of Jacob to Rachel, and Leah, and Lot's daughters. In both cases, the situation involved three participants in the events, one man and two women. Actions that effect the course of events happen at night and drinking that precedes the encounter. Finally, the hopes of having children override many sensibilities . In Rachel's case, the desire for children is so great it leads to Rachel's death, and in Lot's daughters case, it

---

221 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.
222 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.
223 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.

leads to incest.[224]

In all four cases (Lot's daughters, Rachel and Leah, Tamar, and Ruth) the circumstances may affect the relationship to some degree in a negative way but God's greater destiny overrides this and "[v]alorous people and praiseworthy God -their living is thoroughly intertwined."[225] Ruth is a Moabitess, with ancestors of the incestuous union between Lot and his daughters. Ruth herself is a stranger and potential outcast in Bethlehem, yet she succeeds in securing a new family and a role in the progeny of King David. And Leah as mother of Judah, and Tamar as tricker of Judah also are established in their connection to the monarchy. With the book of Ruth, all these scenarios converge to accentuate the greater message of God's control.

> As newcomers and foreigners, all members of the founding Hebrew families were required to place the supreme value of communal survival above personal needs. Whoever chose to prefer personal aspirations put the future of the group into jeopardy, which makes God's saving grace in nurturing the community and keeping his promise even more impressive...[226]

Ruth is the one who epitomizes this.

Ruth 4:15 reads כלתך אשר אהבתך ילדתו אשר היא טבה לך משבעה בנים, "He is born of your daughter -in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons." It is the last comment about the character of Ruth and serves as the final reminder of the merit Ruth has achieved. The book of Ruth seems concerned with the quest for companionship and the end of bareness and emptiness. But this final comment reminds the reader that as focused on these issues the book may seem, it should not be forgotten that Ruth is, טבה לך משבעה בנים "better than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15). The number of sons a woman has has been significant in the stories of Rachel and Leah, Hannah and Ruth.

Rachel, in a desire to bear more than one son (Genesis 30:24) dies in childbirth

---

224 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 93.
225 Campbell 169.
226 Brenner 220.

(35:18). Leah twice expresses hope that the specific number of sons she has given birth to will positively affect Jacob's attitude toward her (29:34, 30:20). Hannah's husband tries to assure her that her concern for bearing children should be eased by the presence of a husband who is טוב לך מעשרה בנים, "more devoted to you than ten sons" (1 Samuel 1:8). The number of sons in all these cases is male oriented - the satisfaction is achieved only by a number of sons. But the statement in the Book of Ruth highlights the woman's worth and glorifies her own contributions, above and beyond what were probably expected goals of bearing children.

> The reason given by the text for Ruth's generosity is her love for Naomi, which makes her more valuable for Naomi than any number of male sons (Ruth 4:14-15). It is Ruth's love which preserves the two women together, feeds them and ultimately resolves the problem of the sad plight through the production of a male heir.[227]

Elements that remained unresolved in the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, are resolved in the book of Ruth. Ruth and Naomi respond to the peril they feel their lives may be in by taking matters into their own hands, but unlike Rachel and Leah, they do so with cooperation and without hopes of destruction for the other.[228] Boaz is able to move beyond the concern of being tricked because "...Ruth's deceptive activities lead to a worthy marriage [and] none of the individuals involved in the tale was hurt in the process."[229] Jacob never shows such forgiveness. Both stories share similar situations but only in the book of Ruth do the characters move beyond personal gratification in the to actions that are for the benefit of those around them.[230]

---

227 Brenner 214-215.

228 Athalya Brenner, and Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes, On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1993) 106.

229 Sasson 230.

230 Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 146.

Chapter 4

A study of the words the biblical characters themselves speak provides a more nuanced understanding of the texts of Genesis, 1 Samuel, and Ruth. In the biblical stories, one of the places the characters consistently speak is in relation to the naming of a newborn child. And when the biblical characters do name children, it is an event done by women more than men. Vos notes that of "the 45 cases in which the naming of children is recorded in the Old Testament, in 26 it is ascribed to women, in 14 to men, and in five to God."[231] Several intentions are expressed in the naming of a biblical child.

Almost every single incidence of naming seems more than a response to the birth of the specific child. "Naming-speeches are a special type of direct speech, hovering between interior speech and a vocalized discourse."[232] These speeches become an opportunity to convey emotions inspired by events long before the child's birth and hopes for the future, not just for the child, but for the parents themselves.

Naming speeches can recount significant events, as the murder by Cain is reflected in Eve's naming speech of Seth (Genesis 4:25), or as the discovery of Moses is reflected in his name (Exodus 2:10). They can express the identity of the father, as the names chosen by Lot's daughters do (Genesis 19:37-38). They can reflect the desired name offered by an outside influence, as Ahaz offers (Isaiah 7:14).[233] Or they can reflect the future destiny not only of the parent, but of the entire nation, as God's naming of Hosea's children suggests (Hosea 1:6-9).

As for the naming speeches in Genesis, 1 Samuel, and Ruth, the majority of these naming speeches reflect the nature of the relationships the one doing the naming is involved in. And because the women do nearly all of the naming in these stories, the opportunity to name that Rachel, Leah, Hannah, and Ruth have offers them an opening for the expression of their perspective on their status in light of themself, their husband, the other women in the story, and God. This chapter will examine the content of such naming speeches and how they serve as an another method to examine the relationships these characters are

---

231 Vos 161.

232 Ilana Pardes, Countertraditons in the Bible. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 43.

233 Vos 161.

involved in.

