BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL

NAMING ONE'S CHILDREN:

AN EXAMINATION OF NAMING PRACTICES THROUGH

RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The naming ritual found throughout the Hebrew Bible, but primarily in Genesis, has a distinctive role in identifying the kinship group, or ethnicity, of the named person, usually a child, and their place in the system of inheritance. In this dissertation, I use my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, supplemented with a hermeneutic of intersectionality and Marxist literary criticism,. The naming ritual primarily appears in narrative texts, within birth narratives, with a few insertions into the genre of genealogy. As they do not appear in legal texts or wisdom literature, birth narratives represent a separate, though related, vein of identification. In making this choice, I exclude Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Proverbs, which are the primary sources to which scholars turn to discuss the exclusion of foreign women for their foreignness. By analyzing stories, I identify structures behind the laws that protect inheritance.

I argue that naming appears to have some power over inheritance within the text. For the purposes of this dissertation, my analysis will focus on stories as they may have functioned within the imperial control and taxation of the Persian bureaucratic system. These stories include in which women are excluded from naming their children in Genesis 16:15; 21:3; 25:25-26; 35:18; 38:3, 29-30; 41:51-52; Exodus 2:10, and Ruth 4:17. Through this analysis, I demonstrate that men performed the naming ritual to supersede the kinship/ethnic claims of the mother and, therefore, to ensure the male heir retained patrilineal kinship and inheritance.

The return from exile will be especially important in this dissertation because those who remained and those who were returning held opposing claims to נַחֲלָה and to what it meant to be from Yehud/Judea. Both remainees and returnees were a threatened minority, and their actions

should be understood as an attempt to preserve their נַחֲלָה and culture, despite the shifts each had undergone.[1] However, foreign women, especially among the remainees, represented a break in the strict bureaucratic system, and therefore represented a threat.

The ethnicity of women in exogamous conjugal unions troubles the ritualistic norms of proclaiming קרא שׁם, which function as a feminine mode of creating kinship. This ritual appears alongside the naming of a person 48 times. Of those 48 times, the verb appears in the feminine form 26 times, and the masculine singular form appears 21 times. Of those 21 times, several appear as a part of genealogies, which also replace the feminine ילד with masculine forms, representing the bureaucratic claims of inheritance, collapsing the complex family relations into an easily digested form. Both Rebekah and Isaac name Esau, as denoted by the masculine plural. However, several occurrences of the masculine form are more complicated. Adam, being the only human alive before her appearance, names Eve. The renaming stories of Joseph and Daniel are also complicated because they are fully grown. The pharaoh renames Joseph, which I will argue makes him Egyptian, and Daniel is renamed in the *niphal* (Hebrew) and passive form (Greek), leaving the actor nameless. After removing these events, the number of masculine forms drops to twelve. In eight of these twelve times, the mother is of a separate kinship group. The remaining four stories reflect competing inheritance claims. Isaac replaces Ishmael, Jacob replaces Esau, and Solomon/Jedidiah becomes king rather than his older brothers.

An intersectional analysis of the ritual language קרא שׁם in birth narratives reveals a method of ethnic negotiation useful for determining how the ancient Israelite community

[1] Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 123.

negotiated kinship and their effects on נַחֲלָה.[2] A study of birth narratives provides new insights into ethnic negotiations regarding the assimilation of foreign women into the community as well as their role in disputes about נַחֲלָה.[3] The proclamation of קרא שׁם is most commonly a mother's act of claiming a child as her own. This process establishes that child's kinship group as well as their status as primary heir within the בֵּית אֵם. The texts that replace the feminine sufformative of קרא with the masculine ideologically safeguard the patriarchal economic system by ensuring that the male head of the family determines the primary heir by excluding the ethnic status of foreign women. Previous analyses of the קרא שׁם ritual, though useful, preclude a deeper analysis of the ethnic negotiations at play, and so miss the role this ritual plays in determining inheritance and kinship/ethnicity. Following my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, I will use an intersectional analysis to examine the ethnicity, class, and gender of those who perform the naming ritual.

Literature Review

A survey of the literature reveals that most examinations of foreign women in the Bible are about legal and wisdom literature, rather than the appearances of women in narratives. Comments about their children are even more rare, as the closest the biblical library comes to providing rules on this topic is in Ezra 9-10, which only sends them away with their mothers.[4] As

[2] For the purposes of this proposal and dissertation, I will use root letters קרא שׁם when talking about the naming ritual because I want to include both the masculine and feminine forms of נחל/נחלה. I use נַחֲלָה when I mean the idea of inheritance and property.

[3] For Carol Meyers, in *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 108, the נַחֲלָה, usually translated inheritance, also refers to "immovable property…to animals and…other moveable property."

[4] Michael Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Period" (Thesis, Hamilton, Ontario, McMaster University, 2022), 3; iii, analyzes mixed offspring in the Hebrew Bible and the Second Temple Period. He notes, "The study of mixed offspring in antiquity has been an incidental topic of exploration in scholarship." Instead, most scholars focus on intermarriage, the status of women, or various texts, especially Ezra 9-10. In his thesis, Gabizon "attempts to trace the status of mixed progeny in pre-Mishnaic literature." He does so by analyzing texts within the pre-Persian period, the Persian period, the Hellenistic period, and the Roman period. The

Christian Frevel has noted, the problem with analyses of ancient endogamy and exogamy, particularly in the Hebrew Bible, is that one is "trapped between anachronism and precision."[5] I do not intend to define what it means to be a foreign woman or what the boundaries of ethnicity were. Instead, my focus is more about *how* and *why* ethnicity and kinship relations functioned in the manner they did while working with womanist and Marxist historiography.

Although the concept of marriage in the contemporary sense did not exist in the ancient world, throughout ancient West Asia, marital and other contractual unions of that sort were important for the purpose of ensuring inheritance and inheritors, as well as establishing ties between families from different towns or regions.[6] However, neither early nor late biblical texts provide much in the way of contracts. For the most part, a man takes, either לקח or נשׂא, a woman, and that is the end of it. Origin stories, such as those related in Genesis, provide some language concerning inheritance. The Hebrew Bible does not provide much information regarding marital contracts (neither exogamous nor endogamous), inheritance, or other such influences on the bureaucratic apparatuses that are central to this dissertation.

For the purposes of my analysis, I will draw on the marital contracts and systems of inheritance for surrounding regions related to various time periods as they pertain to the story. For example, when discussing Hagar, I will draw on marital and adoption texts from ancient Mesopotamia, such as the Code of Hammurabi and documents from various cities. I will also draw on Persian era marriage texts. I draw on both periods because the Torah and other biblical

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loss of inheritance was a reason that intermarriage was condemned, but does not provide the mechanism for how that loss of inheritance took place. That question drives my thesis.

[5] Christian Frevel, "Introduction," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 4

[6] Ilona N Rashkow, "'How Much Is She Worth?: A Comparison of Six Ancient Near East Laws Relating to Bride-Price, Dowry, Inheritance, and Divorce," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (July 2022), 144.

texts do not exist in just one time, but reflect the emendations of stories made over the course of generations. Each community of interpreters reflects a different epistemology, and so the stories reflect not only the meanings of the first community that told the story, but all the changes throughout time.[7] By incorporating both Persian era texts and more ancient documents, I gain a better understanding of the complexity of the competing ideologies at play within the text. These texts, and the biblical text as interpreted in Ezra and Nehemiah, conflict with each other and with general practices of surrounding peoples, including *Yehudim* living in Elephantine.[8]

The surrounding societies have left ample evidence of their practices that likely influenced their practices, from pre-Israelite Hittites and Babylonians to post-exilic *Yehudim* practices in Elephantine and Babylon, which point to much more malleable practices of intermarriage and inheritance than presented in Ezra-Nehemiah, especially for those in diaspora.[9] There is also ample evidence in the biblical text that exogamy was rarely a problem in and of itself, especially in Judahite stories that take place prior to the exile.[10] Following these documents and the biblical text, exogamy was primarily a problem between the ruling group

[7] Brennan W. Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 3.

[8] Ezra and Nehemiah were not written at the same time, but each contains elements written at various points. For Ralf Rothenbusch, "The Question of Mixed Marriages Between the Poles of Diaspora and Homeland: Observations in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Mixed Marriages Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 60–77, later additions to the story represent an increasing problem with exogamous unions.

[9] See Annalisa Azzoni, *The Private Lives of Women in Persian Egypt* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013); Zafrira Ben-Barak, *Inheritance by Daughters in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Social, Legal and Ideological Revolution*, trans. Betty Sigler Rozen (Jaffa, Israel: Archaeological Center Publications, 2006); Stephen Herbert Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure in Ancient Israel" (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan, 1963); Christian Frevel, ed., *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011); Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring"; Mayer I. Gruber, *Matrilineal Determination of Jewishness: Biblical and Near Eastern Roots* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995); Steffan Mathias, *Paternity, Progeny, and Perpetuation: Creating Lives after Death in the Hebrew Bible* (London: T & T Clark, 2020).

[10] Gary N. Knoppers, "Intermarriage, Social Complexity, and Ethnic Diversity in the Genealogy of Judah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 1 (2001): 15–30.

(Persia, in this instance) and their subjects, although the Persian empire encouraged intermarriage between subjects.[11] Although biblical prohibitions from marrying some groups that are found in Leviticus (for priests) and Deuteronomy, these prohibitions do not include all non-*Yehudim* until Ezra and Nehemiah.[12] Ezra and Nehemiah develop more exclusionary interpretations of these texts while under the threat of empire, which is why I have chosen to read the biblical texts with that period in mind.[13] In most other biblical texts, exogamy is more of a *faux pas* than a restriction, and that *faux pas* is ignored if the woman is captured in war.[14]

Naomi Steinberg has written much on marriage in Genesis, including exogamous unions. For Steinberg, marriage functioned primarily to create an heir that continues to tie a kinship group together.[15] Steinberg delves deeper into the topics of polycoity, monogamy, and heirs in *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis*, wherein she analyzes a variety of marital and lineal issues in

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[11] Inchol Yang, "Mixed Marriage in Ezra 9-10: The Disappearance of Ezra as a Mimic Man for the Persian Empire," *The Expository Times* 134, no. 2 (2022): 54.

[12] It is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to determine the timeline and composition of Ezra-Nehemiah, and so too is the structure of the internal chronology, although they are presented in chronological order. They repeat each other at points, as well, see Sara Japhet, "Periodization between History and Ideology II: Chronology and Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 491–508. I follow Elelwani Farisani, "The Composition and Date of Ezra-Nehemiah," *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 17.2 (2004): 208–30 in arguing that the texts were constructed over a period of time, made up of various texts and later additions, with the stories initially developing somewhat independent of each other in the mid 5th century BCE until coming together at the end of the 4th century BCE.

[13] Epstein, *Marriage Laws*, 166; and Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 134 describe Joshua 23:11-12 and 1 Kings 11:1-4 as the Deuteronomist expanding those prohibitions. However, Joshua 23 is a warning against, rather than a restriction, and 1 Kings has them as part of the list of Solomon's women. In addition, both of these texts label the problem as leading the people of Israel to worship other deities, which is significantly different from Ezra's maintenance of the "holy seed," which is an ethno-centric prohibition rather than a religious one. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 243 also takes the position that Ezra marks a shift in the reasons behind the prohibition.

[14] According to Winslow, the increasing prohibition of exogamy should be read "as representative of distinct perspectives on exogamy among the scribes who produced them, and possibly among the earlier tradition transmitters" rather than as gradual stages over time. Karen S. Winslow, "Mixed Marriage in Torah Narratives," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 133.

[15] Naomi Steinberg, "Alliance or Descent: The Function of Marriage in Genesis," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 16, no. 51 (September 1991): 45-55.

Genesis.[16] Throughout the rest of the Torah, it is the P-Source, a later contributor to the text, who focuses on endogamy, or tries to paper over exogamous unions and matrilineality/matrilocality when possible.[17] According to van der Toorn, a major reason for restricting exogamous marriage is to maintain control over the property, which would be affected by the mother's מִשְׁפָּחָה.[18] Michael Gabizon provides a robust analysis of this history in "The Development of the Matrilineal Principle," in which he provides a diachronic analysis of matrilineality from Ezra to the Rabbinic period.[19]

Although this principle is common during the Rabbinic period, scholars disagree about its existence in the biblical text.[20] Notably, the Code of Hammurabi and other documents from Babylonian cities provide a way to undermine the matrilineal system: adoption by the father.[21] I will argue that when the father names a child, they are performing a type of adoption ritual, thus subverting the matrilineal system at play. I add to this body of work by providing a further analysis of the function of kinship in marriage as a means of forming kinship bonds while relegating the foreigner to a lower status. I contribute to this area of discussion by expanding the

[16] Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993). Notably, Judah and Joseph, representative of the twin monarchies later, have children through exogamous unions without a comment from the narrator, as does Abraham, which points to a marriage and fertility tradition. See also Winslow, "Mixed Marriage," 134.

[17] Benedikt J. Conczorowski, "All the Same as Ezra? Conceptual Differences Between the Texts on Intermarriage in Genesis, Deuteronomy 7 and Ezra," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 90.

[18] Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 200-201.

[19] Michael Gabizon, "The Development of the Matrilineal Principle in Ezra, Jubilees, and Acts," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 27, no. 2 (2017): 143–60. However, both Gabizon and Cohen, whose work I discuss later in this section, search for *the* matrilineal principle, as a single defining trait, rather than as one part of a larger system, which is why they cannot find it in the pre-exilic or pre-Roman period, respectively.

[20] Lawrence H. Schiffman outlines several different perspectives in "Jewish Identity and Jewish Descent," *Judaism* 34 (1985): 78–84. Cohen does as well in *The Beginnings of Jewishness*.

[21] Gruber, *Matrilineal Determination*, 440, discusses Code of Hammurabi 170.

role of naming and adoption by including a discussion of systems of exchange and by analyzing how those systems maintained patriarchal structures to ensure the elite-maintained power.

Ancient Israel, and much of West Asia, primarily functioned on two levels, the domestic economy and the institutional economy.[22] In Ancient Israel, the kinship-household model was a (domestic) subsistence-survival economic system within the (institutional) tribute-exchange system of the Persian Empire. According to Roland Boer, Ancient Israel was a largely collective society that formed itself around kinship relations, as represented in the legal and social structures.[23] The בֵּית אָב served as the term that encompassed both נַהֲלָה and people together, usually including a "father, wife/wives, sons and their wives, grandsons and their wives, unmarried children, slaves, servants, gerim, aunts, uncles, widows, orphans, and Levites."[24] However, Boer's analysis lacks engagement with the בֵּית אֵם, as do the others. In *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel*, Shunya Bendor divides Israelite social structure into the *šebeṭ, mišpaḥa,* and *beit 'ab*, with the *beit 'ab* and *mišpaḥa* overlapping as the basic units of self-identification.[25] Bendor's argument here follows Gottwald's description of the Israelite confederacy or league, which splits Israel into component parts that determine land rights and the roles of each level.

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[22] The institutional economy is further divided into formal and informal components. The informal components have left little or no evidence, aside from the extant products of labor, but there is ample evidence of the formal economy through contracts, stories, and other documents that have survived. Kenneth Hirth, "Introducing Economy in the Ancient World," in *Economics and Empire in the Ancient Near East: Guide to the Bible and Economics*, ed. Matthew J.M. Coomber, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023), 21-27.

[23] Roland Boer outlines all of these aspects in *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015).

[24] Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 1st ed, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 40.

[25] Shunya Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1996), 45; 70. I use the transliterated form here because Bendor does.

For Gottwald, the tribes deal with "regional needs" and "perform general…military, cultic, and jural functions in rotation, in coordination, or in segmented specialization, with overall agreement as to…their territorial and demographic bounds.."[26] The *mišpaḫa* was composed of kinspeople who lived together as a small town or subgroup within a city.[27] Each village exists as a group of multiple *batei 'ab.* The *beit 'ab,* then, is responsible for survival, enacting the inheritance, and the use of the land. Within this system, the language of name and naming functions as a "juridical-social term for the basic unit of kinship / property / inheritance in the *beit 'ab*, and the economic-social situation of this unit within the *beit 'ab* determines its status in society."[28] The language of the *beit 'ab* is explicitly patrilineal. Other important markers of kinship are geography (or historical geographical origin), religion, and culture, among others.[29] My research augments Carol Meyers's claim, and Cynthia Chapman's later, by furthering an understanding of how women functioned within this system and how the power of the *beit 'em* was circumvented to ensure the system that Gottwald and Bendor describe retained power, especially in an imperial period wherein the social structure became a structure for taxation.

The בֵּית אָב is represented in the "begats," or the *tôlēdôt* system. This model first appears in Genesis 4 and continues to appear repeatedly throughout the Torah and the two Chronicles,

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[26] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Y[*****]: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 331. I mark the divine name in this title with asterisks although the author used it. As I did with Bendor, I maintain Gottwald's transliteration here.

[27] Gottwald, *The Tribes of Y[*****]*, 257.

[28] Gottwald, *The Tribes of Y[*****]*, 127.

[29] Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 9; Eric Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1. Contemporary definitions of religion and culture are not the same as in the ancient world. They were all understood as aspects of one's kinship practices. As Buell and Barreto argue, these practices were ultimately unstable, but useful for determining in-groups and out-groups. People drew upon different aspects of "ethnicity" depending upon their situation and what was required. One could bend genealogies to broker treaties or draw on different identities. I will further define these terms later.

among other texts. Claus Westermann examines this model as a structuring device and examines the male aspect of ילד, a typically feminine action.[30] Genealogies also occasionally include the name ritual, which I argue is a traditionally feminine action as well, yet men name children in the Genesis 4 genealogy. I contend, then, that men are described using feminine actions when *naḥalah* is at stake. Westermann also argues that the genealogies define Israel's relation to the nations around them and functions as a literary device to structure the Genesis narrative. This (male) genealogical connection is, as Denise Buell argues, a key aspect of kinship practices in the ancient world.[31] Women rarely appear in the *tôlēdôt* system, although they do appear in Genesis 25, 36, and 37 when maternal subunits are important to the story.[32] The maternal sub-unit, then, is important in genealogical systems when dividing a family.