It is not clear from the biblical texts as to why women do the majority of naming of children, independent of their husbands. Vos speculates that the realities of family life in biblical times were such that women were separated from their husbands at childbirth. These realities were influenced by an agriculture-centered life, a father may have been away from the family for long periods of time, and the isolation of the mother, considered unclean, during and after childbirth, all during the time of time of naming.[234]

Whatever the reason that women name children more than men, the biblical narrators found the articulation both of the child's name and of the mother's naming speech significant enough to record. Sometimes the intentions behind the naming speeches were later lost in the future of the story. For example, when Rachel and Leah name their children, it is mostly as a narration of their relationship and what effect each child's birth could have on that relationship, as this chapter will later detail. Yet Genesis 49 is Jacob's articulation of his sons' names. Jacob's rearticulation, or second naming, details what is symbolized in each sons' life in their own right, using agricultural and military terms. Even though the mothers' naming speeches are later subsumed by Genesis 49, and the Jacob cycle's overall goal is of connecting the twelve tribes to Jacob, the initial naming speeches are important enough to report. The parting message of the text's recounting of the twelve tribes, "draws the characters of the tribal ancestors in details and relates them to the future of each tribe."[235] But it does not recount the essence of the naming speeches offered by each mother.[236] And yet for the course of the story, the mother's expressions are very important to the biblical author. [237]

The naming speeches may also provide an important forum for these women to verbalize greater intentions than the explanation of a name.[238] It is in these speeches that women find the rare opportunity to express their emotions, hopes, and desires about the

---

[234] Vos 163.
[235] Callaway 25-26.
[236] Callaway 25-26.
[237] Callaway 25-26.
[238] Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 96.

relationship they are in. These are significant even if the women are "literary personas...[and] constructs created by their authors."[239] For the glimpse of women's worldview in ancient Israel through the words of the various naming speeches, the frequency of women giving these speeches, and the attitudes expressed cannot be ignored.[240] And more often than not, this state is reflected in the relationships with the other family members. As Sternberg states,

> So far as [names] reveal character, the revelation concerns the giver rather than the bearer...The most memorable case in point is the reflection of Leah's ever-frustrated yearning for her husband in and through the naming of her sons (29:31-30:19).[241]

Finally, the naming done by women is significant for the role a mother has in her child's life. The relationships that the mother herself has been a part of may have been in unsatisfactory but the potential for a mother to exert her authority over a child and greatly influence his development may serve as a refuge from her other relationships.[242] This influence, symbolized in the mother's naming speeches, manifests itself in positive and negative ways in the lives of the biblical children. For example, the naming speech for in response to Ruth's son is one of joy and praises God and the kind actions of Ruth, is only mentioned with a positive connotation, as the child that will turn out to be the grandfather of King David. But the jealous tone of the naming speeches of Rachel and Leah, and the way these jealousies played out in Jacob's household, have a detrimental effect on the family. With rival mothers as their models, it is their own jealous sons that make the attempt on Joseph's life.

But whatever the outcome, these naming speeches are important as the opportunity for the expression of the tension they provide for Rachel and Leah.[243] "[T]he focus of the story on the triangle of Rachel-Jacob-Leah indicates another theme which was important to

---

239 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 98.
240 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 98.
241 Sternberg 330-331.
242 Vos 163.
243 Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 179.

the editor. The etymologies of the names makes this clear; the two sisters, not their sons, are the center of the the story."[244] Each naming speech reminds the reader of the centrality of their struggles. These women struggle to express the status of the relationship with the husband and the other sister, with their attitude towards God, and with the emotional state of the mother giving birth.[245] Leah's struggle is based on her need to be loved by her husband, and Rachel's struggle centers around the difficulty she has in bearing children. And these struggles are often expressed in painful terms. In the namings of the children, "the names of eight are directly related to the antagonism between Rachel and Leah."[246]

With the naming of Leah's first four children, (Genesis 29:32-35) the ease in which Leah conceives is clarified. In each of these first four births, the conception, the bearing and Leah's response to the birth come in quick succession , ותהר ותלד ,"she conceived and she bore". Furthermore, the four births come one right after the other in the text. Leah seems to conceive easily, as this sequence suggests.

At the same time that Leah's ease in bearing is shown, the namings that go along with these births also express the difficulties that lie in her relationship with Jacob. One of the wives' primary roles was to bear children, so Leah should be placated by these births.[247] But whatever relief is found in the ease of Leah's bearing is quickly countered by the troubled expression of emotions found behind the name of each child. It is so essential for each child's name to express Leah's attitudes that the literal meaning of the name is not enough. In each case, Leah attaches an enhanced explanation to each child's name.[248]

Leah's first son is name Reuben, literally, "Behold a son." But Leah states he has been named such to express, כי ראה יהוה בעניי כי עתה יאהבני אישי, "For God saw my my suffering and now my husband will love me" (29:32). In the next three births, the explanation is even offered before the son is given a name, as if the content of the

---

244 Callaway 25
245 Pardes 42.
246 Callaway 26.
247 Patai 42.
248 Callaway 26-27.

explanation and what it expresses supersedes the actual moment the child is born. These namings express a continual expectation that Jacob's attitude towards Leah will change, as when Leah says יִלֶּוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלָי, "my husband will be joined to me," (29:34) with the naming speech for Levi's birth. Jacob's name is not mentioned in relation to the birth of his first four sons, while subsequent births note that the wife, וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֵּן, "bore Jacob a son", even those of the handmaids, as well as Leah's later children. The absence of Jacob's name in connection with these births may symbolize the absence of Jacob in Leah's life beyond a sexual presence. Leah acknowledges this alienation, particularly with the birth of her second son, Simeon. She says, כִּי שָׁמַע יְהוָה כִּי שְׂנוּאָה אָנֹכִי וַיִּתֶּן לִי גַּם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן, "Because the Lord has heard that I was hated, he has therefore given me this son also; and she called his name Simeon" (29:33). In this naming, Leah also has the power of naming herself as שְׂנוּאָה.