The inclusion of women and rejection of a purely patrilineal model of kinship relation in contemporary social anthropology began in earnest with David M. Schneider's "Some Muddles in the Models."[33] Schneider argued that the patrilineal model developed by Lewis Henry Morgan does not represent the complexity of kinship systems and that kinship was not a distinct, universal subsystem. The complication of kinship systems and the maintenance of lineage was crucial for the ongoing inclusion of women in the interpretation of kinship systems. This system is more complicated at higher levels. Within this system, foreign women are often multiply marginalized. As Yee notes in *Poor Banished Children of Eve*, women, and especially foreign

[30] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1990), 13.

[31] Buell, *Why This New Race?*, 9.

[32] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 5.

[33] David M. Schneider, "Some Muddles in the Models: Or, How the System Really Works," *HAU : Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1, no. 1 (2011): 451–92.

women, often symbolize evil.[34] Yet, within narrative histories, rather than prophetic and legal texts, women often have agency. Wil Gafney analyzes several women in Genesis through a womanist perspective, engaging the various depictions of violence and noting the class and ethnicity aspects of within each. She also helpfully notes that women in her analysis of Asenath and Joseph's two children, that "Jacob-turned-Israel asserts a claim to her children, perhaps because they are more Egyptian than Israelite," working with the ambiguous aspects of the story.[35] My research will deepen the collective knowledge about how and why Jacob/Israel and other men must assert a counter-claim to a foreign woman and why foreign women are ideologically evil primarily within moralistic and bureaucratic documents, but not within narratives. I anticipate needing to perform more research on the appearance of foreign women in stories; however, the resources for this work are currently limited at this institution. I will include more womanist work on this area as well.

In some cases, women seem to have their own functioning subset within the בֵּית אַב called the בֵּית אֵם. There are two primary theories within this vein: Carol Meyers and Cynthia Chapman. Meyers's depiction of the house of the mother is rooted in her theory of heterarchy.[36] For Meyers, "households typically are characterized by internal gender balance rather than gender hierarchy," although the overall system had a distinct androcentric bias.[37] Meyers defines this gender balance in *Rediscovering Eve*, where she uses archaeological data to develop a notion of

[34] Gale Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

[35] Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017). 71.

[36] Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 196-199.

[37] Carol Meyers, "'To Her Mother's House': Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite Bêt 'āb," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1991), 42

women's life in the ancient world.[38] She further outlines her understanding of the women's role in the household in "To Her Mother's House," in which she challenges the traditional reading of the mother's house as coterminous with the בת אב. Meyers notes that the appearances of the *beit 'em* are associated with woman-centric stories, tying them together through key themes.[39] For Meyers, the language of mother's house is "a counterpart to the usual term for household as the fundamental unit of society" in which "the wisdom and power of women in ancient Israel becomes fleetingly visible."[40] However, Chapman reads the *beit 'em* differently.

In *The House of the Mother*, Chapman argues for more complexity in this system, claiming that the בֵּית אֵם was a further subset of the full kinship system, especially in polygynous households.[41] The division of economic units within polygynous households, following Levenson, likely had multiple firstborn sons, some who were favored and some who were not. The firstborn son for the father had the greatest inheritance and required several rituals, but the firstborn son of each mother required certain rituals as well.[42] My research will contribute significantly to her work by adding the language of קרא שֵׁם to her list of female-kinship language. She notes the general feminine nature of this language, although her explanation is that low-status women do not name their children. This dissertation will bring more occurrences of this language to bear on the topic and focus on *why* a person would be low status.

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[38] Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*.

[39] See Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," 49. "A woman's story is being told…A wisdom association is present…Women are agents in their own destiny…The agency of women affects others…The setting is domestic…Marriage is involved."

[40] Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," 51.

[41] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 72.

[42] Jon Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: the Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1993), 46-47, 55-57.

As so much in antiquity is tied to kinship, foreign women complicate the system of inheritance. Many scholars hold the *a priori* assumption that foreignness was already a problem, based on genealogical impurity, moral impurity, or some other problem. In *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, Shaye Cohen attempts to unravel the history of "Jewishness" as an identity and does not conflate modern racialization and discrimination with ancient ethnic and kinship practices.[43] He argues that ethnicity among "Jews" was patrilineal and that women took the ethnicity of their husband (as did their children) and "a foreign woman who married an Israelite husband was *supposed* to leave her gods in her father's house" (emphasis mine).[44] With Cohen, I argue that women maintained their ethnicity through marriage and add that they could pass their ethnicity to their children through naming practices.[45]

Here, it is important to add that, generally, the exclusion of foreign women is not consistent and, until Ezra and Nehemiah, the ban on exogamy extends only to select groups.[46] Tamar, Asenath, and Ruth, among others, are included in biblical texts without comment about a

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[43] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 265. Cohen develops this argument throughout the third section of *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, examining how religious conversion and marriage functioned pre-exile, post-exile, and in the Second Temple Period. However, Cohen separates religion and ethnicity without examining the role each plays into the other. Thus, his focus is on religious conversion rather than ethnic conversion. The separation of these two concepts limits his ability to analyze notions of foreignness. For example, Cohen argues,

> Since the idea of 'conversion to Judaism' did not yet exist, it never occurred to anyone to demand that the foreign woman undergo some ritual to indicate her acceptance of the religion of Israel….the act of marriage was functionally equivalent to the later idea of 'conversion.'

[44] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 265.

[45] However, with the specific reference to gods in this quote, tying the argument to Rachel, Cohen demonstrates a lack of knowledge regarding the role of daughters when there is no son to inherit. In Nuzi, Emar, and Harran, the daughter inherits the household gods. Given, this is only with the father's permission, but because the daughters are escaping secretly, that could not be obtained honestly; Ben-Barak, *Inheritance by Daughters*, 205. Furthermore, the Terahites are matrilineal avunculocal, meaning that the son inherits from the mother's brother. As both Leah and Rachel are Laban's two daughters, and Jacob is the nephew, they take the entire matrilineage with them, and necessarily the gods (Nancy B Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," *Vetus Testamentum* 38, no. 1 (January 1988): 52-70; 55-56). Despite Cohen's protestations, the very fact that the patriarchs and matriarchs wish for their children to marry members of their family, and that Rachel steals the gods from Laban, is proof that matrilineality is at least as old as the patriarch stories.

[46] David Janzen, *Witch-Hunts, Purity and Social Boundaries: The Expulsion of the Foreign Women in Ezra 9-10*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 350 (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 2.

ban on exogamy. All three build up the house of Israel, which is a potential explanation of their inclusion.[47] The P-source and the Deuteronomistic history functions as the foundation of marginalizing non-Israelite women, particularly in Deuteronomy 7:4 and 21:10-14, where the community is warned against intermarriage because they could lead people away from the Israelite deity.[48] Jezebel represents the Deuteronomistic historians' greatest fear in this regard, and their depiction of her is one of a "hypersexualized seductress."[49] This description leads to the expansion against exogamy in Ezra-Nehemiah, which focuses on the "holy seed" and Ezra's desire to build a pure Jewish nation "as a reawakening of national hope."[50] Epstein argues that this is due in part to the "clouded ancestry" of many returnees, and perhaps remainees, who were the largest group in *Yehud*.[51] There is ample evidence from the Murushu Archives that the diasporic Judahites used Babylonian names for their children and, in records from Elephantine, intermarried with people.[52] With the assimilative nature of these boundary-crossing events in mind, Ezra-Nehemiah's ban on intermarriage is unique to the province of *Yehud*, to the temple community, rather than to all diasporic *Yehudim*.[53] For Karen Winslow, the varied perspectives on exogamy are better explained "as representative of distinct perspectives on exogamy among

[47] Jonathan A Thambyrajah, "Israelite or Moabite?: Ethnicity in the Book of Ruth," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46, no. 1 (September 1, 2021): 53.

[48] Conczorowski, "All the Same as Ezra," 90; Bradley L Crowell, "Good Girl, Bad Girl: Foreign Women of the Deuteronomistic History in Postcolonial Perspective," *Biblical Interpretation* 21, no. 1 (2013), 6.

[49] Crowell, "Good Girl, Bad Girl," 12.

[50] Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud*, 163.

[51] Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud,* 187.

[52] Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 135-6; Azzoni, *The Private Lives*, 109.

[53] Satlow, *Jewish* Marriage, 139.

the scribes who produced them" rather than as stages.[54] Luckily for the children of these marriages, there is no evidence that they were mistreated.[55]

I exclude Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Proverbs from my analysis, although they are primary sources to which scholars turn to discuss the exclusion of foreign women for their foreignness. By analyzing stories, I identify structures behind the laws that protect inheritance. Ethnicity contains elements of fixity and fluidity in a spectrum. Gerd Baumann describes ethnicity as made up of essentialist (inherent) and processual (constructed) discourses of culture which together create ethnic identity and are themselves fluid.[56] In an article that will prove useful for my analysis of Moses, Kenneth Ngwa describes three views on ethnicity and how they function in the Moses's adoption narrative. Neil Glover uses the same system: primordialism (essentialism), situationalism (circumstantialism), and constructivism.[57] Ethnic consciousness is always in a state of flux.

Diana Edelman states, "Ethnic consciousness involves both an assertion of a collective self and the negation of collective other/s, creating a world of asymmetrical 'we-them relations."[58] Ethnicity expands beyond the genealogical and geographical definitions of ethnicity

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[54] Winslow, *Mixed Marriage*, 133.

[55] Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring," 54.

[56] Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 91.

[57] See both Neil Glover, "Your People, My People: An Exploration of Ethnicity in Ruth," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, no. 3 (March 1, 2009), 295; and Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, "Ethnicity, Adoption, and Exodus: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of Exodus 2.1-10," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 38, no. 2 (December 2013), 177. The unilateral situationalist maintains that ethnicity is wholly constructed and chosen, so a person can choose to change their ethnicity "without the recognition of other actors." The sympathetic constructivist maintains that one must receive acceptance from members of the ethnic group by following certain ethnic practices. The hard primordialist maintains that ethnicity is immutable. This third position is most similar to conceptions of race and, also, the primary method of ethnic understanding with which most people operate.

[58] Diana Edelman, "Ethnicity and Ancient Israel," in *Ethnicity and the Bibie*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 25

that are often applied to the biblical text.[59] Therefore, one must alter which cultures one compares, depending on the period in which the text developed. However, many of the texts set in the pre-monarchic periods were written later and are historically unreliable, so scholars are left theorizing what they can through a discussion of cultural memory and other extant evidence rather than biblical evidence.[60] However, there are numerous law codes and contracts from West Asia, particularly Sumerian and Hittite cities, which describe the processes of inheritance, the status of the foreigner, and marital relations, which will prove useful.[61] In addition, as I am staging my research in the post-exilic period, there are numerous documents and data from Elephantine and the broader Persian Empire.[62] This data is crucial as a tool and understanding various possible influences on the authors and redactors, but does not necessarily apply to Persian Yehud. Kenton Sparks provides a broad summary of ethnicity and identity from the monarchic and exilic periods in *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, beginning with a useful summary of Neo-Assyrian, Greek, and Egyptian evidence to provide a broad socio-cultural milieu in which Israelites developed their own ethnic sentiments.[63] As I am not making a historical argument in this dissertation, but an ideological one, these influences play an important role.

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[59] Frank Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 66. Even these two identifiers are themselves flexible. For example, the genealogies in Genesis, "links humanity and the peoples into a unity; or to be more precise, all of humanity and the kinships of Israel are grasped in one single system."

[60] Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 14.

[61] Bernard F. Batto, "Land Tenure and Women At Mari," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 1980): 209–39; and J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

[62] Azzoni, *The Private Lives*; Bob Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt: The Fate of the Yehudite Community of Elephantine* (Penn State University Press, 2020).

[63] Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 23-93.

According to Elya Tzeneva, "The main analytical concept concerns the simultaneous historical/chronological alongside the situational/contextual character of the phenomenon, whose constitutive elements undergo change as actors seek to keep *ethnic* alive."[64] Ethnicity continues through cultural hybridization as both insider and outsider adjust their actions, dress, foods, beliefs, etc., to "(1) keep their home identities and (2) construct new ones."[65] The elements of common ancestry and culture are especially important in determining the how and why of ethnicity in the biblical text. Genesis, which contains the vast majority of the occurrences of קרא שׁם, is the myth of common ancestry and provides the people with a common name (Israel); the rest of the Torah provides the people various elements of culture and a homeland. נַחֲלָה, then, retains an important aspect within the functions of ethnicity.

Rodrigo Luiz Cunha Gonsalves argues that "Ethnicity is the psychic and embodied take up" of the agreement that "Defending that race, racism and a racialized reality were a byproduct of the construction and growth of capitalism in our society." He calls this a "psychic reality" that has "been crafted and controlled by those who have resources to do so."[66] This psychic reality is represented in what Boer calls a malleable genealogy. Boer claims that genealogies are structural and formal features that represent the economic conditions of the time in which they are written.[67] For the purposes of this dissertation, the relevance of the economy to the construction of ethnic identity is vital, as the protection of land rights is heavily dependent upon

[64] Elya Tzaneva, "Ethno-Cultural Symbolism and Group Identity," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*, ed. Steven Ratuva (New York: MacMillan Publisher Int'l Ltd, 2020).

[65] Tzaneva, "Ethno-cultural Symbolism."

[66] Rodrigo Luiz Cunha Gonsalves, "Ethnicity and Class Nexus: A Philosophical Approach," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*, ed. Steven Ratuva (New York: MacMillan Publisher Int'l Ltd, 2020).

[67] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 89.

the ethnic negotiations at play among those who ruled and took part in the bureaucracy of land management during the monarchy, exilic, and post-exilic periods.

The protection of land rights played a major role in the ancient world. Ezra-Nehemiah is useful, as it references potential land disputes among the various groups inhabiting Yehud, often in reference to historical landholdings.[68] If land passed through inheritance, one needed assurances that legitimate children inherited that land. However, legitimacy was highly determined by kinship relations, which were permeable and dependent upon ever-changing boundaries that allow movement and identities to shift while the boundaries remain (and change) in some form.[69] In addition, Yehud/Judea had lost their independence.[70] Both remainees and returnees were a threatened minority and their actions should be understood as an attempt to preserve their identity and culture with each other, despite the shifts each had undergone.[71] Marrying outsiders had the potential to create a conflict about the kinship loyalty of the child and, therefore, social separation.[72] For the purposes of this dissertation, I am working with this period as it represents a height of imperial control and taxation and because the Persian bureaucratic system was an essential aspect of their rule. Thus, I read them as reflective of the political-economic situation at that time as well.

Inheritance, and broader property ownership as a whole, was very important and complicated. Scholars have found extra-biblical evidence of a wide variety of inheritance laws,

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[68] Danna Nolan Fewell, "The Ones Returning: Ruth, Naomi, and Social Negotiation in the Post-Exilic Period," in *Women and Exilic Identity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Katherine E. Southwood and Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 36.

[69] Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 49, argues "The transgressing of social boundaries does not invalidate them but actually perpetuates them."

[70] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 261.

[71] Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah," 123.

[72] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 261.

dating back to the Code of Hammurabi, all the way to the Persian period. These inheritance laws determined the role of adoption in the inheritance system, the amount that the eldest brother received in relation to the other siblings, the rights of women, and various other subjects necessary.[73] Devora Steinmetz takes a psychoanalytical approach to these texts and to Genesis, arguing that the process of bestowing inheritance and the leadership of the family onto the next generation involved violence each time to determine the proper successor. She identifies the symbolic system the ancient people used to work through the struggle of the collective, the patriarchal, and the individual system of their world.[74] Calum Carmichael analyzes the role that women play in this system by following various accounts of women in Genesis. She notes that Tamar and other women forced into levirate marriage had to engage in "an obscene symbolic act," in which they were treated as one of their dead husband's fields that must be plowed to ensure the continuance of inheritance and property for him.[75]

Names are also important as signifiers of important people as well as signs for what the character will be in the future. C. Jeff Foster argues that קרא שׁם functions as a ritual rooted in oral tradition that marks a character or place as significant, following Gunkel's form criticism. He performs a full analysis of the forms that the naming ritual takes based on word order. His analysis is broader than my own, as he examines all occurrences, many of which apply to places,

[73] See Rachel Clay, *The Tenure of Land in Babylonia and Assyria*, University of London Institute of Archaeology, no. 1 (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1938); Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure." Most of the articles or texts that provide examples and summaries of inheritance in the pre-Persian period available at TCU are older than I would prefer. I will endeavor to find more. These pre-Persian documents are often similar to the rules followed in Genesis, marking them either as an aspect of oral tradition that survived or an attempt to sound older.

[74] Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

[75] Calum Carmichael, "Inheritance in Biblical Sources," *Law and Literature* 20, no. 2 (2008): 231-232.

and lacks deeper engagement with individual occurrences.[76] As such, Foster neglects the role that the subject plays within each occurrence and, therefore, the role that ethnicity and gender play in each. However, both Edward Bridge and Rainer Kessler pay special attention to these two concepts in their analysis of birth narratives. Kessler argues that there are two genres of naming, the *Geburtserzählung* and the genealogy. The birth narrative consists of "den konkreten Umständen von Schwangerschaft, Geburt und Namengebung, ganz unabhängig von den Fragen der Deszendenz."[77] The latter genre is only concerned with patrilineal ancestry and, as I have stated earlier, is not a part of my research except in the case of 1 Chronicles, in which the *Geburtserzählung* is inserted into the genealogy. Both Bridge and Kessler argue that the birth narrative is a gynocentric genre, with Bridge adding that the birth narrative is a pre-exilic genre, which "gives support to those studies which argue that women in ancient Israel were highly influential in at least the domestic sphere."[78] Both authors also note that foreign women do not name their children, although they do not provide an explanation for this fact.

Adele Reinhartz analyzes the role that naming plays in the biblical texts through their opposites, the unnamed characters in the stories, in *"Why Ask My Name?"*, which is useful as a tool for understanding how the background characters, often women, function within narratives, further enlightening the role of women in the textual ideology.[79] Richard Hess also performs an

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[76] C. Jeff Foster, "The Name Ritual: A Mark of Significance," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64, no. 4 (December 2021): 703–28.