The intention of שְׂנוּאָה, as discussed in Chapter 1, suggests a legal status of the less favored wife whose firstborn should nevertheless receive what is due to him as the firstborn (Deuteronomy 21:15-16). But Leah's use of שְׂנוּאָה, at this point in time, when there is no other wife's child to threaten the status of her children, may indicate she was truly hated. The opportunity to name her situation as that of a wife hated by her husband becomes so compelling that it is wrapped up with the naming of her second child.

The naming of the next two children suggest that Leah's hopes towards her husband change. With the third son, Leah, "expects the number of sons she has borne to motivate a change in her husband's attitude towards her...", as she states, יִלָּוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי יָלַדְתִּי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים, "my husband will be joined to me for I bore him three sons" (29:34).[249] The hopes embodied in Levi's name express a hope of change on Jacob's part that will remain unfulfilled. The later mandrakes scene will show, not only are Jacob and Leah not joined, they are so separate that she will need to hire him via her sister in order to be with him (30:14).

By the fourth son, there is only praise of God and no mention of Jacob, וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת יְהוָה עַל כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה, "And she conceived

249 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 99.

again, and bore a son; and she said, Now will I praise the Lord; therefore she called his name Judah" (29:35). As God acknowledges Leah by opening her womb, Leah acknowledges God's role in her children's birth with the names. By the time Judah is born, the relationship with God is central to the naming speech, while the hopes of a change in Jacob's attitude have be dropped.[250]

The relationship with Jacob is so unsatisfactory that joy of the births and the hopes for the future of these children are quickly lost in Leah's laments. But in these first four namings, Leah expresses no bitter feelings specifically towards Rachel. It is Rachel who is jealous of her sister for Leah's ability to bear. This is acknowledged both by Rachel's own words and the way the story is told. For, in contrast to the quick succession of Leah's births in the narrative, Rachel's attempts to conceive are spread over several scenes in the story. Before Rachel gives birth she confronts Jacob, barters for the mandrakes, and sees her sister give birth to seven children. Perhaps making it all the more painful for Rachel is that three of Leah's births take place even after after the text notes Leah stopped bearing (29:35). The ease Leah has in bearing highlights the difficulty of Rachel has in bearing, a difficulty that infuses the nature of her own relationship with her husband and her sister (30:1-2).

Even Bilhah, Rachel's initial solution to her bareness, seems to bear quickly thus further emphasizing Rachel's inability to bear ;

> And Bilhah conceived, and bore Jacob a son. And Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and has given me a son; therefore she called his name Dan.. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bore Jacob a second son.And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed; and she called his name Naphtali. (30:5-8).

Rachel's concern with barrenness is also reflected in the nature of her first two naming speeches she offers for Bilhah's children. "The condition of barrenness is implicitly characterized in these naming speeches as an injustice and, explicitly, a disgrace

---

[250] Aschkenasy 85.

and reason for rivalry among women."[251] The naming speeches are so centered around Rachel's reporting of her plight that the second naming speech, for Naphatali, does not even acknowledge the son that has been born, just the battle she has won.

So while for Leah the bettering of the relationship with Jacob was central to her naming speeches Rachel is unconcerned about the nature of the relationship with Jacob. Instead, the relationship Rachel reflects on in the naming is the one with her sister. Rachel's central concern is that she be seen as the victor in the relationship with her sister. Ironically, she is the victor in terms of getting Jacob's love, but this is not enough for the barren Rachel.

> That the rivalry between the sisters is meant to mirror the struggle of Jacob and Esau in the main plot becomes conspicuous in Rachel's speech upon Naphtali's birth...Her speech anticipates Jacob's struggle with the angel, which is inextricably connected with his struggle with Esau.[252]

But just as Leah's naming speeches do not remedy her relationship with Jacob, Rachel's naming speeches do not remedy her barrenness. The irony of the victorious tone of the still barren Rachel's naming speeches about her handmaid's children is not lost on the reader. "This naming speech is more the delusion of a desperate woman, trying to find comfort in the offspring of her maid."[253] It is not the accurate reflection of Rachel's ability to bear. God has not really, as she mythically states, וַיִּתֶּן לִי בֵּן, "Given me a son" (30:6).

The idea that Rachel uses the naming speeches to express her emotions is also intriguing. Unlike Leah, Rachel has been given an opportunity to express concerns elsewhere, as she does in her confrontation with Jacob in the beginning of Genesis 30. And yet even for the beloved Rachel who does remain in close contact with Jacob and has the ability to express emotions to him, the naming speeches are necessary for her. They express her emotions towards her barren state and the sister she envies. Naming speeches are a useful means to communicate perspective, no matter how vocal a woman is in the biblical text, as Rachel's use of the naming speeches demonstrates.

---

251 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 98-99.
252 Pardes 65.
253 Pardes 65.