[77] Rainer Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter," *Wort Und Dienst* 19 (1987): 29.

[78] Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 3 (July 28, 2014): 400. Kessler also makes a similar argument, which I will expand upon when I discuss specific texts. For Kessler, the P-source has edited some *Geburtserzählungen* and added its own stories, which explains some of the instances in which men name the child, especially in Gen. 21. Kessler, "Benennung des Kindes," 31.

[79] Adele Reinhartz, "*Why Ask My Name?"* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

analysis of names in the text, particularly in Genesis 1-11.[80] Although he limits the scope of his work, his insights into these names and his methodology are useful for understanding the role that names play throughout the text, although only as a starting point. My research will provide more insight into the function of names and naming. I hope to further the study of names as ideological markers, not just as signifiers of their role or their importance, but also as a means of relieving and controlling anxieties about future economic stability.

Methodology

I have rooted this dissertation in a Marxist and womanist-accomplice hermeneutic and methodology. Through my use of womanist-accomplice hermeneutics and Marxist literary criticism, I develop a historiography that subverts both conceptions of the ancient world as well as generate alternative structures for the one in which we live. An intersectional hermeneutic helps me analyze the various factors of one's life and being that together affect how one exists in the world.[81] As womanist interpretation is a hermeneutic performed by Black women who claim the term, I, as a white man, am unable to perform that hermeneutic. I have developed a womanist-accomplice lens to draw upon womanist works and incorporate them into my own. This approach, as with the womanist approach, is dependent upon the positionality of the person performing it. My approach begins with womanist work while simultaneously embracing and examining my positionality in an action-reflection cycle, following Wil Gafney's methodology

[80] Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament: Veröffentlichungen Zur Kultur Und Geschicte Des Alten Orients Und Des Alten Testaments 234 (Germany: Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevalaer, 1993).

[81] For my intersectional hermeneutic, I will primarily draw on Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 357–83; Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2nd ed., Key Concepts (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2020); Anna Carastathis, *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

in *Womanist Midrash*.[82] Womanist works often focus on the particular elements of the lives of Black women, including oppression along racial and gender lines. Necessarily, so too does my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic. I also incorporate intersectionality as a means of supplementing womanist works with different perspectives.

Marxism originated as a European critique of the European ideological and economic system. which has relied on slavery or slave-like conditions since its inception. In *Black Marxism*, Cedric Robinson critiques Marxism, arguing that Marxists consistently overlook the importance of slavery and the bulwark of racialized nationalism that prevents revolutionary change. He also argues that there was a Black Radical Tradition through which people such as W.E.B Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright critiqued Marxism and its failure to confront racism.[83] In light of Robinson's analysis, Roland Boer's claim that all ideological criticism is ultimately Marxist, in the sense that all oppression is rooted in the economic system, underplays the dire nature of *racialized* capitalism. Drawing on Robinson's description of the heterogenous Black Radical Tradition, I place my womanist-accomplice interpretation alongside Marxism to create a fuller picture. Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," is another useful text for understanding the relationship between Marxist and womanist criticism.[84]

In "Ideology," Althusser explains his theory of how the base and superstructure in Marxist theories relate to each other. For Althusser, the base and superstructure are related but separate because "(1) there is a 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure with respect to the base;

[82] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 7.

[83] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism, Revised and Updated Third Edition: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[84] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso Books, 2020), 1–60.

(2) there is a 'reciprocal action' of the superstructure on the base."[85] Although Althusser does not directly address the role of race in this system, I would argue that racialization is critical in the "reproduction of labour-power," as it ensures a workforce through the use of ideology, with humans understood as materials of production.[86] The same goes for other socio-spatial borders. Through an Althusserian lens, womanist works critique ideology, the superstructure, but not the base, i.e., the economy. However, as Robinson has argued, Marxists fail to account for the fact that Africans and persons in the African diaspora had, and continue to have, their own ideological systems that they bring with them wherever they go. Intersectionality is another model to generate new analyses and to correct the white-malestream of Marxism.

Intersectionality, which can function as both a theory and a hermeneutic, is a broad, transdisciplinary model for understanding the world.[87] In all its broadness, it is difficult to state exactly what intersectionality *is*. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will limit my discussion to three primary texts that have been important in the development of intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins," Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge's *Intersectionality*, and Anna Carastathis's other *Intersectionality*.[88] My inclusion of their work is important because it provides a foundation for my intersectional analysis, as intersectional hermeneutics without a key marginalized group upon which to base one's analysis can quickly fall into a colorblind analysis. From here, I will turn to Marxist literary theory, which mixes both hermeneutic and

[85] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 9

[86] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 4-8.

[87] Patricia Hill Collins examines the use of intersectionality as a theory in Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019). For multiple examples of intersectionality as a hermeneutical tool in sociology, see Mary Romero, ed., *Research Handbook on Intersectionality* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023).

[88] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins;" Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*; and Anna Carastathis, *Intersectionality.*

method, connecting intersectionality and Marxism through Ashley Bohrer's *Marxism and Intersectionality*.[89]

Womanist and Womanist-Accomplice Approaches

Womanist interpretation is as varied as those who use it. As Nyasha Junior notes, "There is no clear consensus regarding the major features of a womanist approach to biblical studies...Womanist approaches are thus individualized."[90] However, this lack of clear consensus is intentional, because, according to Townes, the womanist task of weaving the various forms of Africana perspectives, castes, sexuality, class, age, etc., brings one to understand "the ways in which Black life is not my life alone, but a compendium of conscious and unconscious coalitions with others whose lives are not lived solely in the Black face of United States life."[91] Womanist interpretation is a form of what Love Sechrest calls an associative hermeneutic, "a method based on analogical reasoning" that "involves a disciplined attempt to find the 'rhyme' between contemporary issues and the biblical texts."[92] Thus, my womanist-accomplice hermentuic does the same, and other people's womanist-accomplice approaches will necessarily reflect their own subjectivity.

In addition, the intersectional lives of Black women are primary sources from which one can critique aspects of the biblical text. As Gafney notes in *Womanist Midrash*, "womanism is as

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[89] Ashley J Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism*, Edition Moderne Postmoderne (Bielefeld, Germany: transcript publishing, 2019).

[90] Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 113.

[91] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and The Cultural Production of Evil* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

[92] Love Lazarus Sechrest, *Race and Rhyme: Rereading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 2.

much perspectival as ideological, and phenomenological as much as analytical, it resists methodology."[94] In my analysis, I will follow the list of questions she provides in her introductory section while following her womanist principles:

> (1) The *legitimacy of black women's interpretation* as normative and authoritative, (2) the *inherent value of each member of a community* in the text and interpreting the text, (3) *talking back* to the text, and (4) *making it plain*, the work of exegesis from translation to interpretation.[95]

Emilie M. Townes argues, "a key way to understand the arithmetic of misery that evil invokes and provokes is to concentrate on particularities rather than universals."[96] Townes continues by claiming her particularity as her epistemology while endeavoring not to make that a universal so that she can better analyze "the ways in which human lives and cultures have become commodities."[97] The particularity of womanism often involves walking the line between materialist and ideological hermeneutics, as "womanist thought is the notion that womanism is [not] a 'neck-up' (i.e. disembodied)…venture," but also "concerned with how theoretical insights and identity politics concerning the life and work of Black women work to facilitate liberationist scholarship and anti-oppressive social praxis."[98] In this duality, womanist interpretation is simultaneously concerned with the embodied life of Black women as well as the ideological and metaphorical function of characters and events in texts.[99]

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[94] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 7.

[95] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 8.

[96] Townes, *Womanist Ethics,* 2

[97] Townes, *Womanist Ethics*, 3.

[98] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, "Introduction: Writing for Our Lives—Womanism as an Epistemological Revolutoin," in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 5, 6.

[99] Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), analyzes the sexual imagery in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and how the negative depictions of women affects contemporary women.

In response to womanist ethics, theology, and biblical interpretation, as a white man, I have developed what I call a womanist-accomplice hermeneutic. This approach takes womanist sass, heteroglossia, or the "dancing mind" as a primary source for both understanding the contemporary world as well as the biblical text.[100] My perspective, and my desire to write as a womanist-accomplice, derives from my experiences growing up with an adopted sister who is Black. [101] She first lived with us when she was three and my parents worked at a children's home, but she later returned to live with her mother, who is also a white woman. A year or so later, her mother ran away and left her alone, so my family adopted her when she was seven and I was fourteen. I spent the next few years experiencing the racism and sexism directed at her, by both my parents, my brother (and likely myself), and her fellow students, second-hand, or through stories she told. Suddenly seeing how my family and other people treated her differently from myself and my brother, while simultaneously moving from a conservative Christian private school that was almost entirely white, and two years of being home-schooled, to a public high school with a racially and religiously diverse student body, jolted me out of my complacency and forced me to reevaluate my internalized biases. Through my undergraduate and graduate studies, my sister and I had several conversations about her ongoing struggles as a light-skinned Black girl growing up in white-majority spaces. With a white family and the traumatic separation from both of her biological parents, she has struggled to fit into both Black and white spaces, and to find her identity in either. In addition, she has faced a particular form of sexual harassment as a light-skinned Black woman, similar to the Jezebel caricature.[102] It is in light of my sister's

[100] Townes, *Womanist Ethics*, 2.

[101] I have permission to share the story of her life. However, I am keeping the details minimal to protect her privacy.

[102] See Febbie Dickerson, *Luke, Widows, Judges, and Stereotypes: Womanist Readings of Scripture* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 93-149; and Vanessa Lovelace, *A Womanist Reading of Hebrew Bible*

experiences and our conversations, and in defense of her right to exist as a fully-embodied human, that I first approached womanist biblical interpretation, theology, and ethics in my master's program, beginning with Mitzi Smith's *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*,[103] particularly in how it recontextualized my sister's sass toward my parents and other authority figures. In the interceding years, I have developed the womanist-accomplice hermeneutic I use here.

The language of accomplice is meant to evoke the legal and criminal context in which an accomplice is charged alongside the perpetrator because both parties took part in the criminal act, though potentially through different means. Thus, in the currently rising tide of racism and sexism, including the US president's direction to his administration to legally or economically attack any state or country supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, the accomplice does not stand down or relent, but is implicated alongside Black women and other minorities as they stand up in defense of their existence. I outline the development of this hermeneutic, my ethical commitments, and my praxis in my forthcoming article, "How Can I Do This Work Well?: Ethically Engaging Womanism and Black Women as a White Man," in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*,[104] so I will provide an abbreviated description of my practice here; however, my intention for the womanist-accomplice hermeneutic is that it can be used my many people, so this is not the singular form that everyone should use. It should be as varied as those who take part in the same approach.

This approach begins with a thorough study of womanist works, as well as other writings by Black women in various veins, and a centering of Black women's lives, and also those of

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Narratives as the Politics of Belonging from an Outsider Within (New York: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2024), 61-90).

[103] Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (in)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

[104] To be published.

other minoritized people, to gain an understanding of the systems of oppression and how they are experienced. I write as a white man for other white people, and so my intention is to help my audience understand and engage with the experiences of minoritized people. Here, my goal is to read with a ”global-systemic paradigm…across geopolitical boundaries employing diverse critical methodologies to address the interconnected crises of our time.”[105] This is why I read with an intersectional lens and a Marxist lens alongside my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic.

My next step is to read the text through two lenses: the lens of the oppressor (how the text can be used to support white men and oppress others) and in light of how oppressed people read the text against their oppression. I then read a second time, attending to the power dynamics at play through race, class, and gender in the interplay of the narrator and characters. I then turn to womanist and other Black women's works on the topics at play (including sociology and related disciplines), and then the works of other minoritized people. From here, I engage in self-reflection between these perspectives repeatedly as I interpret the text and incorporate those perspectives. In doing so, I use the text to respond to the group in power and how it reproduces the systems of control to benefit itself, challenging the cisgendered, heterosexual white male-centric hierarchy. I read the text as representative of the dominant view, but containing and suppressing the perspectives of the minoritized groups.

A womanist-accomplice hermeneutic is appropriate for my study because it foregrounds multiply marginalized people in the ancient world and embraces both their embodied nature and the way that they function as symbols within the text to dominate and exclude others who might challenge the systems of power. Townes's "countermemory" is a beneficial tool for this

[105] Amy Lindeman Allen, Francisco Lozada Jr., and Yak-hwee Tan, "The Critic in the World: Toward Geopolitical Biblical Criticism," in *The Critic in the World: Essays in Honor of Fernando F. Segovia*, ed. Amy Lindeman Allen, Francisco Lozada Jr., and Yak-hwee Tan, Resources for Biblical Study 108 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2024), 63.

project.[106] Countermemory assists in redefining a person's history to acknowledge how oppression helped and hindered one's growth and how the hegemonic system determined one's morals and ethics. It is not my goal to fully recreate what *actually* happened in the ancient world, although I will use various sources from the ancient world in shaping my argument.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept that focuses on societal structures and how a person functions in different ways, based on various identity markers and claims, and how their positions within society are reflected in various ways based on those identities. Kimberlé Crenshaw specifically identifies her work in intersectionality as both Black feminist and within the framework of critical race theory in "Mapping the Margins."[107] She divides her examination of intersectionality into two categories: structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. According to Crenshaw, "The problem of identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference…but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences."[108] Ashley Bohrer further qualifies what she calls "the intersectional tradition" by providing six postulates of intersectional thinking: the inseparability of oppressions, the inability to rank oppressions, thinking in multiple registers of oppression simultaneously, identity within political organizing and theorizing, thinking about power within those spaces, and its role as an account and critique of power.[109] Intersectionality is *a* tool for identifying differences within groups and how that

[106] Although it does not quite fit Townes's intention, I believe Jameson's call to "Always historicize" echoes the attempt to re-member the past in a way that provides more liberatory futures. The key difference is that Copeland's re-memory is a counter-memory, a response to systems of oppression in order to re-present oneself as a full human being. Townes, *Womanist Ethics*, 8.

[107] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 378.

[108] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 357.

[109] Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality*, 91-4.

"contributes to tension *among groups*," and how feminist and anti-racist works fail to take the intersections into account.[110]

For Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, intersectionality is useful as a tool for confronting inequalities and social division both at an organizational level and at an individual level and examine how people use the tool throughout the world, including the historical usage of multiple identities throughout history as a heuristic device, which means that "intersectionality can assume many different forms."[111] Carastathis argues that the four main analytic benefits of intersectionality as a paradigm are simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility, and inclusivity.[112] She argues that intersectionality likely functions more as a heuristic for interpreting results—methodological commitments—rather than as a research method.[113] For this reason, Collins and Bilge primarily focus their analysis on what intersectionality *does* as a critical praxis. Placing it within a global context, similar to a Marxist model, "can foster a better understanding of growing global inequality…complicates class-only explanations for global economic inequality…[and] highlights the significance of social institutions in shaping and solving social problems."[114] For both authors, the point of using an intersectional hermeneutic or developing intersectionality into a critical social theory is to begin the practice of building coalitions of people that can work

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[110] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 357.

[111] Bilge and Collins, *Intersectionality*, 4.

[112] Simultaneity is the "Phenomenological claim that intersectionality captures how oppressions are experienced simultaneously." Complexity accounts for and captures experiential and structural complexity. Irreducibility is important because "Intersectionality theorists argue that oppression is produced through the interaction of multiple, decentered, and mutually constitutive axes. This controverts orthodox Marxist approaches, for instances, which claim that class relations of exploitation…have causal and explanatory priority to gender and race, which are viewed as 'epiphenomenal," immaterial, and divisive ideologies." And finally, inclusivity works act as a corrective against the white solipsism, heteronormativity, elitism, and ableism of dominant power and hegemonic feminist theory by making social locations and experiences visible that are occluded in essentialist and exclusionary constructions of the category 'women.'" Carastathis, *Intersectionality,* 54-57.

[113] Carastathis, *Intersectionality*, 59.

[114] Bilge and Collins, *Intersectionality*, 15-16.

together to create a better future for all people. It is for this reason that intersectionality's root in Black feminist theory must be emphasized (and why I choose to focus on womanist interpretations).

This hermeneutic is important for biblical interpretation, and this project in particular, because it brings together the multi-faceted lives of the characters within the text and provides a basis upon which to both conduct research in the ancient world as well as to direct one's attention to the multiple aspects of a character's lives. Although Rainer Kessler has noted, "Eine Einschränkung dieses Brauches [these customs] finden wir nur, wo die Mutter keine Israelitin (Asenath und Zippora) oder zusätzlich nicht im Vollsinn legitime Ehefrau des Kindes ist (Thamar und die Nebenfrau Gideons),"[115] he does not spend significant time examining the repercussions of this fact. Edward Bridge's examination of the annunciation type-scene as a form of women's influence and public-facing duties describes the gendered system of the ancient world, but he does not discuss the impact of non-Israelite mothers or how they are affected.[116] An intersectional hermeneutic, especially one guided by womanist interpretive strategies and questions, is critical to understanding how these statuses functionally removed foreign women from the genealogical system of *nahalah* and other forms of influence over their children. In eschewing the mother's claim to her child, the texts avoid confronting the economic and political systems in which those texts arose, and therefore reify the systems of oppression that maintain upper-class domination through the control of property and the backing of the Persian governmental apparatus.

[115] Kessler, "Benennung des Kindes," 34.

[116] Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 3 (July 28, 2014): 389–400.

I argue that the Persian empire worked in a similar manner, especially because one of its main contributions to future peoples was its clearly defined bureaucracy.[117] That is not to say that the Persian government had anywhere near the level of sophistication that contemporary nation-states. The Persian Empire was divided into seven regions, each region divided into satraps, and those into sub-satraps, each with its own tax burden and governor. In doing so, the Persian government allowed Persian administrators over their province to set their own rules for how they attained their taxes, among other rules.[118] In the case of the province of Yehud, it seems as though the local leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and later Ezra and Nehemiah, had some say in the matter of who was included in their system, as demonstrated through the language of "the people of the land" (Ezra 4:4) over and against the *golah*, with each group having separate governors.

An intersectional hermeneutic helps one to better understand the interlocking systems at play within the texts and the community at large as multiple groups vied for power. The leaders of the returnee group determined who could take part in the broader community according to various rules that they themselves set up. These rules determined who could own land, who could marry whom, and from whence the taxes came to travel through the ranks of the Persian administration. An analysis of the stories that these people and their neighbors tell, which includes biblical texts, must include various perspectives and examine the multiple systems at play. Although the systems of taxation/tribute were important and underlie the systems at play, merely focusing on the economy and taxes invisibilizes those whom the community and their

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[117] Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 113.

[118] Norman K. Gottwald, "The Expropriated and Expropriators in Nehemiah 5," in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, ed. Mark R. Sneed, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 1–20; E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 80.

leaders chose to reject. The group with the backing of the Persian government seems to have won the economic contest, but there are underlying compromises that this hermeneutic helps bring to the fore. This focus on the economic system as a root of oppression and control, the class system (anachronistic, I know, but that is the point), brings me to Marxism and its broader ideological criticism as both hermeneutic and method.

Marxism

Marxist literary criticism is concerned with the development of texts and how they reflect the ideologies within which they arose. Marxist critics do so through a rhetorical analysis of the text (especially the rhetoric of form, central to this dissertation) and critical engagement with the ideology of the text (especially naturalization and dominant ideologies).[119] Throughout Marxist criticism, the economy is the "untranscendable horizon" through which all ideology is reified and interpellated. For Althusser, this "last instance" never comes because the economy and superstructure continually change each other. Following Robinson, all capitalism is racial capitalism, and following Althusser, ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) survive through economic changes. Both racism and sexism, and particularly their intersections, are ideological tools by which the dominant socio-economic ethnic class ensure that the means of production, the workers themselves, continue to exist in a state of conflict with one another, rather than rising

[119] Both Barbara Foley and Roland Boer provide a longer list of what Marxist literary criticism discusses, including the nature of dialectics, the understanding of culture, literature and aesthetics in light of ideology, commodification, economic value, reification, the superstructure, social class and conflict, the mode of production, fictionality, defamiliarization, universality, empathy, individual and group identity, autonomy, and formal unity. Barbara Foley, *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press, 2019), 94-120, 122-136; Roland Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 6. Terry Eagleton identifies several definitions, including "(a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life; (b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class…(d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power…(g) forms of thought motivated by social interest; (h) identity thinking; (i) socially necessary illusion…(p) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality." Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso Books, 1991). 1-2.

against those with power. One of Robinson's key arguments is that capitalism *requires racism*, and here I also add sexism, and therefore both are as central to the present superstructure as the economy, but specifically under capitalism. It is at this point that I break with traditional Marxist thought, which takes only the economy as the base. Intersectionality, for its part, provides a better system for understanding intra-categorical distinctions and counteracting the tendency among Marxist scholars to homogenize all relations into economic and class-based oppression. In addition, both womanist and Marxist interpretations are historiographical projects.

Althusser's theory of ideology is one that focuses on the production and reproduction of ideologies, describing ideology as yet another material from which one can produce forces which extend an expansive web of other forces that must also produce and reproduce each other to maintain this system. Althusser's unique benefit to this dissertation is his separation of the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA, formerly called the State, aka the government, military, criminal justice system, etc.) and the ISA, as well as his discussion of the autonomy of each part of the base-superstructure model. The ISA, separate from the State, is the private plurality by which the SA reproduces and protects itself. It is made up of various groups, including religious groups, educational systems, family, the political system, communications, and culture.[120] Because the ruling class has control over the whole RSA and only the *ruling* ideology, the ISA is "not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle."[121] Literary works are products at the intersection of various ISAs, yet they also reflect back upon those superstructures and even the

[120] Althusser, "Ideology," 17.

[121] Althusser, "Ideology," 21.

economic infrastructure, which renders them all "a complex and dialectical network of mutual determination."[122]

Boer uses Althusser's theory in "Louis Althusser: The Difficult Birth of Israel in Genesis," wherein he uses Althusser's "Ideology" and *The Future Lasts a Long Time* to examine why and how "The maternal body of Rebekah becomes a site of the most profound tensions in Genesis, for here all of the [ISAs] comes [*sic*] together in a contradictory effort to bring about the 'birth' of Israel."[123] For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use Althusser's terms to focus on the religious/political-family dynamic as the primary ISAs at the time, as the religious and political forces were intimately linked both by the Persian ruler. Texts are the site of class struggle, where the ruling class has the ability to create and understand the text and the proletariat does not. However, that does not mean that the illiterate people accepted the ruling class ideology; in fact, the edict in Ezra-Nehemiah that required the divorce of intermarried couples (Ezra 10; Nehemiah 13) points to the counter-narratives that allowed marriage beyond one's kinship group. One might imagine counter-genealogies, different tales of ownership that point to abuses of power among the elite prior to the exilic period.

The final point of Althusser's discussion of ISAs is that of their autonomy, particularly its usefulness in combining Marxism with intersectionality. In the Marxist tradition, the superstructure is relatively autonomous from the base and the superstructure always affects the base reciprocally. Ideology has a material dimension, and the various autonomous aspects of the superstructure seek to reproduce themselves. An ideologeme is the smallest material unit of

[122] Luke Ferreter, *Louis Althusser*, 1st ed., Routledge Critical Thinkers (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41-2. I hope it is becoming more obvious why intersectionality theory works well with Althusser's system.

[123] Roland Boer, "Louis Althusser: The Difficult Birth of Israel in Genesis," in *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 7.

ideology with a "possibility to manifest itself either as a pseudo-idea—a conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or prejudice—or as a proto-narrative."[124] It is here that I bring intersectionality and Marxist theory together most easily. By centering multiple fields of identity and relation and how they interrelate, an intersectional hermeneutic helps one understand how the various autonomous structures (e.g. race, class, and gender) reciprocally affect each other while also replicating themselves within society as their ideologemes spread and evolve. The relative autonomy of all aspects of the superstructure and infrastructure also allows these various aspects of the Marxist model to contradict each other, which is the root of Marxist literary criticism and the superstructure under analysis in the second horizon of Jameson's symptomatic reading.

Marxist criticism is rare among Bible scholars, although it more frequently appears within materialist, social-scientific, and ideological criticisms.[125] However, Boer has become perhaps the most prominent Marxist biblical scholar (when he works with biblical texts), and his work will be central to my work with Marxism. My methodology will follow his own in *Jameson and Jeroboam,* which uses Fredric Jameson's Marxist methodology outlined in *The Political Unconscious*, but edits that methodology to fit the context of the Bible and the ancient world to which one has little access. For Jameson,

> "History is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious."[126]

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[124] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 87.

[125] For example, Gottwald, *The Tribes of Y[*****]* Mark Sneed's *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, Yee's Poor Banished children of Eve, Meyers *rediscovering Eve*,

[126] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 35.

Althusser is quick to warn his readers against periodization and historicism, which certainly flies in the face of this project and Jameson's work, which I use as a methodological root, especially Jameson's steadfast, "Always historicize!"[127] It is this point that also makes intersectionality a necessary tool in this analytical model, as Althusser's warning is against becoming fatally reductive.[128] I note here that I am not drawing a line from this research to contemporary ethno-racial and sex/gender structures, but rather examine ways in which models of oppression along the lines of sex/gender and kinship arise in various forms in response to both internal and external forces, often in response to economic conditions. My use of this methodology is a movement toward Gafney's fourth principle of womanist interpretation, "making it plain,"[129] as my goal is to make the economic roots of socio-spatial borders between people of different ethnicities, races, genders, sexualities, classes, and nationalities plain, both within the text and in the modern world. Jameson's model uses three phases to accomplish this analysis.

Jameson's three horizons, or phases, of analysis are made up of an analysis of the superstructure and base at play within each. The first horizon is the political/literal phase, wherein the superstructure is the text, and, for Boer, the base is "inaccessible for biblical analysis."[130] In the second horizon, or the social phase, the superstructure is the text *and* ideology while the base is class. Finally, the superstructure of the third horizon, or the historical phase, is the generic form and the base is the mode of production.[131] In narrative terms, the generic form

[127] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 9.

[128] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 27.

[129] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 8.

[130] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 52.

[131] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 76-83.

could be a specific type-scene.[132] The *Geburtserzählung* is the type-scene for this dissertation, and so that is where the first phase begins.

First Horizon: The Literal or Political Phase

The first horizon is the literal or political phase which is, admittedly, more formalist than I prefer; however, my argument is deeply rooted in a specific verbal form, the feminine *qal* form, and the way that the appearance of other forms demonstrates conflict and contradiction. The superstructure here is the text and the base is history as a list of events, such as the change of monarchs or the exile of the elites. It is in this phase that I will perform an exegetical analysis, taking the text as a symbolic act, and therefore an imaginary solution to the real problems of infrastructural contradictions. The structure (or genre) organizes the content, which is the raw material, shaping the product in such a way that fits well within the tradition of that form.[133] An analysis of the formal structures reveals some, though certainly not all, aspects of ideology within the text.

The aporia in the formal structures I am analyzing is the masculine singular, common plural, and feminine plural form of קרא שׁם. By using these forms, the biblical text brackets off the possibility of foreign women influencing society through claims of mutual kinship and the control of property. The naming formula is but one part of the structure of the *Geburtserzählung*, which also includes pregnancy and birth. I am convinced by Jeff Foster's argument that the name ritual is far more expansive than the birth formula. Instead, the name ritual is one genre, and the

[132] Robert Alter analyzes type-scenes and explains their importance for understanding the function of texts in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011).

[133] This is why establishing the naming formulation as a form is so important.

birth narrative is derived from mixing narrative (about a birth) and the name ritual.[134] Sometimes the *Geburtserzählung* is inserted into other genres, as in both 1 Chronicles 7 and Genesis 4, which creates a conflict between the typically masculinized genre of genealogy and the feminine name ritual. It is from this perspective that I argue that inheritance is at stake. Because naming a child is typically the role of the mother, the entire genealogical structure represents a break in the form in which most birth narratives appear. Then again, naming a place is typically the role of the man, i.e. naming and claiming it. In that case, the mother naming her child is also a moment of aporia, when women of the text, as a whole, are presented as having collective power.

Second Horizon: The Social Phase

The second phase of Jameson's analysis is the mediation point between the first and third phases, bridging the gap between the text's ideological function in the social world and how it functions for either the legitimation or subversion of the ruling class. The superstructure in this phase is the text and ideology, especially drawing on the Marxist definition of ideology as the Imaginary relationship of individuals to their Real conditions of existence, or, in Jameson's words, which "designates function whereby the biological individual situates [themselves] in relationship to the social totality."[135] As with the first horizon, Jameson's focus here is the form of the text, rather than in the content or intentions, because these aspects arise from the political unconscious rather than the intentions of the contributors. For both Althusser and Jameson, narrative is the

[134] For Foster, the use of קרא שׁם points the audience to an important figure in the text, either as a character, a city, or a place. He argues that this structure is an aspect of oral tradition in the repetition of word roots and concepts (though he acknowledges the problems in attempting to reconstruct these traditions). He calls this construction a ritual because it consistently appears with the same features, including the name clause and the explanation clause, as well as a *Leitwort* that appears in both clauses. There is no specific order in which the clauses must appear. Foster, "The Name Ritual," 704.

[135] Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 165.

means by which each person mediates the relationship between themselves and their conditions of existence, between individual and totality, and therefore makes the unconscious of the contributors accessible. The base in this phase is the question of class, and a "constitutive form of class relationships is always that between a dominant and a laboring class: and it is only in terms of this axis that class factions (for example, the petty bourgeoisie) are positioned."[136] The text always represents both classes because it is an attempt at delimiting the ideological boundaries with which people can subvert the current structures, or it is used to subvert those very structures as a counter-ideology.

Ideologemes are analyzed as one does the formal structure in the first horizon, by examining how it is a symbolic resolution to a historical contradiction to find the antinomy. The broader site of struggle in these texts is that of the return from exile. This crisis is not so much the return from exile itself, but the crisis of returning from exile and finding an occupied territory, people who are kin, but having to reject those people to grasp and maintain power. This conflict is made explicit in Ezra 4:1-3, when the returnees refuse help from those who never went into exile. The returnees, in effect, reject the authenticity of the remainees' genealogy and claim to be the only people with a right to the land. Having the backing of the Persian government, the returnees are the upper class because they have access to the Repressive State Apparatus, to the Persian coffers, and represent the Persian government's will in their actions. The remainees, then, are the lower class who must contend with both returnee and Persian repressive actions.

The remainees use underhanded means in this colony-esque class warfare, including bribery and official complaints, though the returnees ultimately succeed and work to exclude the

[136] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 83-4.

remainees and all others who intermarry (although this rule against intermarriage is another site of ideological conflict, as I argue throughout this dissertation). However, Jameson seeks to find a mote of utopia as the positive dimension of ideology and conflict. A utopia is "a space for a better place…a more or less realistic program, or a mere hope for a better life with few expectations for its realization."[137] In using this approach, Jameson historicizes the world in which the text arose to discover the "political unconscious" and how the text functions as a form of wish-fulfilment, necessarily repressed for survival.[138] This is because "Utopia may also spring from an impulse and reflect a transcendent mentality that has the ability to break to bonds of the existing order and generate a new social one."[139] Biblical studies is often, in a sense, always utopian, in that "Biblical scholars enact socially critical 'backward glances' that look for lost possibilities as well as alternate futures and/or seek to disrupt the present through a critical excavation of the past, of what we have too easily forgotten."[140] Jameson's symptomatic approach is a methodology that makes this turn toward the utopian intentional.

The problem with utopias is that they tend to be a utopia for one group while simultaneously excluding everyone else, typically from the perspective of the elite.[141] However, by intentionally incorporating the voices of all people, and particularly those minoritized by

[137] Philippe Guillaume, "Pragmatic, Utopian, and Dystopian Deuteronomy," in *Deuteronomy: Outside the Box*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Philippe Guillaume, Themes and Issues in Biblical Studies (Bristol, CT: equinox, 2024), 322.

[138] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 61-69.

[139] Guillaume, "Pragmatic, Utopian, and Dystopian," 322.

[140] Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, "Biblical Studies and/as Utopian Studies," in *The Critic in the World: Essays in Honor of Fernando F. Segovia*, ed. Amy Lindeman Allen, Francisco Lozada Jr., and Yak-hwee Tan, Resources for Biblical Study 108 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2024), 678.

[141] Guillaume, "Pragmatic, Utopian, and Dystopian," 329.

other systems, "an infinite project," one can mitigate this problem.[142] Through my womanist-accomplice approach, I tie this movement toward utopia as related to Alice Walker's definitions of what womanist is: a person who is "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people."[143] "Entire people" could be entire individual people or entire groups of people. I read it in the latter form, as seeking wholeness for the whole world and everyone and every thing that lives upon it. That is, I read in the text "the material grounding of utopia in the author's reality and the desire to go beyond it to create to create a better alternative."[144] It is the attempt to create a new and better world, but one's positionality affects how one imagines a better world. As I read these birth narratives, I read them as an attempt to establish an exclusivist version of utopia, but not to the same extent that modern racial and religious nationalism takes. However, I reject this version of utopia because it inherently dehumanizes people and leads to abuse and, potentially, genocide. Instead, I read utopianism as a constantly changing image of the future, in which freedom for all is a constant act of marronage, running away from unfreedom through social transformation.[145]

For the biblical text, I agree with Boer that part of this symptomatic reading should be an examination of how it functions as a national allegory.[146] Genesis, the text from which the vast majority (all but two) of my passages derive, is itself a national allegory, so this model works well. However, the cracks in exclusivist utopias always break the system. Thus, I also read the submerged utopian dream that is hidden in the text, which I derive from my womanist-

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[142] Frauke Uhlenbruch, "Introduction," in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 620 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 3.

[143] Alice Walker, "Definitions of Womanist," in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), xi.

[144] Katherine Gwyther, "Utopian Studies and the Hebrew Bible," *Currents in Biblical Research* 23.2 (2025): 111.

[145] Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 7.

[146] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 73-76.

accomplice hermeneutic. Finding this submerged utopia requires me to read against the text to understand what perspectives and which people the narrator and the contributors to the text are suppressing. It is in this move that I find the hidden utopias that move toward inclusion, health, and the wholeness of all people as fellow humans.

Third Horizon: The Historical Phase

The third horizon concerns the totality of history and the text's formal structure as sign systems that represent different modes of production. In some ways, this phase is a return to the first horizon, but with a broader perspective that understands the text's role as a historical moment, representative of the entire society in which it came forth and all of history. As with the first phase, the superstructure is that of form and is concerned with the contradiction between the structure of the text and the way they change throughout the text. The base, however, is much different: it is the mode of production (MP), "designating the whole of reality" in an Althusserian sense.[147] The key here is that it is not just the ancient MP, but also the MP of the interpreter, and their relationship to one another. Jameson draws on Marx's historical consciousness to engage in this act of historicism. Each MP also comes with a dominant cultural field in Marxist theory.

Mode of Production	*Cultural Dominant*
hunting and gathering (tribal society, primitive communism or the horde)	magic and mythic narrative
neolithic agriculture (the *gens* or hierarchical kinship societies)	kinship
Asiatic mode of production ("oriental despotism" or tributary MP)	religion or the sacred
ancient or classical [*sic*] mode of production	"politics" in terms of citizenship of the city-

[147] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 86.