Following in Rachel's footsteps, Leah now uses her handmaid, Zilpah, to have more children.[254] Although Rachel and Leah both name their handmaids' children and use those children to continue the narration of their relationship, it seems that "the children retain their identities as offspring of their biological mothers. For example, Issachar and Zebulun are listed as Leah's fifth (30:17) and sixth children (30:19) , and not 7th and 8th if Gad and Asher counted."[255] With the naming of Zilpah's children, Leah refers neither to Jacob nor to her quest to have him love or respect her, nor does she refer to any contest with Rachel. She does recognize, however, that the births of their additional sons make her more esteemed among, בנות, "daughters, women" (30:13). Leah has no hopes of being esteemed among the אחות, "sisters", but perhaps women outside the relationship, the בנות, could give her the needed support.[256]

Like the hopes for Jacob's love that are expressed in many of Leah's naming speeches, this hope for other women to sing praises of her may never come to fruition. It is only in the book of Ruth that the scenario that Leah describes is portrayed, when the women offer a blessing in response to Ruth's son and Naomi's grandson (Ruth 4:14).

Leah's maid, Zilphah, like all the women in the story but Rachel, also seems to bear children quickly and easily. Rachel is the only woman who cannot move from her barren state. Even Leah, who had for a time stopped bearing (Genesis 29:35), resumes bearing after the mandrake scene between Rachel and Leah and the namings of Leah's fifth and sixth son are the only times in the text Jacob's name is connected to the birth of Leah's children,

> And God listened to Leah, and she conceived, and bore Jacob the fifth son. And Leah said, God has given me my hire, because I have given my maid to my husband; and she called his name Issachar. And Leah conceived again, and bore Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, God has endowed me with a good dowry; now will my husband live with me, because I have born him six sons; and she called his name Zebulun. (30:17-20).

Although this linking of Jacob's name would seem to show improvement in Leah's

---

254 Jeansonne 76.
255 Jeansonne 135.
256 Jeansonne 76.

relationship with Jacob, the naming speeches about the births themselves indicate otherwise.

Clearly, God listens to Leah's concerns, as Genesis 30:17 indicates, but Jacob does not. Zebulun's name indicates Leah's continuing hope for a change of attitude by Jacob. The עתה or "now " that she continually wishes for never comes. Leah acknowledges God's role in the birth of her children, but it is the hope of love from Jacob that are the final words of her last naming speech. And the birth of the daughter is not afforded a naming speech. Not only is Jacob's name not mentioned in regards to her birth, but Dinah's name can not even bring any new narration to Leah's suffering.

As for Rachel, since three more children are borne between the mandrake scene and the point in the text where Rachel finally conceives (30:23). Rachel probably does not immediately benefit from the mandrakes's properties. It is also significant that the text notes that God is credited with opening Rachel's womb. Up until this time, Rachel had sought help from all other means but God in order to bear – her concubine, to her husband, and to the mandrakes, in her quest for a child.

There is a longer introduction to the birth of Rachel's first son than to any of the other women's children. The text reads, ויזכר אלהים את רחל וישמע אליה אלהים ויפתח את רחמה ותהר ותלד בן "And God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bore a son" (30:22-23). This longer introduction, along with longer description of the painful birth of her son Benjamin, highlight the difficulty Rachel has in conceiving and later birthing, children. In addition, Jacob's name is absent from the birth of Joseph, as was the case with Leah's first four children. But the absence of Jacob's name probably indicates Rachel's focus on bearing children above all else rather than a statement about the absence of Jacob in her life. These long introductions also emphasize the significance both sons will have in the future of the family. The story of the life of Rachel's son will be so important, it will occupy the last thirteen chapters of Genesis.[257] And Rachel's other son, Benjamin, will serve as the character whose role reunites Jacob's family. The long introductions to the birth and naming of these two children directly correspond to the role they will have in the future.

257 Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit 206.

In addition to alluding to the future, the name of Joseph may also allude to the past. Whether intentional or not, Joseph's name contains the root אסף, the root that is used in the scene is the verb (29:3) regarding the gathering of the flocks, immediately preceding the first meeting of Rachel and Jacob. There are two meanings connected to the root of Joseph's name, ויהי ותקרא את שמו יוסף לאמר יסף יהוה לי בן אחר, "God has taken away my reproach. And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son" (30:23-24). It is appropriate that two meanings of this root are reflected in the name because things will be both removed and added because of the birth of these sons. Most important to Rachel is the addition of a biological son whose birth will remove from her the "disgrace of infertility..."[258] But the addition of this son, Joseph, will also add tension. The jealous relationship that develops between Joseph and his brothers grows to such a degree that Joseph's brothers try to remove him from the family (37:19). Finally, the hopes expressed in the naming speech for the addition of another son, will also result in the greatest loss, that of Rachel's life. Rachel, whose most frequent expressions were regarding her ability to bear, dies doing just what she always wanted to do, have children (35:16-18).

Before she dies, Rachel names this son בן אוני, "son my suffering" but Jacob changes it to בנימין, "son of my old age" or "son of the right hand."[259] "Rachel expresses her despair in the name she gives him."[260] By changing the name given in Rachel's naming speech, Jacob takes away the means Rachel and other women use to name and to express emotions. Rachel did experience sorrow and suffering, as the name she gives her second son reflects, and yet she is not permitted to retain that connection with her child after she dies. The text finds it important to share the name change with the reader. Even though Jacob's name change ends up being the one that is used, Rachel's response to the birth is also shared. Rachel's naming speech is meant as a final battle cry in her fight with Leah. This change in name may also allude to the rearticulation of the sons' names in Chapter 49 that shifts the focus of the sons' name away from their

258 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 99.
259 Patai 190.
260 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 101.

connection to the lives of their mothers and more towards the future tribes they will head (49:28).