(the *polis* or oligarchical slaveholding society)	state
feudalism	relations of personal domination
capitalism	commodity reification
communism	original forms of collective and communal association[148]

I will replace the "Asiatic mode of production" in Marx's categories with Boer's work in *The Sacred Economy*.[149] I make this change because Marx's use of "Asiatic" and "oriental despotism" reflect what Edward Said calls Orientalism, which is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience," used for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[150] However, it is important to note that the point of this model is to help one historicize and mediate between the ancient MP and the modern MP. These MPs do not necessarily arise in any particular order and several MPs exist simultaneously at various levels of society, each with their own cultural dominants, constantly interacting with each other within the web. As I place these texts within the Persian empire, Boer's model of tribute-exchange applies to each. Although I will apply this model altogether in my conclusion, I will not do so in each chapter. Some texts will certainly use that model, such as my analyses of life in Egypt, but my chapter on the Davidic lineage will focus on the (E)state MP because those texts are relevant to the establishment of a monarchy.[151] As I will have already analyzed the formal structures of the texts in the first horizon, my use of the third

[148] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 88.

[149] For the purposes of this dissertation, I will follow the models of the ancient world as described in Boer, *The Sacred Economy*; Bendor, *The Social Structure*; and Gottwald, *The Tribes of Y[*****]*.

[150] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 1; 3.

[151] Boer encloses the E in (E)state in parentheses because, although the modern nation-state did not exist, the monarch's estate usufruct of the land and the labor force. The estate, then, was also a form of State, or proto-State; Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 110.

horizon will focus primarily on the mediation between the superstructure and the base in order to find the antinomy and utopia.

Two important features in this process of mediation are figuration and cultural revolution. Figuration examines the shadows of the MPs, seeking out the "peripheral, distorted and symbolic figures" of the MP and identifying the connections.[152] These figures stand out as a break or lapse in the style because they break through the boundaries of the dominant MP and culture to express the faint outlines of other models. Jameson especially pulls out conceptual traits like religion, spatial representation, and sentence production. Cultural revolution is "that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life."[153] That is, it is the aspect of the text that derives from a change in circumstances and the subsequent change in relationship between the superstructure and base. A utopia derives from this change in circumstances, where the system fails and people can imagine a new future. It is here that I draw most from womanist perspectives, as the system has repeatedly failed Black women and forced them to define themselves on their own, often as an outsider-within.[154] However, a modern utopia must acknowledge the failure of the capitalist economy, of socio-spatial borders, and of liberal and neoliberal epistemologies, and instead focus on imagining the world as a place for all people to thrive and move freely without the constraints of the nation-state. Yet, I must also note that the exclusion of foreign women in Ezra-Nehemiah functioned as a utopia, not just for the upper-

[152] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 81.

[153] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 95.

[154] Shannon M. Monnat, "Toward a Critical Understanding of Gendered Color-Blind Racism Within the U.S. Welfare Institution," *Journal of Black Studies* 40.4 (2010): 648.

class returnees, but as a marginalized group trying to protect itself from dissolution.[155] The same goes for modern people who are marginalized on the global scale who might suppress other minoritized peoples within their own homelands. For this dissertation, I will generally point to the conflict between the returnees and the remainees as the central revolution because the arrival of those who had been in exile creates a distinct shift in power and relations to the Persian emperor. The re-establishment of the temple is also a broad general representation. However, each text will also have their own forms of figuration and cultural revolution that betrays these and other aspects of change.

Conclusion

Following these three horizons, I have divided the texts according to major themes at play within the broader narrative. The first chapter in my analysis focuses on the development of the people of Israel through birth narratives. These stories include the births of Ishmael and Isaac (though their mothers are more central characters), the birth of Esau and Jacob,[156] and the children of Bilhah, Zilpah, Rachel, and Leah (although Ben-oni/Benjamin is the only aberrant form here). The next chapter focuses on the Judahite and Davidic lineage through Shua, Tamar, and Ruth. Shua and Tamar share Genesis 38, which splits the Joseph narrative, marking it as unique and separate, and Ruth has her own story. In addition, each of these three women is non-Israelite and the other characters subvert that narrative in different ways. Finally, the third chapter of this analysis focuses on characters whose lives are deeply connected to Egypt. Joseph

[155] To see how this exclusion functioned as a utopia, see Ehud Ben Zvi, "Re-Negotiating a Putative Utopia and the Stories of the Rejection of Foreign Wives in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 620 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 105–28.

[156] I use the singular term for birth here because they are twins, and so shared the same womb and birthing process (though they are fraternal twins, so likely two different ova).

marries an Egyptian woman and, according to the analysis of Erin Beall, my fellow candidate, becomes Egyptian, making his story unique. In addition, Joseph's sons become Jacob's sons. Moses, who is an Egyptian through naming (I will argue), also marries a non-Israelite woman, although the story of his children does not end so well for them. By dividing the narratives into these categories, I emphasize different phases and focuses on the lives of the Israelite people, from origins to monarchy to exile. Although I place the stories in all three chapters after the exile, the throughline also has its own three-horizon structure which I will elaborate in the conclusion.[157] Though these analyses, I will demonstrate that naming functions as a tactic to negotiate kinship claims and determine who carries forward the familial land claims and maintains the usufruct of the land.

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[157] I would like to make an important caveat to my work. Although I have divided my analysis into three distinct chapters, the reality is that the commentary for each of the three horizons could be the same, as they are all tied together. I could have separate each chapter into a distinct horizon, rather than a collection of texts with all three horizons (i.e. chapter three as an analysis of all texts through the first horizon, chapter four as an analysis of all the texts through the second horizon, and chapter five as the third horizon). However, I found it better to work with each story on its own and in the context of particular themes.

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CHAPTER 2: THE MATRIARCHS

The stories of the matriarchs in Genesis function as the foundational myths for Israel, and are therefore key points of ethnic negotiation and conflict for determining the boundaries around which the *golah* community would define itself and exclude the remainees. Several scholars have noted the connections between Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan and the returnee's journey from Persia to the province of Yehud.[1] The Abrahamic covenant supports the displacement of indigenous peoples in the future so that Abraham's descendants would take over the usufruct of the land (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7, 18-20; 17:8, among others). This covenant is repeated to Abraham's descendants multiple times (Gen. 26:3; 28:13; 32:28; Ex. 23:31-33). This chapter will focus specifically on Hagar and Sarah's birth stories, but first I will discuss the other matriarchal stories to provide greater context for the genre conventions.

Each of the matriarchal stories is tied to the division of land among Abraham's descendants and represents the various kinship ties among people. Ishmael and Isaac's outcomes are the most disparate, with one living in the wilderness and the other traveling in land promised to Abraham. Isaac's children both receive land, although Esau's land is further from the central realm of these stories. All of Jacob's sons become the people of Israel, but represent specific tribes that become the central focus of all other stories. His daughter, Dinah, is discounted in the ensuing narratives and her children, if she has any, do not explicitly appear in the biblical text

[1] See Albert de Pury, "Abraham: The Priestly Writer's 'Ecumenical' Ancestor," in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 294 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 163–81.

beyond this story. Each of these stories reflects a cultural claim of land ownership and a demarcation of that ownership. These boundaries are and land claims are further developed in Second Temple texts like *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*. As Second Temple texts, the continual reassertion that the land does, indeed, belong to one specific group of people, the *Yehudim* (*Ioudaios* under Greek and Roman rule), is also at play in these patriarchal narratives and reflects ongoing problems at the subconscious (and, really, conscious) level.

As a central facet to these land claims, the stories of the matriarchs are fertile ground for examining ethnic negotiations taking place in the early Second Temple Period. Devora Steinmetz sees this literature as the "social construct" of "a society struggling to define itself."[2] For her, these stories represent "the struggle for stability within the family" that "reflects the society's perception of its very nature, of the conflicts that threaten it, of its capacity to resolve conflict, and of the society's ultimate ability to establish itself and to survive."[3] This understanding fits particularly well into Jameson's conception of the political unconscious, in which a society develops imaginary solutions to real problems through story.[4] The matriarchal stories reflect the returnee's fear of women's role in systems of power through exogamous unions, as well as the fear of losing the land they had taken as a result of their position within the Persian Empire.[5]

Hagar's story is particularly representative of these fears, as her story takes place at the very beginning of the returnees' claim to the land, and her exile repeats Ezra and Nehemiah's

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[2] Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 30.

[3] Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 30.

[4] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[5] This entire dissertation is an examination of this fear through naming stories. However, this fear is not just evident through naming stories, but numerous others. Delilah and the זָרָה מְנָכְרִיָּה in Proverbs 7 are both examples of the fear of foreign women generally. Jezebel, however, is the most famous example of how an exogamous union is portrayed as going badly for the Israelites.

solution to exogamous marriage. However, before I turn to Hagar, I will first analyze the stories of Rachel and Leah having children and claiming Bilhah and Zilpah's children through naming provide a full thirteen examples of this form, then turn to Rebekah's twins. I will read these stories first to set the standard against which I will analyze the break with the naming formula that takes place in Hagar's story.

Bilhah and Zilpah Losing Their Children

The story of Bilhah and Zilpah begins when Leah has children and Rachel becomes jealous due to her perceived inability to do so (Gen. 30:1).[6] After Leah has four children (29:32-35), Rachel gives Bilhah, her אָמָה, to Jacob. After Rachel says these words to Jacob, the text uses שִׁפְחָה (30:5-8) instead of אָמָה, and Rachel gives her as an אִשָּׁה (30:4), like Sarai does with Hagar to Abram. Leah does the same with Zilpah, always שִׁפְחָה (30:9-13), and each אִשָּׁה-שִׁפְחָה has two children. The process of naming each child born to four of these women is almost identical and establishes an important precedent for the rest of this paper. Notably, this form returns almost identically in 1 Samuel 1:20 and 1 Chronicles 7:23. The basic model for these *Geburtserzählungen* follows this model: X conceived (וַתַּהַר, Qal-Preterite-3FS), and bore (וַתֵּלֶד, usu. Qal-Pret-3FS) a son (בֵּן), *explanation of name,* and *mother* called (וַתִּקְרָא, usu. Qal-Pret-3FS) his name (שֵׁם) *name*.[7]

[6] Surrogate motherhood, rather than increasing the number of wives, ensured the primary wife or wives maintained their status in the system, Jibrail Bin Yusuf and Sultan Omar, "From Hebrew 'Slave' to Arabian 'Sage': Linking the Jewish and Muslim Narratives in the Story of Hagar, the African in Pre-Islamic Arab History," *CJR*, January 2017, 8.

[7] The Greek text has a more varied system of verbs and verbal forms than the Hebrew. For conception, συλλαμβάνω, the participle appears in Genesis 29:35; 30:17 and 23, while the rest use the active indicative form. For the birth, τίκτω retains the aorist active indicative form throughout. Καλέω is the primary verb used for naming, although Leah uses ἐπονομάζω in Genesis 30:11.

Most changes to this formula are minor throughout the biblical text, but appear in Genesis 29-30, the birth of Bath-Shua's children in Gen. 38,[8] Samuel's birth in 1 Samuel 1:20, and Beriah's birth in 1 Chronicles 7:23.[9] First, throughout Genesis 29 and 30, as well as Genesis 16 and 21 for Hagar and Sarah, the women bear a child for or to their partner, Abra(ha)m or Jacob, as signified by the prefix –לְ. This addition is repeated throughout Genesis, but is not required for the *Geburtserzählung*. In some cases, the material moves around, such as in Genesis 29:32 and 1 Samuel 1:20, where the explanation of the name comes at the end of the birth narrative. Or sometimes part of the formula is not present, as in the case of Judah's children in Genesis 38:3-4, where there is no explanation for the name at all. Other minor changes include adding the order of the child (e.g. in Gen 30:17-18, Issachar is the fifth son, this type of addition also appears in vv. 7-8, 10-11, 12-13, and 19-20). Another is the birth of Dinah, the only woman who has a birth narrative in this style, with בַּת and שְׁמָהּ replacing בֶּן and שְׁמוֹ (v. 21).[10] In a more striking disappearance, the MT of Gen 30:10-13 does not describe Zilpah conceiving children, jumping straight to her childbirth, although the Greek does describe the conception. As with the explanation of the name and the description of bearing to or for a partner, this aspect of the birth narrative is not required to count as part of the naming genre, which only requires a birth and naming, according to Kessler.[11]

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[8] The designation of Judah's wife's is "The daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua." Therefore, I am currently calling her Bath-Shua, or daughter of Shua. This might change in the future.

[9] 1 Chronicles 7:23 also uses וַיִּקְרָא instead of וַתִּקְרָא; however, it also appears within a genealogy and falls outside the scope of this project. In 1 Samuel 4:19, the Greek uses the perfect active participle to describe the conception, its only appearance.

[10] Job also provides names for his three daughters, Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch, marking only four women given names using קרא and שֵׁם as roots, but they do not have a birth narrative, as the text instead uses וַיִּוָּלְדוּ לוֹ...וְשָׁלוֹשׁ בָּנוֹת to describe them.

[11] Rainer Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter," *Wort Und Dienst* 19 (1987): 31.

The sufformative forms of קרא barely change throughout these passages, except in a few places. The first example is demonstrative of my broader project, as the BHS version of Gen 29:34 uses קָרָא, taking the Qal Perfective 3rd masculine singular form, to describe the naming of Levi.[12] This form differs from other forms of קרא in Genesis 29-30 in that it takes the perfective aspect and the masculine sufformative. However, the births of Judah (Gen 29:35) and Dan (Gen 30:6) also take the perfective aspect, with all other verbs matching the aforementioned forms. The use of the perfective rather than the preterite is relatively common in this naming formula.[13] The most significant discrepancy for the Levi story is that the verb takes on the masculine sufformative in the Masoretic Text. However, multiple sources take the third-person feminine singular for this verb, including the Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac Peshitta, Codex Alexandrinus, and Targum Cairo-Geniza. In addition, the Greek does not provide a new pronoun, so the feminine antecedent applies here. Targums Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan both use the third-person masculine singular form. Taking the feminine form as the best attested, and the fact that the P-source changes the form to masculine in other cases, this form does not necessarily break with the rest of the naming stories within this passage.[14] With this reading, Leah, not Jacob, names Levi, giving the verb a proper antecedent in 29:32, in accordance with the births of Reuben, Simeon, and Judah. With this discrepancy explained, what is left is a system by which Leah and Rachel name their children, some born through Bilhah and Zilpah.

[12] The NRSVue translates this phrase as "he was named," which assumes the niphal form, for which there is no evidence, but at least marks it as different from the rest.

[13] Other appearances of the perfective aspect include God's proclamation of Ishmael and Isaac's names (Gen 16:11, 17:19; both are second person), and Jabez (1 Chr 4:9). This form remains rare, but has little meaning beyond its verbal function.

[14] Kessler, "Benennung," 31.

I now turn to examine the kinship relations of these four women in relation to Jacob. First, the narrator establishes that Leah and Rachel are Jacob's cousins, because their father, Laban, is Jacob's uncle, Rebekah's brother. Rebekah's family, and therefore the family that Abram and Sarai left, follows a matrilineal system, and the stories of the patriarchs reflect the conflict that arises between patrilineal and matrilineal systems.[15] The conflict between matrilineal and patrilineal systems primarily appears within the stories of those traditionally called the Patriarchs. For example, matrilineal systems usually have the son inherit from the mother's brother, which plays out when Jacob inherits from Laban. However, when Jacob leaves Laban's household, he breaks the matrilineal system as well.[16] In addition, following Nuzi, Emar, and Harran law codes, the daughter is also meant to inherit her father's gods, but only with permission.[17]

Due to this breach with tradition, Laban chases his heirs and asks, "Why did you steal my gods?" (Gen 31:30). The narrator then reveals that Rachel had stolen the gods when they fled, following the Nuzi, Emar, and Harran tradition, although without permission. I provide these examples to establish that while Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah are with Laban, the story is awash in matrilineal traditions. Therefore, I believe that these birth stories should be read through the lens of matrilineal systems. And, because Abra(ha)m and Sarai/h and Isaac and

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[15] Nancy B. Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," *Vetus Testamentum* 38, no. 1 (1988): 66; Vanessa Lovelace, "'This Woman's Son Shall Not Inherit with My Son': Towards a Womanist Politics of Belonging in the Sarah-Hagar Narratives," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41, no. 1 (2015), 71.

[16] Nancy B. Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 104-5.

[17] Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," 65. Zafrira Ben-Barak outlines several inheritance laws, *Inheritance by Daughters in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Social, Legal and Ideological Revolution*, trans. Betty Sigler Rozen (Jaffa, Israel: Archaeological Center Publications, 2006), 138-144, 205. This is in opposition to Cohen saying that women were supposed to leave their gods at their father's house, Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 265.

Rebekah are also a part of this same system, though distant, the stories of their children should be read in the same manner. However, before I turn to my analysis Hagar and Sarai/h, I will briefly discuss Rebekah's story, which will further illuminate this system.

Rebekah and Her Twins

Rebekah's birth narrative contains a few nuances different from the previous stories. The two biggest differences are that Rebekah has twins, which coincides with a word from the deity, and that Esau's naming event is unique from all other forms. Rebekah herself conceives a few verses before the actual birth, in Genesis 25:21, but the verbal form here is וַתַּהַר (Qal-Pret-3FS), sticking to the normative form.[18] Even at this early stage, she notices the children struggling and seeks out an answer from the deity, who responds by saying that there are two people growing within her and that the younger will be stronger (25:23). In a unique formula, the text states, וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת (v. 24). The only other times that ילד appears in the *Geburtserzählung* in infinitive form are in Genesis 38:27 and 28, which is another story of twins, and in Genesis 35:16 and 17, describing Rachel birthing Ben-oni/Benjamin. However, the latter version is part of an idiomatic phrase, בְּלִדְתָּהּ, to describe the labor, and is matched with וַתֵּלֶד in the previous verse, which is a more typical form. בְּלִדְתָּהּ also appears in Gen. 38:28, after לִדְתָּהּ in v. 27. Therefore, I posit that the infinitive form is used to describe twins and matched with יצא applied to each child. This model also follows in the Greek text, which uses the aorist active infinitive of τίτκω in Genesis 25:24 and the present active infinitive in 25:17 and 38:28. In both Genesis 25:25 and 26, and in 38:29 and 30, each birth is described using יצא, rather than ילד. This verb is matched with

[18] The Greek συλλαμβάνω does not appear here, but instead one reads the rarer ἔλαβεν, which only appears three times. In addition, it is attached to ἐν γαστρὶ. The primary verb for this idiom is ἔχει, which appears in Gen. 16:11, Judges 13:3, 5, and 7, and Isaiah 7:14.