Behind nearly every name given by Rachel and Leah to their children, are expressions that resound far beyond the literal meaning of the child's name and the circumstances surrounding the children's birth. Naming of the children in the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah provides a useful method for expressing a variety of emotions. The story of Hannah in 1 Samuel also reflects elements of the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah that are drawn out in the naming of Hannah's first child. There are several shared intentions behind the naming of children in both stories.

Like Rachel and Leah, "...Hannah take[s] the name of Yahweh upon [her] lips as [she] name[s her] child."[261] Like Rachel, Hannah is the beloved and barren wife. Also like Rachel, Hannah feels an intense rivalry with her fertile co-wife, although Peninnah is portrayed as taunting Hannah about her inability to bear in a way that Leah never is. Hannah, like Leah, also seems to find inadequacy in the response of her husband to her plight, albeit for different reason. While Elkanah did interact with Hannah and try to comfort her, unlike Jacob with Leah, Elkanah could still never be as good to Hannah as "ten sons" (1 Samuel 1:8). Unlike Leah's namings that articulated the inadequate nature of her husband's response, the naming of Hannah's child does not focus at all on Elkanah, but solely on God's role on the ability of her to bear children. Most like Rachel and Leah, is the fact that more is expressed in the naming speech than what is found in a literal translation of the son's name, Samuel.

The naming says, ותהר חנה ותלד בן ותקרא את שמו שמואל כי מיהוה שאלתיו, "Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, Because I have asked him of the Lord"(1:20). Because Hannah's naming of the child expresses more than one verb root, Hannah's naming of child is a multi-leveled expression of her story.[262] Although the root שאל does implicitly appear in the name Samuel, the root has a variety of meanings in the story and appears nine times.[263]

---

261 Vos 162.
262 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 31.
263 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 31.

The literal meaning of Samuel's name itself is multifaceted. It can be translated as "God heard." This idea may be an indirect commentary on the power of God versus the power of humans. When Eli the priest could hear Hannah's vow, he thought she was drunk (1:13). But Samuel's name, as well as Hannah's words (1:20), reflect that God, whose cooperation is essential to Hannah's ability to bear, has heard. The literal name may also intend to express, שְׁמוֹ אֵל, "his name is God" or "of the name of God."[264]

As for Hannah's naming speech that brings in the root שׁאל, "to ask," it is clear that Hannah is asking for a son, as her vow expresses (1:11). Hannah's request beyond that for a child, will be that her child will lead a specific life, in the service of God.[265] So for Hannah, "...Samuel gets a name that celebrates and identifies the divinity because he is the answer to her request from Yahweh."[266] The specific request for the male child has been answered and how the second part of Hannah's request, that the child be in service to God, will be the continuation of the Samuel story.

But, as the names of Rachel and Leah's sons demonstrate, naming speeches can have a multi-faceted nature. So what else is Hannah asking for in regards to Samuel's name? And what is she not asking for? She is not asking for the support of a husband, as does Leah is in her naming. Her husband has already indicated that he loves her in spite of her inability to bear children (1:8). In the name, she is also not asking for triumph over her rival co-wife. Hannah has a different means to attack Peninnah, and does with the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2: 1-10. In the song there are several analogies that can be interpreted as the now fertile Hannah claiming victory over Peninnah. Instead it seems that Hannah's relationship to God is more central to the name she chooses. Of course Rachel and Leah both acknowledged God's role in the birth of their children, but these intentions were always paired with hopes for more than her sister in Rachel's case and the love of Jacob in Leah's case.

In the book of Ruth, there are two incidents of naming, one of a woman renaming herself, and one of women naming a child. The two incidents of naming that take place in

---

264 Eslinger, 83.
265 Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1 31.
266 Eslinger 83.

Ruth contribute to what Bertman calls the "symmetrical design" contained in the book. "In such design elements of content, either analogous or contrasting, stand over against each other in the structure of the story and appear thereby to counterbalance one another."[267] The move from sadness to joy in the two expressions of naming contribute not only to the flow of the book of Ruth but highlight how significant the ability of women to name is in expressing emotions and reactions to the circumstances around them.

Both namings center around Naomi. She is the central character and the tragic figure around whose tragedy the early story revolves.[268] Her renaming of herself reflects a bitter pessimistic woman.[269] Articulating these words and the renaming of the self may actually help to assuage the harsh events she has known. Like Eve, in Genesis 3:20, once she has been named, or in Naomi's case renamed, she can go on and plan for the future and eventually bestow her name, and influence, on the future generations.[270]

The prevalence of women as the givers of naming speeches and the content of these naming speeches both indicate the importance of the naming speech. In the book of Ruth, Naomi uses a naming speech also for the purpose of expressing emotions. Her speech, though, is not for the naming of a child, but in Naomi's renaming of herself. The renaming of Naomi takes place in Ruth 1:20, and reads אל תקראנה לי נעמי קראן לי מרא כי המר שדי לי מאד, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara for God had dealt very bitterly with me." Naomi's remark about her name intends to answer the surprised reaction of the women to her return.[271] Up until this point, Naomi has provided children for her husband and seen her sons marry. Now with the death of her own husband (Ruth 1:2) all the people she was required to provide for were gone and she has no more sons left to offer her daughters-in-law (1:11). Naomi left Bethlehem with her husband and her sons and returns minus all expect one.[272] With the expression of מרא, Naomi is able to express the

---

267 Stephen Bertman, "Symmetrical Design in the Book of Ruth" Journal of Biblical Literature 84 (1965) : 165-166.
268 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 82.
269 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 82.
270 Pardes 40.
271 Chamesh Megillot 12.
272 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 80.

loss she feels as her role of wife and mother has been taken away from her by the death of her husband and her sons.

The renaming is also an expression for the personal pain she, the woman named Naomi, feels. Her answer indicates that her name נעמי, whose meaning expresses comfort and goodness, is no longer suitable to her situation.[273] Naomi demands a change in her name along the way in order to express the bitterness of her fate.[274] And as God's name is often wound up with a child's naming, God's name is also connected with Naomi's renaming. Naomi clearly connects God with her move from pleasantness to bitterness.[275] She uses some form of God's name four times in the speech where she renames herself.

But Naomi is able to move on from her bitterness. As soon as they arrive in Bethlehem, Ruth and Naomi make plans to ensure their survival. Ruth and the women who respond to Naomi when she returns to Bethlehem express interest in her fate. The renaming may have served as a place for Naomi to articulate her emotions, but just as important is that the woman addressed her by name and reacted to her return.

The namings speeches that Rachel and Leah give in Genesis often seem futile, lonely expressions of emotions. Jacob never hears Leah's pleas for companionship echoed in the name of her children and Rachel never acknowledges Jacob's love for her as enough to quench her thirst for children. But Naomi does her renaming out in the open to a group that hears her. It is at this lowest moment for Naomi that her story takes a turn for the better and the potential for a secure future is within reach. The reality of the future is realized in the birth of Ruth's child in Ruth 4 and the circumstances that surround that child's naming.

But before the name of that child is ever given several things happen that differentiate Ruth's child's naming from others. In the other stories, the child is named immediately after birth, as if the women must spit out the name in order to express their frustration (Genesis 29:32, 33; 30:8; 30:20). And the child becomes an excuse to a express hopes of downfall for rival wife or an expression of unrealistic hopes in the life of the

---

273 Chamesh Megillot 12.
274 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 80.
275 Bush 93.

mother. The naming speech in the book of Ruth is an opportunity for one woman, Naomi, to be reminded that both the child and the mother, Ruth, are a blessing to her life. "...[F]or the women to give the name is now seen to be literarily appropriate: as they greeted Naomi's bitter return (Ruth 1:19b), so they celebrate her remarkable reversal of fortune (4:14)."[276]

It is only in the book of Ruth that women are able to rejoice with the good fortune of fellow women.[277] The birth in Ruth 4 inspires the women to hail the positive relationship between Ruth and Naomi before the child is even named. This scene reveals Ruth as honest, wise and devoted to a Naomi who had tried to do the best for her daughter-in-laws by separating from them.[278] She only expressed her pain after she had intended to separate from her daughters-in-law in Ruth 1, and in response to the women's questions in Ruth 1:19. These women are central to the naming in Ruth.

> As the women's sad question inaugurated it (Ruth 1:19b), so their joyous statement concluded it. The woman who despaired of ever having a son now has one, The key them of Naomi's lack of an heir has come to an end. Once shunted aside as mockery in favor of Mara ("Bitter"), the name Naomi ("Pleasant") now has regained its appropriateness as a description of her fate (cf. Ruth 1:20-1).[279]

In Genesis, Leah had also expressed hopes of women rejoicing with her with the birth of Asher, ותאמר לאה באשרי כי אשרוני בנות ותקרא את שמו אשר, "And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed; and she called his name Asher" (Genesis 30:13). But there is no indication that the sentiments expressed actually occur."[280] This idea expressed in Genesis only comes to fruition in Ruth . The women find it essential to remind Naomi of the importance of her daughter-in-law to her life before Naomi even seems to touch her grandson (Ruth 4:15-16). In Genesis, the one daughter

---

276 Robert L. Hubbard, "Ruth IV: A New Solution," Vetus Testamentum 38 (1988): 294.
277 Hubbard 298-299.
278 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 82.
279 Hubbard 299.
280 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes 94.

is interpreted as a smaller biblical interest in the "interrelation between mothers and daughters"[281] then by the book of Ruth, this relationship not only holds the authors interest but becomes the entire design around which the Book of Ruth is based.[282]

Along with indicating the positive relationship between Ruth and Naomi, the events leading up to the naming of Ruth's child also highlight the importance of the child himself. Naomi nourishes the child through nursing, reminding the reader of the importance of sustaining the child's life. And immediately after he is named Obed, the significance of the child's future is listed. There is more emphasis placed on establishing a relationship with the child, rather than only using child to express an attitude towards other relationships that the child has yet been a part of.

There is confusion around the name of Naomi being connected to Obed as his mother. This may indicate the controlling nature Naomi had in the events of Ruth's life. Unlike Laban's control of Leah that led to pain for her and bitterness for Jacob, Naomi controls the action not in a way that hurts Ruth, but in a way that plants ideas that improve the course of events. So it is appropriate that Naomi is involved in the incidents of naming in the book or Ruth. Furthermore, the two namings in Ruth reflect a development of the story where Naomi's afflictions are contrasted with her blessings. The woman that once was once bereaved of her two sons now has a near kinsman who will watch over her. She is also blessed with "a daughter-in-law who is better than seven sons, and a nursling whom the women call Naomi's own son."[283] This move from bitterness back to pleasantness is reflected in the intention of namings that teach about the possibility for change in fate and to move from disgrace to repair.[284]