ἐξηλθεν in each case. In 25:25, it is וַיֵּצֵא, and in v. 26 it is יָצָא. In both 38:29 and 30, it is once again יָצָא. Twins, then, get their own special formulation in which the mother bears once and the children come out separately. That is, one event for the mother, and one event for each child.

Esau comes out in Genesis 25:25, וַיֵּצֵא, which is the only use of the preterite form in the twin *Geburtserzählung*. However, there is so little evidence present that I will not conjecture as to any particular meaning there. However, unlike any other birth narrative, both parents name Esau, וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו. This is the sole appearance of the Qal-Pret-3CP version of קרא in a birth narrative.[19] In the Greek, Rachel alone names him using ἐπωνόμασεν, a form that typically only appears when a father names a child (Gen. 4:25, 26; 5:3, 29; Ex. 2:10, 22).[20] Only in Gen. 30:11 does another woman name their child with this verb. Jacob, on the other hand, is named with the phrase, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב, or ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (25:26). In the Hebrew, Isaac alone names Jacob, while both parents name Esau. In the Greek, Rachel names both children.[21] In line with the word of the deity in 25:23, Jacob proceeds to become the primary heir. He first buys Esau's birthright through trickery in 25:29-34, and then receives the blessing intended for Esau in ch. 27.[22] Notably, Esau marries two Hittite women in 26:34-5, which grieves Isaac and Rebekah.[23]

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[19] I describe this form as common, rather than masculine, because both parents are naming the child. The other plural is וַתִּקְרֶאנָה in Ruth 4:17, which will be the central text for my next chapter.

[20] This form also appears outside of birth narratives when naming places and wells, such as in Gen. 21:31; 26:18, 21, 22, Ex. 15:23; 16:31; 17:7, 15, and numerous others.

[21] I must note that I only claim that Rachel names each child because she is the most recent subject who could perform this task.

[22] Earlier, Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, but sacrificed a goat instead. For each of these firstborn children, the father must sacrifice an animal to replace the firstborn son. When Jacob tricks Isaac with his own sacrificial animal, the status of firstborn symbolically moves to him; Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," 62-3.

[23] Christian Frevel argues that this is one of three reasons to reject exogamy, the emotional reason. The other two are religious, or Deuteronomistic, or that of purity and genealogy, Christian Frevel, ed., *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 8-10. However, the text is not particularly concerned with their personalities and interpersonal conflict here. In addition, the solution is to have Jacob marry endogamously.

Even Esau's marriage to an Ishmaelite woman is not enough. Esau's marriage to a cousin, a patrilocal union, is not sufficient to please Rebekah. His marriage must be matrilineal.[24] It is this aggrievement that partially leads Rebekah and Isaac to send Jacob to find a wife among their family in Paddan-aram. And so Esau and Jacob's naming stories reflect their future actions, particularly the disinheritance of Esau. Esau's decision to marry two Hittite women further distances him from the inheritance, again foreshadowed by the naming formula. Important here is the idea that Esau, though the brother of Jacob, is not an inheritor *despite* being the firstborn son. He must move to a different land. The same model follows the returnee and remainee groups. The returnees have Jacob's claim, the remainees, in a sense, have Esau's. They are related, but they married the metaphorical Hittites and gave up their birthright.

Isaac's lone naming of Jacob in the Hebrew signals to the reader that the story will primarily follow the second son and that he will receive the primary inheritance. As the story progresses, Jacob's marriage to both Rachel and Leah further instills the endogamy that will ensure the land for their descendants. It also ties the matrilineal and patrilineal lines together for three generations, from Abraham and Sarai to Isaac and Rebekah to Jacob and Rachel and Leah. As this lineage continues, there is less and less question as to who will receive primary covenantal storyline that is the central story of this section of Genesis. Reversing this order shows that the covenantal line of inheritance begins with doubt but becomes surer the more endogamous the family is. All of Jacob's children, except Dinah and her unnamed sisters (Gen. 37:35), receive the inheritance and the central narrative follows the brothers together. Isaac has

[24] The connection to matrilineage is my own. Conczorowski argues that this link to Ishmael, and Esau's inability to please his parents is an ethical one, but provides no proof that there is moral or ethical language in this passage. Benedikt J. Conczorowski, "All the Same as Ezra? Conceptual Differences Between the Texts on Intermarriage in Genesis, Deuteronomy 7 and Ezra," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 96.

two sons, but only Jacob receives the covenantal promise at Beth-El (Gen. 28:10-22) and takes on the primary storyline.[25] Abraham's two children, one of whom is from an exogamous union, almost split the narrative until Sarah steps in. And so Hagar's story is central to these matriarchal systems of naming and determining to whom the land truly belongs.[26]

Hagar's Story

Hagar's story in Genesis 16 is the first to deal with the effect of exogamous unions on the status of children and their relationship to inheritance, although it is not the first to deal with the issue of exogamous unions. Sarai, Hagar's mistress, her enslaver, also has a sort of non-consensual exogamous union, once with the pharaoh, which ends with her acquisition of wealth and people. According to Bereshit Rabbah, that acquisition includes Hagar (Bereshit Rabbah 45:1).[27] The same thing happens once again with Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-18). Yet, when Sarah has her own child in Genesis 21, she does not empathize with Hagar, but engages in a one-sided battle for control over whose child will inherit from Abraham, ending in the expulsion of Hagar and her son into the desert. However, *Jubilees* demonstrates that the solution, expulsion of the foreign woman and her child, was not a viable, long-term option. The Hagar and Ishmael story contained therein, in comparison to Genesis, occasionally privileges Ishmael over Isaac, or at least makes them equal in Abraham's eyes, more strongly sets Ishmael up as Abraham's heir, and places him

[25] Albert de Pury, "Abraham: The Priestly Writer's 'Ecumenical' Ancestor," in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 294 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 170.

[26] de Pury, argues, "Abraham is placed from the beginning in an inter-tribal, inter-communitarian, 'ecumenical' perspective. And there is no sense talking about Abraham, if one is not going to address the issue Ishmael / Isaac," in "Abraham," 167, 169.

[27] Bereshit Rab 45:1 also has Hagar as the daughter of Pharaoh.

at Abraham's bedside, beside Isaac, when the patriarch dies.[28] This demonstrates continued anxiety over the position of Ishmael in this system, and therefore of all multi-ethnic children. I read this act as an allegory for the *golah* community in the Persian period as they return from exile.[29] Within this story, the returnees demonstrate that they divided between incorporating exogamous unions into the community, or expelling the foreign women and their children. The story also demonstrates a struggle between finding loyalty to Persia, Egypt, or themselves, a particularly poignant struggle at the time of its collection.

Genesis 16, from the J-source, and 21, from the E-source, are at least two stories brought together, but they both portray a perspective on Abra(ha)m as somebody willing to use and abuse women's bodies for his own personal gain.[30] Following my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, I begin with womanist interpretations of Hagar's story. As an enslaved woman from the African continent, Hagar's story is particularly poignant for many Black women. Among the many womanist discussions of Hagar, Delores Williams's *Sisters in the Wilderness* and Renita J. Weems's *Just a Sister Away* are particularly influential and the most common referents for womanist readings of this story.[31] These authors not only represent some of the earliest womanist

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[28] Ekaterina Kozlova, "Abraham's Burial (Genesis 25.9): An Idyllic Burial or a Dispute over Inheritance?*," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42, no. 2 (December 2017), 179; Michael Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle: The Case of Ishmael in Jubilees," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 21, no. 3 (March 1, 2012), 265-7, notes that *Jubilees* has both sons forced to keep the covenant.

[29] To see a deeper explanation of this reading choice, see Conczorowski, "All the Same as Ezra?" 89-108; Vanessa Lovelace, "'This Woman's Son Shall Not Inherit with My Son': Towards a Womanist Politics of Belonging in the Sarah-Hagar Narratives," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41, no. 1 (2015): 63–82; Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, Old Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 2000); de Pury, "Abraham," 163–81.

[30] Genesis 16 is primarily a J-source text and Gen. 21 is primarily an E-source text, each with some P-source changes. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, vol. 1, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 119, 156; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Revised Edition, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), 231; Sean E McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," *Semeia* 3 (1975), 73.

[31] Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away* (San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1988); Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

explorations of Hagar, but of womanist biblical interpretation and theology in general. There are many other womanist explorations of Hagar that I will include here.[32] Each of these women writes about Hagar in light of modern racism and sexism, and in the case of Williams and Weems, between white and Black women.[33] As I analyze Hagar's story, I will bring these perspectives to bear on the Marxist analysis, and vice versa.[34]

First Horizon (The Literal Phase)

The first horizon for Jameson's Marxist literary criticism, the political and literal phase, is primarily concerned with the formal structure of the text itself, particularly as it relates to its genre. Following traditional Marxist structures of analysis, there is a superstructure, which for this phase is the text itself, and a base. The base is the political history taking place at this time, a list of events. However, the biblical text was written over a long period of time and influenced by

[32] For other womanist interpretive methods, see Vanessa Lovelace, "'This Woman's Son Shall Not Inherit with My Son': Towards a Womanist Politics of Belonging in the Sarah-Hagar Narratives," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41, no. 1 (2015): 63–82; Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017); Stephanie R. Buckhanon Crowder, *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood from a Womanist Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016); Oluwatomisin Oredein, "The One Who Sees Me: Finding Hagar through Literary Hermeneutics and Religious Interpretive Agency," *Black Theology Papers Project* 4, no. 1 (2018). I will also include Masenya Madipoane's *bosadi* perspective in "A *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Reading of Genesis 16," which represents a South African-Northern Sotho perspective, rather than an African-American perspective. In her reading of Genesis 16, she focuses on the missionary-colonial context. Madipoane J Masenya, "A Bosadi (Womanhood) Reading of Genesis 16," *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 11, no. 2 (1998): 271–87. Each of these authors makes the note that they are aware that attributing modern racism and sexism to the past, and particularly such an ancient past, and so layer their analyses with those matters.

[33] According to Nyasha Junior, the African American/Black women's association with biblical Hagar begins primarily with Williams's and Weems's work: *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible*, Biblical Refigurations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 110; 118.

[34] I will also keep in mind Anna Fisk's criticism of womanist interpretations of this text, particularly those of Williams and Weems, as she says, "To my mind, what is more problematic about womanist appropriation of the conflict between the African Hagar and the Hebrew Sarah is the assumption of Sarah's whiteness, both in terms of the conflation of Jewishness with white hegemony, and the risk of reinscribing anti-Semitic attitudes in the name of countering racial oppression." Anna Fisk, "Sisterhood in the Wilderness: Biblical Paradigms and Feminist Identity Politics in Readings of Hagar and Sarah," in *Looking through a Glass Bible: Postdisciplinary Biblical Interpretations from the Glasgow School*, ed. A.K.M. Adam and Samuel Tongue (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2014), 127. Fisk discusses the potential issue of antisemitism throughout pp. 126-130.

many contributors, so the base is "inaccessible for biblical analysis."[35] However, I have decided to place my analysis within the broader period of Persian Yehud, particularly during the *golah* return from diaspora, for which there is some additional evidence. [36] The story itself takes place long before that time, so I take a broader historical perspective to determine how the scribes collected ancient stories that reflected ancient systems to inscribe their own systems of determining kinship.

The general plot stretches back to Gen 12, when the pharaoh takes Sarai, thinking she is Abram's sister. The pharaoh also gave Abram many oxen, sheep, male and female slaves, and other sources of wealth and labor (12:16).[37] Upon discovering his mistake and Abram's lie (and having suffered many plagues), the pharaoh returns Sarai to Abram and the couple leaves. Although it is not explicitly described in the biblical text, this is presumably where Sarai acquired Hagar.[38] Several chapters later, after Abram and Lot have split, leaving the former without an heir (Gen 13), the deity makes a covenant with Abram affirming that he will have heirs and that they will acquire much land (Gen 15). Sarai remains barren and comes up with a solution to their inheritance problem: she will provide Hagar, whom the narrator calls a שִׁפְחָה מִצְרִית, an Egyptian slave-woman.[39]

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[35] Roland Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 52.

[36] Bridge reads Genesis as a post-exilic text, Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 3 (July 28, 2014), 400.

[37] Zucker and Reiss describe this gift as a purchase. David J Zucker, "Ishmael and Isaac: Parallel, Not Conflictual Lives," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26, no. 1 (2012), 2.

[38] Bereshit Rab 45:1 has Hagar as the daughter of Pharaoh.

[39] HALOT says slave-girl, but that implies youth that is not necessary in the text; or, it draws on the infantilization of enslaved peoples (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M.E.J. Richardson, G.J. Longeling-Vos, and L.J. de Regt (New York: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 1621). The BDB uses maid-servant, but that obscures the nature of slavery (Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Academic, 1994), 1046). Rosalyn Murphy pints to the Ugaritic root, s-f-h, and argues that it "denotes a communal or cloistered form of living or of being together—among female companions" and that it "indicates a close bond between two women: a sisterhood per se [*sic*] that goes so far as to entitle the שפחה (handmaid) to inherit the goods

Abram follows Sarai's suggestion and Hagar becomes an אִשָּׁה, a woman/wife.[40] Mark Brett points to the self-interest at play in these dynamics, with Abram focusing on his own survival and self-interest at the cost of Sarai's bodily autonomy, and then Sarai proceeding to do the same with Hagar.[41] Reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, both women are taken as sexual partners against their will *for the benefit of a man*, although Hagar's abuse is also initially for Sarai's benefit. However, Sarai takes the lead in subverting Hagar's personhood through abuse. This behavior is reminiscent of many white women's treatment of Black women, derived from the desire to seek security as one oppressed woman against another by rejecting the Black woman's humanity. Tikva Frymer-Kensky has argued that Sarai abuses Hagar as a reflection of her own experience in the pharaoh's household, saying "Sarai's own experience as a slave does not make her more empathetic to the slave in her own home. On the contrary, it makes her want to assert her dominance and authority so she won't lose it again."[42] As a result, this story plays

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and possessions of her mistress after death" (Rosalyn F T Murphy, "Sista-Hoods: Revealing the Meaning in Hagar's Narrative," *Black Theology* 10, no. 1 (April 2012), 81). In Gen 21, the E-source uses אָמָה to describe her. For Mignon Jacobs, it is notable that the narrator never describes Hagar as a *pilagesh*, saying "The tendency [of modern readers] to classify Hagar as a concubine may arise from assigning a negative and illicit status to the role of concubine…likewise, the bias of many interpreters against a foreign woman as the wife of one of the patriarchs is also responsible for the tendency to label Hagar as a concubine rather than a wife," (Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 145). Although I quibble with Jacobs's translation of *pilagesh* as concubine (see Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 34), his broader point that Hagar is an אִשָּׁה and not a *pilagesh* points to her elevated status in the text. This story, found in Genesis 16, relies on the J-source, with some emendations from P (Speiser, *Genesis*, 119). Naomi Steinberg, *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 51 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 44, says that the description of Sarai as barren signals to the readers that they are in need of an heir. For Nyasha Junior, the text also reinforces that Hagar remains enslaved and therefore subordinate to Sarai, (*Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible*, Biblical Refigurations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 22).

[40] The use of enslaved women to ensure heirs for the primary wife was a common practice in Nuzi, almost perfectly matching a document found there. Speiser, *Genesis*, 119. Making the enslaved woman a secondary wife was common with this practice. I will discuss more connections to other ancient texts in the second horizon, which broadens the text to its historical context.

[41] Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, Old Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 2000), 58.

[42] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 232. Gafney references a hadith by Ibn Abbas in Sahih Bukhari vol. 4 book 55 number 584 that describes Sarai as jealous of Hajar in Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 41

into an allegorical reading between two minoritized groups who must struggle for the little power they are capable of holding. In taking power over Hagar's body, Sarai also draws on the covenantal language to control Abram.

In obeying Sarai, Abram has sex with Hagar, and she conceives, וַתַּהַר, or συνέλαβεν.[43] Both women undergo a shift in status, with Hagar as the "young and fertile" woman who is powerless, and Sarai as a wealthy woman, the owner of slaves, who is scorned for her barrenness.[44] Sarai perceives this change in her enslaved woman, and holds it against Abram.[45] Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I connect this solution and the after effects to the plight of Black women and other minoritized groups who perform the manual labor for wealthy families. They are subjected to sexual harassment and rape and remain silent and take it to keep their positions and ensure their children's survival, but the wife blames them alongside her husband. The language that Sarai uses here is confrontational, saying "May the wrong done to me be upon you! I set my שִׁפְחָה into your lap. She saw that she had conceived (הָרָתָה, Qal-Perf-3FS; or ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχει in Greek)[46] and I was insignificant in her eyes! May THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES judge between you and me" (Gen 16:5).[47] The issue here is that, among the peoples

[43] Williams focuses on this process in her discussion of Hagar and surrogacy, which functions as a primary throughline throughout *Sisters in the Wilderness* connecting Hagar and Black women, especially in "Tensions in Motherhood: From Slavery to Freedom," 34-59, and "Social-Role Surrogacy: Naming Black Women's Oppression" 60-83. This connection will come into play in the third horizon.

[44] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 3. Laws against this in CH and Nuzi. This is now a conflict of status and class, as is that of Bilhah and Zilpah's potential conflict with Rachael and Leah, in that these three women could never call upon their mistresses to act as their surrogates. See Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion*, 135; Speiser, *Genesis*, 119; especially concerning CH 146 and documents from Nuzi..

[45] Part of this change is found in the fact that the narrator repeatedly refers to Hagar as the mother, subverting Sarai's claims over him, Yusuf and Omar, "From Hebrew 'Slave' to Arabian 'Sage," 12.

[46] This is a rare Greek idiom that appears only seven times in this formula, twice in the Hagar narrative.