In each case examined here the relationships are important enough to be delineated by the biblical authors. There are powerful lessons, both positive and negative, that can be gleaned from all the relations. But is only in the naming of the child in Ruth that both the importance of the relationships both among human beings and with God are

---

281 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes, 103.
282 Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes, 103.
283 Bertman 166.
284 Olam HaTanakh: Megillot 104.

acknowledged. In the other naming speeches noted in this chapter there is always something lacking. Leah's namings often thank God (and God hears her) but, at the same time, reflect the absence of Jacob's love. Rachel's namings ignore anything positive about the relationships she is in. Her namings do not show an appreciation of Jacob's love, but more a desire for vengeance against her sister. Hannah's namings glorify God's role in her child's birth, but reflect no response to her husbands's love, and as her song will indicate, only hope for destruction of her rival. Finally, in the book of Ruth, the naming of the child, beyond celebrating that child's birth, acknowledges both the blessing of the relationships with God and with close family (and the women of the family, who have only been portrayed as rivals in all the other scenarios).

The book of Ruth shows that the birth of a child and its subsequent naming can both praise God and praise the relationships that exist in the story. Ruth and Naomi have continually supported one another throughout the book of Ruth and this naming is an honest reflection of the support they have provided to one another. This caring relationship that Ruth and Naomi have modeled is imposed on the future for the child with the line, והיה לך למשיב נפש ולכלכל את שיבתך, "He will renew you life and sustain your old age" (Ruth 4:15). Most other naming speeches examined here either praise God alone or praise God while expressing hopes of the betterment of the parent's own life or the downfall of a rival. Rachel and Leah's naming speeches primarily reflect the needs of the parent. The interests expressed in these naming speeches play themselves out in the rivalries that develop among the children of Rachel and Leah.

The different naming speeches given in these stories demonstrate that the relationships that take place, and are reflected in the naming speech, can have an influence on the generation that is a product of the relationship. The decision to express that message of the relationship for good or for bad, that happens in the naming speech, has reverberations far beyond the relationship the speech describes.

Conclusion

In this study of the relationships among the biblical characters of Genesis, Hannah and Ruth, the focus was much more on the women in these biblical stories more than the men. This is because when Rachel, Leah, Hannah, Peninnah, Ruth , and Naomi expressed their attitudes, it was most often in response to the relationships that existed with their husbands, or with the "other" woman in their respective stories. The women comment both on their own situations and how their situation measures up to those around them.

The women measure their worth by how loved they are by their husbands, how many children they can provide their husband with, or how they compare to the other women in the story. For the woman, their happiness or unhappiness in a particular scenario often depends on how successful they feel about these above factors they use to measure their worth. Leah never receives the amount of love she wants from Jacob and so all her perspectives on their relationship express this sentiment. Peninnah sees herself in a better position than Hannah and taunts her rival because she feels empowered by the number of children she has, over the barren Hannah. And Ruth is celebrated as a loving person because of the concern she continually expresses for her mother-in-law, Naomi. In all these cases and more, the women's concern for her status in the relationship as compared to any others is of primary concern and is one of the few opportunities women have to articulate their perspectives.

The men in each of these stories also react to the relationships they are in. But the husband's reaction seems secondary to their own self interest. For example, Jacob spends as much of his time arguing with Laban over what is rightfully his as he does engaged in a dialogue with his wives. And in the relationship sphere itself, Jacob is surprisingly lacking. He provides little comfort to his beloved, but barren, wife and makes no attempts to improve his relationship with Leah, as her children's names continually suggest. And Elkanah also offers an inadequate response to Hannah's barrenness because he expects his own presence in Hannah's life provides her with as much satisfaction as children would. Even Boaz has a moment that could be interpreted as his own self interest overriding the desire to help Ruth, when he lets another redeemer first have a chance at redeeming Ruth.

These men also have different criteria by which to judge the relationship successful. While the women are concerned with the number of children they have and how they are perceived in relation to the other wife, these husbands to do not put any pressure on these wives to have children nor do anything to pit one woman against another. For example, as great of a rivalry that existed between Rachel and Leah, Jacob did not act differently once his attitudes were established at the very beginning of each relationship. He loved the one whom he loved from the very beginning, Rachel, and he had little connection with the one he was associated with only by trickery, Leah. Jacob's reactions are consistent but offer no intention beyond his initial emotions.

In the conclusion, I also feel compelled to speculate why some situations seemed to improve over time, like Ruth, Naomi, and Hannah's, and why some seemed to get worse or remain the same, like Rachel and Leah's. The answer to this can be tied directly to the relationships each of these characters were involved in. For example, those women who did not dwell on the negative, but instead acted unselfishly to improve their situations seemed to have a more hopeful outcome. Ruth and Naomi help each other out and seek their own solution to their plight, while watching out for one another. And Hannah takes her own initiative to make a vow to God that will offer to God's service the very son she prays for. These women come up with their own responses to their situations and are able to take their own advice. Women who give useful advice are important to the biblical texts.

> As Amsler has recently pointed out, the woman who gives advice stands at the center of the sage's vision...All of the women [of Proverbs [are] ...judged entirely by [the advice they give] rather than on t he basis of their procreative function.[285]

Rachel and Leah fail both in giving advice and in offering successful solutions to their own plights. Their interactions with Jacob are more often than not a display of the competition between the two sisters. This may explain why, once Rachel died, Leah has no more role in the story, only mentioned in terms of which sons she had and where she is buried (Genesis 49:31). So much of who these women are is their attitude towards each other and once one is gone, the other does not have a role.