[47] I use THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES in place of the Tetragrammaton because throughout these stories, the role of the deity is to provide children.

amongst whom Sarai and Abram grew up, the first wife was primary in all ways, and especially over the women she used as surrogates.[48]

Sarai proceeds to abuse Hagar, with Abram's approval. The abuse is described with the word וַתְּעַנֶּהָ, or ἐκάκωσεν, which is the same used to describe the treatment of enslaved Hebrews in Exodus 1:11, עַנֹּתָו or κακώσοσιν.[49] After receiving abuse, Hagar flees to the desert, where she meets a messenger of the deity near a spring (16:7).[50] The messenger asks, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" (Gen 16:8).[51] For Mark Brett, the rearticulation of Hagar's status as a "slave of Sarai…remind[s] her of her social status even after she has fled."[52] The messenger proceeds to provide a promise similar to Abra(ha)m's covenant, both in Gen 12 and Gen 17, and decides the child's name, saying, "You have conceived (הָרָה, Adj-FS, or in Greek, σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις, again) and will bear (וְיֹלַדְתְּ, Qal-Part-FS, or τέξῃ) a son and you will call (קָרָאת, Qal-Perf-2FS, καλέσεις) his name Ishmael, for THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES has heard of your oppression" (Gen 16:11).[53] Hagar is commanded to return to Abram

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[48] Charlotte Gordon, *The Woman Who Named God: Abraham's Dilemma and the Birth of Three Faiths* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 110.

[49] For Weems, this dynamic is also connected to the ways in which white women maintain white-male supremacist systems, as they benefit from Black women's labor, but inevitably do not achieve equality. Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 5-8. Historically speaking, under the Code of Hammurabi, if a slave woman with a child sought equal status with her mistress, the mistress was allowed to abuse her more. Gabizon, "The Development of the Matrilineal Principle," 146.

[50] Williams and Buckhannon both discuss this flight in light of the homelessness of Black women and their struggle to provide food and shelter for their children. Williams does so especially in light of enslaved Black women fleeing their enslavers, but Buckhannon speaks in light of more recent issues of homelessness. (Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 38; Buckhannon, *When Momma Speaks*, 47).

[51] According to McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles," 69, this dialogue "interiorizes the situation." Furthermore, the messenger speaks in couplets, as does Abram in 6a; Sarai, on the other hand, speaks in 5 stichs and is more irregular (p. 70).

[52] Brett, *Genesis*, 59.

[53] Hagar is the first woman in the biblical text to receive and "annunciation," and for Trible that means that she is "the prototype of special mothers in Israel. For her unborn child signifies not just comfort but also suffering." Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 13 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 17.

and Sarai, to her abuse, which Brett reads as a command to return as the reassertion of the dominant ideology.[54] Immediately undermining that assertion of dominant ideology, Hagar names the deity, and is the first to do so.

Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this story in light of people who committed marronage. Under US chattel slavery, women rarely ran away because, when the men fled, they were left to take care of their children. However, when she did run, it was often because she was pregnant and wanted to ensure that her child was not enslaved when they were born.[55] However, the majority of all maroons returned after a few days or weeks because they became sick, were starving, or for some other reason.[56] I read Hagar's return as a way to ensure her and her son's survival, in much the same way that modern minoritized women are forced to endure racism, sexism, harassment, among other problems, in the workplace to ensure that their families survive. As Williams describes *Sisters in the Wilderness*, the wilderness is only a temporary way to recover and regain strength.[57]

In time, Hagar gives birth: "And Hagar bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to Abram a son, and *Abram* called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS, ἐκάλεσεν) the name of his son, whom Hagar bore (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν), Ishmael" (16:15). The Greek contains an additional ἀυτῳ just before Hagar's name the second time. Neither Sarai nor Hagar name Ishmael, unlike Rebekah, who

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[54] Brett, *Genesis,* 59. For Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 51, "God is clearly biased in favor of an ungenerous family, willing to send the innocent into the wilderness, willing to have Hagar and her son suffer for their redemption." Von Rad, *Genesis*, 195, reads this command to return as necessary to return Hagar to the family for Gen. 21 to take place.

[55] See Stephane Martin Demers, "Contemplating the Afterlife of Slavery: Gynecological Resistance, Marronage, and Revolution in Late-Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Caribbean Quilt* 6.2 (2021): 36 and Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 89-91.

[56] See Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 74-96.

[57] See Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 108-139.

names both children, and unlike Rachel and Leah who name Bilhah and Zilpah's children. In fact, Sarai disappears after she abuses Hagar, which narratively excludes her claim over Hagar's child.[58] For Cynthia Chapman, "The failure of Sarai's plan is…the fact that Abram, rather than Sarai, names the child. Leah and Rachel both name the children of their maidservants, and neither of their maidservants is presented as usurping their mistress's position in the house (Gen 30:1-24)."[59] Chapman's statement gestures to the thesis of this dissertation, and this chapter in particular. Phyllis Trible notes that Abram's action also undermines Hagar because it "silences her voice," "stresses not her motherhood but the fatherhood of Abram," and "strips Hagar of the power that God gave her."[60]

By naming Ishmael, Abram subverts the normal processes and takes the child out of the mothers' houses and into his own, so Sarai's house cannot be built up.[61] *Genesis Rabbah* 45:5 further supports this reading by having Sarai say, "Had you said: "We go childless," just as He granted you [a child], so would He have granted me. But now that you have said: "I go childless" (Genesis 15:2), He granted you [a child], but did not grant me."[62] Abram's action *ensures* that there will be continued conflict regarding the status of the two women over the inheritance of their children, as a woman was largely valued for her ability to reproduce a male heir. However, he also ensures that Ishmael will be his primary heir. For this reason, the deity must make it clear

[58] Vincent Onwukwe, "Characterisation and Plot(s) in Genesis 16: A Narrative-Critical Analysis," *Scriptura* 119 (February 1, 2020), 10.

[59] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 155; Trible, *Texts of Terror*, also agrees on this point, Trible 19.

[60] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 19.

[61] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 155; Lovelace, "This Woman's Son," 73. There is also a pun in this language, as בֵּן is son and בנה is the root of "to build."

[62] "The Sefaria Midrash Rabbah," Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts Online, 2022, https://www.sefaria.org/texts.

that Sarai is to be the mother through which the covenant will be fulfilled.[63] The deity also changes both Abram and Sarai's names (Gen 17:5, 15) and soon after, says, "Your wife, Sarah, will bear (יֹלֶדֶת, Qal-Part-FS, τέξεταί) for you a son, and you will call (וְקָרָאתָ, Qal-Perf-2MS, καλέσεις) his name Isaac" (Gen 17:19). In fulfilment of this promise, Isaac's birth narrative is longer than Ishmael's and repeatedly establishes Sarah's maternity: "Sarah conceived (וַתַּהַר, Qal-Pret-3FS, συλλαβοῦσα) and bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to Abraham a son in his old age, at the time when God had spoken to him. And *Abraham* called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS, ἐκάλεσεν) the name of his son, who was born (הַנּוֹלַד, Niphal-Perf-3MS, γενομένου) to him, whom Sarah had born (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to him, Isaac" (Gen 21:2-3).[64] After Isaac is weaned, Sarah sees "the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἐγένετο) to Abraham, playing" (Gen 21:9).[65] This scene leads Sarah to tell Abraham to send the slave woman (אָמָה, as compared to שִׁפְחָה in Gen 16) and *her* son away; "for the son of this slave woman will not inherit with my son, with Isaac" (Gen 21:10).[66] Here Sarah asserts twice that Ishmael, whose name she never pronounces, belongs to Hagar. She circumscribes his

[63] Shehla Ahmad is careful to note that neither Hagar nor Ishmael are portrayed negatively in the text and argues against a reading that takes the two as not belonging within the household, Shehla Ahmad, "Hagar and the Levite's Concubine: Reclaiming Biblical Women Through Employing a Womanist Lens" (M.Res., England, Canterbury Christ Church University (United Kingdom), 2022), 39. However, I would push back on this reading by noting the continued repetition of Hagar being both a maidservant and Egyptian. There is no need to portray Hagar or Ishmael as negative, as the point is that they were merely not of the same kinship group. The connection of race/ethnicity to negative stereotypes is a more recent development.

[64] As Genesis 16 is primarily a J-source text with P-source changes, so too is Gen. 21 E-source with some P-source changes. However, I am reading the text in its present form, rather than dividing the text. Speiser, *Genesis*, 156, von Rad, *Genesis*, 231; McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles," 73.

[65] Age of Isaac, Shaun W. Flynn, *Children in Ancient Israel: The Hebrew and Mesopotamia in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 58. The Greek includes "with her son Isaac," at the end The age of weaning is around 2-4 years and at the end. Before the child is weaned, they were not defined by name or lineage

[66] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 21, explains this difference as a move from maid to slave; however, the difference is better explained as dependent upon the source material. Hagar was already an enslaved woman. Although there may be a difference between the two words in other contexts, I do not think the distinction is intentional in this instance.

relationship to Abraham and reasserts Ishmael's foreignness. In addition, the emphasis on inheritance as a primary division between Hagar and Sarah becomes clear, here.[67]

Despite Abraham's distress, the deity affirms Sarah's request.[68] For Jacobs, this is an intentional act on the narrator's part to demonstrate that the deity and Sarah are aligned on this matter. It plays on the notion that Hagar and Sarah's children are in "mutually exclusive categories" in the plan for Abraham's future and therefore "The narrative itself dehumanizes and nullifies them by making them indispensable and nameless entities to be discarded after their usefulness has expired."[69] Furthermore, in Genesis 26, Isaac is twice told that he will be blessed, as opposed to the once for Ishmael. Both boys eventually reach twelve descendants, but Isaac must wait for his twelve grandsons, and even then, Joseph is skipped over in favor of the great grandsons (more on that in the fourth chapter). However, as Pigott describes in her article, Hagar receives the promise of many children and speaks directly with a messenger of the deity.[70] It is almost as though the battle for dominance is taking place in the text itself, long after Ishmael's threat to Isaac's inheritance has been removed. Ishmael was the legal firstborn child, and so the narrator must continually reinforce Isaac's status and claim as the true inheritor.

This repetition of Isaac's claim provides the antinomy between the text and the historical community in which it is written, collected, and emended. Abraham has two sons, both of whom

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[67] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 21; Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 155. Blessing Boloje argues, "Because Sarah fears of Isaac's future, she proleptically sees into the future and takes drastic action to protect her son's inheritance," in "Remembering Hagar and Her Son (Gen 21: 9–21): A Narrative Reading of Helpless Victims and Hopeful Survivors in the Wheel of Providence," *Religions* 14, no. 12 (2023): 1477.

[68] In *Jubilees* 17:6, Abraham is more confused and concerned regarding Ishmael, and "still considers Ishmael an heir to all aspects of the covenantal promises, Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle," 265. In addition, throughout Jubilees, Ishmael is continuously considered part of the family and returns for various events, such as the Festival of Weeks in *Jub 22:1-9*. Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle," 269.

[69] Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion*, 152.

[70] Susan M. Pigott, "Hagar: The M/Other Patriarch," *Review & Expositor* 115, no. 4 (November 1, 2018), 517.

have a potential claim to be the primary heir. However, the primary wife is preferred.[71] Ezra and Nehemiah have already presented a solution to the problem of inheritance and exogamous unions by removing the offending women and their children. Hagar and Sarah's conflict echoes this problem and solution with Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion.[72] The narrator even provides a happy ending for Hagar and Ishmael, their own genealogy. However, expelling one woman and her son clearly does not provide the solution that the returnee community desired. The character and his descendants continually recur in the narrative.

Ishmael returns after Abraham's death and buries him alongside Isaac (Gen. 25:9). However, in *Jubilees*, Ishmael returns before Abraham's death and is first in line for Abraham's admonishments and blessings, along with his other children.[73] Abraham goes on to celebrate their reunion, demonstrating, "the desire of Ishmael's father, Abraham, that all his sons enjoy the lifestyle of full covenant insiders."[74] The story of Ishmael continues to evolve and reflect different perspectives for different communities. However, reading Ishmael through Ezra-Nehemiah leads to greater exclusivity, because the women and their children who were forced to return to their father's household are still connected to the returnee community, as they already lived locally. They could still make the claim that the inheritance belonged to them, no matter what the *golah* community said. In addition, there is ample evidence that the Judahites who fled to Egypt did not draw the firm boundaries that Ezra-Nehemiah does, nor, apparently, did those

[71] Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 67.

[72] Naomi Steinberg, *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 51 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 84: "It is as if, at that time, he lived in a monogamous household whereas the birth of Isaac shifts the family into a polygamous one and demotes the status of Ishmael. Thus, the social location of Ishmael and Isaac and the dynamics of their childhoods in a setting where heirship is vertical through only one son determine how each child will be treated in this polygamous household."

[73] Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle," 265-6.

[74] Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle," 269; 275-6.

who developed *Jubilees*.[75] Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this reunion, in both Genesis and *Jubilees*, as an attempt to bridge the gap between two groups. However, as Ishmael was forced to find his own means of survival because he was cut off from his inheritance, so too do Black people struggle with poverty because their inheritance, the fruits of their labor under slavery, Jim Crow, and now, go unpaid or underpaid. These contradictions and their failure to provide a suitable solution to the problem of inheritance provide the entrance to the second horizon, the social phase, which analyzes the ideology within the text to understand how the text functions as the site of class conflict.

Second Horizon (The Social Phase)

In the second horizon, the economy of the ancient world in which the contributors lived becomes more involved. The superstructure in this phase is the text and ideology. That is, following Althusser, the narrative functions as a way for the readers and contributors to mediate the relationship between themselves and the whole of their existence. Philosophy, literature, and literary criticism are the sites of class struggle in the realm of theory.[76] The base for this phase of

[75] These people, particularly those in Elephantine, lived in a polyethnic community containing Babylonians, Caspians, Khorazmians, Medeans, Persians, and Arameans. The Judahites retained close cultural ties with Judah, including the use of YHW in their names, and called themselves "Judaeans of Elephantine," as well as Arameans and Syenians. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness,* 83. Notably, surviving Babylonian onomastica provide evidence that the exilic community in Babylon used Babylonian names until 480 BCE, at which point they began using more Yehud-style names that drew on the tetragrammaton, Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 135. The multiplicity of descriptors they used demonstrates that the lines were more open for this group. In addition, although marriage contracts were not usually required, some contracts were created and survived, see Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 136; and Azzoni, *The Private Lives,* 109. As Elephantine was a military garrison, the evidence points to many soldiers and mercenaries from Yehud and nearby regions marrying locally, even across economic strata.

[76] Luke Ferreter, *Louis Althusser*, 1st ed., Routledge Critical Thinkers (New York: Routledge, 2006), 70; Barbara Foley, *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press, 2019),125; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981) (really just the entire thing); Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (New York, NY: Verso Books, 2006), 45.

analysis is class, in the sense that the text itself represents both upper class and lower-class ideologies.[77] However, the victorious ideology is only a victor in the imaginary sense, although it is useful for rhetorical purposes in the ongoing class struggle. In order to find how this struggle takes place in the unconscious, one finds the antinomy in the ideologeme, the smallest unit of ideology in the text, and reads it within the national allegory that the text portrays. In this stage, the ideologeme is the status of the mother: Hagar's enslavement and connection to Egypt compared to Sarai/h's freedom and connection to Mesopotamia. The antinomy is that the remainees and other inhabitants of the land, and the Yehudim who live in Egypt, are *still* Yehudim, even if they are not the preferred candidates. By focusing on the women of this story, I read the story as one that contends with unequal status, as both women were abused and used by Abram.

Following Dolores Williams, I read Hagar's whole experience as one that "has been shaped by the problems and desires of her owners."[78] In these chapters, Hagar and Sarai vie for a position of power in the household, which reflects their fight for survival in a patriarchally dominant system.[79] For Weems, the difference between these two women is not just their class status, but also an "ethnic prejudice exacerbated in economic and sexual exploitation."[80] I would

[77] These boundaries are not as clear as I have just laid them out. For example, there were likely people among the remainees who were wealthier than many among the returnees, and each group had different methods of accessing the power of the Persian bureaucratic system. According to the narrator of Ezra, Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the rebuilding of the temple, but faced opposition from "enemies of Judah and Benjamin" (4:1). However, these people claim to worshipping the same deity and ask to help, which would have included the sharing of resources. However, the returnees refuse that help. In addition, both of these groups are under the control of the Persian Empire, and so their struggle for survival is between two oppressed groups and not against the *true* upper class, Persia and the emperor (much as Hagar and Sarah fight amongst each other, but do not challenge patriarchal dominance *wink*).

[78] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 15.

[79] In Bereshit Rabbah 45:1, Rabbi Yehuda states that Hagar was a "maidservant of usufruct property, and therefore Abram had to pay for her survival, but could not sell her." Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai argues that she was Pharaoh's daughter, "The Sefaria Midrash Rabbah."

[80] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 2.

modify Weems's argument somewhat here to argue that there is no ethnic prejudice between the characters, but within the contributors' contexts.[81] That is, Sarai does not mistreat Hagar because she is Egyptian, but because she is a שִׁפְחָה. Sarai herself is a foreigner, as Masenya notes, pointing out that both women are resident aliens in the land. Neither knows all, or perhaps any, of the customs of these new people amongst whom they now live.[82] The ethnic prejudice stems from the exilic and post-exilic conflicts with (and fear of) Egypt and Persia and is reflected in the narrator's construction of the story and descriptions of individuals, which I demonstrate later.[83] Thus, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read Hagar functioning in the same manner that Beth Richie argues Black women and immigrants do, as a symbol against which the laws and socio-spatial borders protect.[84]

With these scholars in mind, I find four key factors at play within the text. First, both of these characters are women, and therefore subject to the power of the patriarch, Abraham. Second, both Sarah and Hagar are migrants and lack historical claims to the land. Third, although the deity legitimizes Abraham and Isaac's (male) control over the land, both women function primarily to give birth to children. And fourth, although both women are migrants, Hagar is Egyptian and Sarah is from Ur, which is quite close to Susa, the Persian capital in 522 BCE, and Babylon. Taking the story as a national allegory, the returnees are also traveling from Susa, especially Nehemiah. As the beneficiaries of Persian beneficence, this group travels to the land

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[81] Nyasha Junior agrees on this point in *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible*, Biblical Refigurations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 110, and so too does Lovelace, "This Woman's Son," 70. Lovelace takes both women as women of color.