---

[285] Camp 92.

Jacob himself has very little insight to the pain his favoritism caused among his wives, and he exhibits favoritism with his children. The favoritism his parents showed towards their children was not a strong enough lesson to compel Jacob to examine his treatment of his children.

These relationships show that human behaviors matter and can have great effect to both good and bad ends. Esau is able to overcome the pain and significance of Jacob's deception. But Laban's deception of Jacob is never completely resolved. The two sisters, pawns in Laban's deception, don't ever reconcile in the text. And Jacob is fleeing from Laban even after he and his family have physically left Laban's camp. The treatment of one person towards another can be very powerful and have long lasting effects, as these relationships show. But so too, one's life need not be totally ruined just because of an initial situation. Both Hannah and Ruth overcome odds and are able to recreate relationships for good. Hannah and Ruth learn what Jacob, Rachel, and Leah often seem to forget. "God's purposes are always entrammeled in history, dependent on the acts of individual men and women for their continuing realization,"[286] and those that work to use their actionsto enrich their relationships can have positive affect not only on their own lives but those of future generations.

---

286 Alter 12.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

Alter, Robert. Genesis: Translation and Commentary. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

Aschkenasy, Nehama. Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.

Bach, Alice. Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Bernstein, Moshe J. "Two Multivalent Readings in the Ruth Narrative." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 50 (1991): 15-26.

Berquist, Jon L. "Role Dedifferentiation in the Book of Ruth." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 57 (1993): 23-37.

Bertman, Stephen. "Symmetrical Design in the Book of Ruth." Journal of Biblical Literature 84 (1965): 165-168.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.

Bird, Phyllis A. Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1997.

Brenner, Athalya, ed. The Feminist Companion to Genesis. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.

Brenner, Athalya, and Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes. On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible. New York: E.J. Brill, 1993.

Bright, John. Anchor Bible: Jeremiah. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1984.

Bronner, Leila L. From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

Bush, Frederic W. Word Biblical Commentary: Ruth, Esther. Waco: Word Books, 1996.

Callaway, Mary. Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.

Camp, Claudia. Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs. Decatur, Ga.: Almond Press, 1985.

Campbell, Edward Jr. Anchor Bible: Ruth. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985.

Cartledge, Tony W. Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.

Chamesh Megillot. Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1973.

Cohen, Norman J. Self, Struggle & Change. Woodstock, Vt:.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1995.

Crenshaw, James L. Old Testament Wisdom. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. The Savage in Judaism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Eslinger, Lyle M. Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1-12. Decatur, Ga.: Almond Press, 1985.

Evan-Shoshan, Avraham. New Concordance for Torah, Prophets and Writings. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer Ltd., 1995.

Fewell, Danna Nolan and David M. Gunn. "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 45 (1989) : 45-59.

Fewell, Danna Nolan and David M. Gunn. " 'A Son is Born to Naomi!': Literary Allusions and Interpretation in the Book of Ruth." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 40 (1988) : 99-108.

Fox, Everett, transl. The Five Books of Moses. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.

Fuchs, Esther. "Who is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism." Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins. Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1985.

Gottleib, Claire. Varieties of Marriage in the Bible: And Their Analogies in the Ancient World. Diss. New York U., 1989. New York: NYU, 1989.

Gruber, Mayer I. The Motherhood of God and Other Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.

The Holy Scriptures. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1992.

Hubbard, Robert L. "Ruth IV: A New Solution." Vetus Testamentum 38 (1988): 293-301.

Jagendorf, Zvi. "'In the Morning, Behold, It Was Leah': Genesis and the Reversal of Sexual Knowledge." Prooftexts 4 (1984) : 187 -192.

Jeansonne, Sharon Pace. The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.

Jewish Publication Society. Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988.

Jobling, David. "Ruth Finds a Home: Canon, Politics, Method." The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible. ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Klines.

Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Kates, Judith A. "Women at the Center: Ruth and Shavuot." Reading Ruth. ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Kiel, Yehuda. Sefer Shmuel. Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1981.

Klein, Ralph W. Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Samuel. Waco: Word Books, 1983.

Licht, Jacob. Storytelling in the Bible. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986.

Marcus, David. "David the Deceiver and David the Dupe." Prooftexts 6 (1986) : 163-171.

Meyers, Carol. Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Olam HaTanakh: Bereishit. Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1982.

Olam HaTanakh: Devarim. Tel Aviv: Lior, 1993.

Olam HaTanakh: Megillot. Tel Aviv: Lior, 1994.

Olam HaTanakh: Mishle. Tel Aviv: Lior, 1993.

Olam HaTanakh: Shmuel 1. Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1982.

Pardes, Ilana. Countertraditons in the Bible. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Patai, Raphael. Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1959.

Rauber, D. F. "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth." Journal of Biblical Literature 89 (1970): 27-37.

Russell, Letty M., ed. Feminist Interpretation of the Bible. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

Sasson, J.M. Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989.

Scott, R.B.Y. Anchor Bible: Proverbs. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985.

Speiser, E.A. Anchor Bible: Genesis. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985.

Sternberg, Meir. The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Trible, Phyllis. "A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth." Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives. ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis. Vol. 2. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982.

Van Wolde, Ellen. "Texts in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the the Ruth and Tamar Narratives." Biblical Interpretation 5.1 (1997) 1-28.

Vos, Clarence J. Women in Old Testament Worship. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1968.

Westermann, Claus. Genesis 12-36: A Commentary. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981.

Zakovitz, Yair. Mikraot B'eretz HaMarot (Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible). Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd., 1995.