[82] Masenya, "A Bosadi (Womanhood) Reading," 271. Notably, Hagar's name is also able to be translated as "the foreigner," whereas Sarai's name is more closely related to "the princess," and so their names also represent their status and social location.

[83] Jeremiah Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative: A Postcolonial Subversion of Genesis* (New York: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2024), 152.

[84] Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3.

the claim their historic property. This group is represented by Sarah, coming from the same general region. When the *golah* community returns to claim their land, they must dispose of the remainees' claim to the land. For Joseph Blenkinsop, the returnee group is "at great pains to dissociate itself from the natives, those who had remained…or who had settled there…who are referred to as 'the people of the land'…considered outsiders."[85] In addition, some of the returning families have questionable genealogical descent, and so the person who ultimately decides, within the text, is the deity "represented [in Ezra 2:59-63] by the centralizing role of the temple, the genealogical lists and rituals of which are employed to discern the legitimacy of (some of) these incomers."[86]

However, there is a counterclaim, or a counterinfluence. Down in Elephantine, there already exists a new temple. The Elephantine community, then, would be symbolized by Hagar, the Egyptian. At Elephantine, the people from Yehud intermarried with Egyptians and other groups.[87] Persians encouraged this behavior, but discouraged inter- and intra-ethnic marriages across classes.[88] There would also be general influence from Egypt, which was closer. In addition, Egypt was among the more difficult provinces to keep under control, so solidarity with Persia involved a rejection of Egyptian influence.[89] Within the allegory, Abra(ha)m (and perhaps

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[85] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Judaism, The First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 35.

[86] Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims* (2010: T & T Clark, New York),135.

[87] Michael Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Period" (Thesis, Hamilton, Ontario, McMaster University, 2022), 118; Bob Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt: The Fate of the Yehudite Community of Elephantine* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 32; Azzoni, *The Private Lives*, 109.

[88] Inchol Yang, "Mixed Marriage in Ezra 9-10: The Disappearance of Ezra as a Mimic Man for the Persian Empire," *The Expository Times* 134, no. 2 (2022), 54-55. In Elephantine, evidence suggests that marriages across social and economic strata were relatively common, which would have worked against Persian interests; Azzoni, *The Private Lives*, 109.

[89] Yang, "Mixed Marriage," 60.

the deity) represents the Persian Empire, as he determines which of his sons receives the inheritance by forcing the other to leave. Beer-lahai-roi, the well where Hagar named El-roi, is ultimately reclaimed by Isaac after Abraham dies (Gen. 25:11). This act of reclamation is important because, according to Francesca Stavrakapoulou,

> Land is the dominant ideological referent in the Hebrew Bible for the mythic, social, ritual and political expressions of identity…'land' thus functions in the Hebrew Bible as a narrated topography of cultural memory, shaped both selectively and meaningfully in order to map the biblical story of the past and its people onto the socio-religious and political agendas of the present.[90]

The land must be reclaimed from Hagar, from the Egyptians, because it is important to the socio-political project for Yehud and the people moving there. In the same way, through my womanist-accomplice lens, racial and sexual politics are a means of claiming the land against indigenous people, Black people, and others who might pose a threat to white male hegemony. There are two perspectives on the land at play within this text, "one institutional, the other ancestral."[91] The returnees have an ancestral claim to the land, as do the remainees. However, in order for the returnees to have an institutional claim that supersedes the people already living on the land, they must rely on the Persian bureaucracy and the goodwill of the king.

Hagar's position as an Egyptian woman, and therefore Ishmael's questionable status, plays a key role in this national allegory. Because Hagar is a foreign woman and an enslaved woman, her child falls into a weird position when it comes to inheritance. Garroway notes that "A free-born child is identified by his father's name…when more than one woman enters the picture the child is identified by the mother's name, and it is not uncommon that the child born to a handmaid is simply called that child or her child, even if the child will later enter the line of

[90] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 7.

[91] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 6.

succession."[92] Fathers would transmit their name, house, and land through mediating factors such as blessings and covenants.[93] Although Ishmael is circumcised when Abraham is, Isaac is the first person to be circumcised on the correct day.[94] In addition, Abraham performs a sacrifice for (almost of) Isaac in Genesis 22, but does no such thing for Ishmael. Nancy Jay notes that matrilineal and patrilineal systems use sacrifice to establish heirs, also seen in the story of Esau and Jacob earlier. For matrilineal systems, sacrifices were often performed "in direct opposition to matrilineal structural bonds, a reversal of its role in patrilineal groups."[95] Thus, in this dual matrilineal-patrilineal system in which the father's claims take precedence, the *Aqedah* functions to separate Isaac from Sarah's בֵּית אֵם in favor of Abraham's בֵּית אַב. Notably, this only takes place after Ishmael and Hagar are exiled. Similarly, race theory has historically functioned as a story to ensure that only white children inherit, both at the familial and national level.

The full story is a utopic ideal for the pro-Persian group, as reliance on Egypt is part of the reason that the monarchy of Judah fell. Cataldo states that it symbolizes "why the defeated kingdom of the past failed to fully embody that ideal…This puts the editorial context of Genesis around 6th century BCE."[96] The solution is to remove the remainees. To further solidify this language, Hagar must succumb to her status as an enslaved woman who "was useful as a proxy mother when Sarah couldn't get pregnant, but she was no longer important when Sarah finally

[92] Garroway, *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*, 74.

[93] Steffan Mathias, *Paternity, Progeny, and Perpetuation: Creating Lives after Death in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 130.

[94] Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 36.

[95] Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent, and the Patriarchs," 54.

[96] Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative*, 156.

bore Isaac."[97] That is, through this story, the returnee community signals that Egypt and its influence are no longer necessary and should now be subordinate to their own wills, as proxies for the Persian emperor.[98] Is it not far better for the people to side with the returnees, represented by Sarah, who have access to Persian funds? Egyptian taxes go to Persia, anyway.

To further reinscribe this ethnic sentiment, Hagar is an enslaved woman, just as Egypt is under Persian control. For Chapman, there is a clear status differentiation between Sarah, Rachel, Hagar, Zilpah, and Bilhah, although all are referred to as אִשָּׁה; however, to find it, one must look at how those women entered the household.[99] In this vein, Hagar and Ishmael are both repeatedly described as having lower status. Even before Hagar gives birth, Abram is sure to establish that Hagar is a שִׁפְחָה (Gen 16:4), which, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read as marking her as inherently inferior and less of a woman, and therefore less human. In Genesis 21, Ishmael is never named. The narrator refers to him as אֶת־בֶּן־הָגָר/τὸν υἱον Αγαρ (21:9), אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד/παιδίον (21:14, 15), and הַנַּעַר/παιδίον (21:17, 19, 20). Sarah refers to Hagar and her son as הָאָמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ/τὴν παιδίσκην ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς (21:10).[100] The deity calls Ishmael הַנַּעַר/παιδίον (21:12, 17, 18) and אֶת־בֶּן־הָאָמָה/τὸν υἱὸν τῆς παιδίσκης (21:13), and Hagar as אֲמָתְךָ/παιδίσκης (21:12). [101] This language rhetorically dehumanizes both Hagar and Ishmael, and therefore Egypt

[97] According to Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative*, 152, the goal is to preserve own status and status of Isaac as sole beneficiary. Cataldo also argues that Hagar is the "author's idealization of Egypt…the colonized body of the minority," 56.

[98] The returnees became the most influential and powerful group in the region through the backing of Persia. Gerda de Villiers, "The 'Foreigner in Our Midst' and the Hebrew Bible," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (March 1, 2019), 5.

[99] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 155.

[100] According to Phyllis Trible, this description symbolizes Ishmael's shift from inheritor to outcast, Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 26-27. This language of "the boy" also has a long function with racism in the United States to emasculate Black men.

[101] David W. Cotter argues that this is an act of the deity doubling down on the language of slavery. Cotter also claims that Abraham values Hagar as a person here, but Abraham never speaks, and the narrator says that he is concerned for his son. There is no point where Abraham seems concerned for Hagar beyond her role as the caretaker for Ishmael, David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 139.

and other "foreigners" are also dehumanized.[102] I read these identifications through the lens of the dehumanization of Black women into stereotypes through the use of anti-person language, focusing on the role they play rather than as persons with names.

By naming Ishmael, Abram legitimated him as the בְּכֹר of the בֵּית אָב through adoption.[103] Isaac, on the other hand, did not need legitimation after his birth, and therefore would have functioned as the primary heir under this system if Ishmael had not been born. The deity specifically names Isaac as the inheritor of the initial covenant, which included the whole of Israel as real estate, and so Ishmael had to be disallowed from that privilege.[104] These two stories come from the J-source and E-source, respectively, which are themselves drawing on other sources.[105] It is at this point that I return to both Boer's and Sneed's decision to refrain from

[102] The choice to place inheritance with Isaac also functions as an appeal to tradition. The use of naming to determine inheritance is an appeal to ancient sources. The Code of Hammurabi [CH] § 170-171 states that if a father has said to the descendants of both a wife and a maidservant, "my sons," all those sons are to inherit equally; but if he has not done so, then the sons of the maidservant will not inherit equally (Kristine Garroway, *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*, Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 91). In other ancient sources, other factors would have determined how inheritance worked for adopted sons and the sons of enslaved women borne to ensure an heir. For the most part, the eldest son received more than the other siblings (yes, including daughters in some cases). In some regions, such as at Mari, adopted sons were protected from being renounced or losing their double portion, although they were not protected in places like Nuzi. However, at Nuzi, a biological son born after the adopted son would replace the adopted son as the eldest, although the adopted son would retain inheritance rights, Stephen Herbert Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure in Ancient Israel" (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan, 1963), 26-32. Tying this information back in to Weems's connection to white women and Black women, the men typically did not have to worry about who would inherit from them, as they would be dead. However, the women who survived their spouse had to rely on the inheritance of their children for survival. This notion is true especially in polygynous households, where each mother had her own firstborn son, what Chapman refers to as a "womb-opener," that inaugurated the house of the mother, see Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 156-9.

[103] Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring," 71. However, in CH, this action merely means that he could not cut off the child, not that he had to provide any of his real estate, Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure," 35.

[104] Under CH, there would be no reason to remove Ishmael as heir because Abraham was not required to include land in that inheritance. At Nuzi, Emar, and Alalakh, the father had the opportunity to allot shares prior to his death, including for daughters, and took place after he or the mother died. Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 113 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 18. At Nuzi, this includes the daughter according to Zafrira Ben-Barak, *Inheritance by Daughters in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Social, Legal and Ideological Revolution*, trans. Betty Sigler Rozen (Jaffa, Israel: Archaeological Center Publications, 2006), 124.

[105] Nancy Jay argues, "J and E…tell stories full of conflict over issues of descent. Ishmael was the offspring of an exogamous union and patrilineal descent from Abraham alone could not make him the heir. He was only a 'father's son' – insufficient for continuity. Isaac, who could trace his patrilineal descent through his mother, was the

historical analysis in the first horizon in their work, as there is no way to determine the full cultural influences at play in each story.[106] Later contributors to the Hagar tradition continue to struggle with Ishmael's place in the system of inheritance, particularly as he fulfills the duty of the firstborn son even in later texts, like *Jubilees*.[107] The struggle within the text is about who gets the claim to not just Abraham's land and property, but his name; and so too for the returnees and the remainees.[108]

Ishmael and Hagar must undergo a shift in status because Isaac is a free-born son and Ishmael's status is questionable. Both Hagar and Ishmael are treated as sub-human, cast into the wilderness, despite Abraham's claim to be Ishmael's father. With Cataldo, I read Hagar as a symbol for colonized peoples who are "sentenced to death because they do not fit within the cultural normative symbolized by Abraham's family."[109] Reading against the text and in light of how Black women are often portrayed, I read Hagar and Ishmael as characters who break the

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true heir," Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," 59. I disagree with this assessment. First and foremost, the text is quite clear that Isaac also receives the blessing of abundant children that God promised Abram and his descendants, just not the same land. Second, there is ample evidence throughout West Asian texts, especially from Abram's homeland of Mesopotamia, that the child of an enslaved person and her master could be a primary heir. The birth of Isaac complicates the issue in that different Mesopotamian cities had different rules for when the primary wife gave birth after an enslaved woman had already birthed an heir. However, generally, the firstborn of the primary wife would become the primary heir; the enslaved firstborn would still receive some inheritance. Thus, Jay's statement is half-true. It was Hagar's status as surrogate, secondary, and slave, rather than a conflict about matrilineal descent. Abraham marries both, claiming both over and against the mothers. They do not get to claim matrilineal descent.

[106] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 53; Mark Sneed, "Qohelet and His 'Vulgar' Critics: A Jamesonian Reading," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1, no. 1 (December 2004), 3.

[107] Kozlova, "Abraham's Burial," 179, disagrees with this assessment, describing the scene as Ishmael trying to get his inheritance by performing his duties at Abraham's burial. However, there is no evidence in the text that Ishmael is doing anything other than his duty. Francis, "Defining the Excluded Middle," 264-6; notes that Ishmael is at the front of the line when Abraham performs his final rites as patriarch for his children, followed by Isaac, Isaac and Isaac's children. This ordering is not under Ishmael's control, but the patriarch's. However, because Ishmael is Egyptian, "he is uncredentialed to become the chief covenant conduit…(*Jub. 14:22*)," 272. The fact that his difference must be pointed out also signifies an underlying argument within the community.

[108] At play here is the notion that inheritance laws establish how the father's memory and name gets passed along through his descendants forever, how the father will live on after his death, Calum Carmichael, "Inheritance in Biblical Sources," *Law and Literature* 20, no. 2 (2008), 239.

[109] Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative*, 156.

hierarchies that Sarah desires to keep in place: Ishmael plays with Isaac and Hagar had previously looked down on Sarai. Furthermore, Cataldo writes,

> "And Ishmael, [Hagar] was already promised…will be uncivilized, unregulated by the cultural values, mores, obligations, and institutions that anchor Israel's collective, national identity…Was not something similar said to justify the taking of black persons to be slaves in Europe and the Americas? That slavery was a type of divine domestication of uncivilized bodies?"[110]

Williams draws a similar connection between enslaved Africans and Hagar, noting how both were forced to serve in surrogacy roles for their mistresses. Enslaved Black women were expected to "labor, reproduce and nurture," but also to breastfeed their mistresses' children, raise those same children as they grew up, and serve the master's sexual desires while dealing with the jealousy of white women.[111] One might imagine that an enslaved woman, not Sarah, breastfed Isaac, perhaps Hagar herself raised the young child, as a woman at Sarah's age would have trouble performing those acts.[112] In removing Hagar from this system, Sarah loses her surrogate and, therefore, a person who acted as a mother-figure for Isaac.

Williams argues that this concern and need to discard the mother and child gestures to the idea that Ishmael was not a slave, as he was still capable of receiving that inheritance until forced into exile.[113] This point is the aporia within this phase: the banished children and their mothers, and the Yehudim who never left or live in Egypt, are *still* Yehudim, even if they are not the preferred candidates. At every point in this narrative, Hagar and Ishmael are pushed away from

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[110] Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative*, 158. Cataldo also expands this problem to explicitly include conflicts between Jews and Muslims, and between Israelis and Palestinians, pp. 157-8.

[111] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 38, 40. Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 8, notes that Black women continue to fear "that white women, if given the slightest opportunity, will betray their trust and exploit their vulnerability as racially and sexually oppressed women."

[112] Vanessa Lovelace, *A Womanist Reading of Hebrew Bible Narratives as the Politics of Belonging from an Outsider Within* (New York: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2024), 15-16.

[113] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 27.

the family and dehumanized, separating them from the inheritance and from any kinship and inheritance claims that Ishmael would have to Abraham and over Isaac. However, no amount of rhetorical and ideological gesturing changes the fact that Ishmael is Abram's firstborn child, whom Abram intended to be his heir.[114]

The solution to this problem was endogamy, so marriage between people of the same kinship group would not create conflict either way. However, with the insertion of different ethnic groups, or even just claims and counterclaims between the remainees and the returnees, this became a problem. As Ishmael is disinherited and Isaac takes his place, so too are the remainees disinherited when the returnees take the land and kick them out. In finding this aporia, I read against the text to identify how these socio-spatial borders were used and are used to ensure that one group of people remains available for exploitation. Reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, I connect this form of endogamous language to the early stages of the racial capitalist system in the United States, in which endogamy was legally enforced to ensure that the lower-class white people and indentured and enslaved Black people would not develop solidarity with one another.[115]

This separation continues to have an effect on modern racial politics. I bring this endogamy up precisely because I remember hearing a white male member of my family, at the age of seven or eight, say "Ew, that's just gross," when he saw a Black man and a white woman holding hands. This person was too young to have a fully developed concept of racialization, but it stunned me and I immediately called him out for his racism. This racism is deeply embedded,

[114] This problem is representative of an issue in the Israelite genealogy. The Israelite system was primarily one of unilineal descent that, according to Jay, concealed the conflict that "it is unclear through which parent unilineal descent flows," Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," 56.

[115] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 104-131.

and I know for a fact that he used racial slurs around my sister and defended himself by saying it was okay because he had a Black sister. Many of these events happened when I was gone, so I was unable to step in directly in the moment, but I was able to support my sister and argue against that racism when such stories arose. This racism undoubtedly affected his relationship with my sister and between my sister and the rest of the family.

Within the biblical narratives, the Ishmaelites draw their history back to a mother and child who were expelled from their home and left to die in the wilderness, and modern day Black people in the United States draw their history back to enslaved people who survived, escaped, and lived under chattel slavery. By excluding the people living in Yehud prior to the return of the *golah* community, the returnees ostensibly negate any claim of familial relation the remainees had in order to establish their homeland, which follows the same function as racism, and the intersection of racism and sexism.

Third Horizon (The Historical Phase)

The third horizon, or the historical phase, concerns the genre of the text under consideration, the superstructure, and how it interacts with the mode of production (MP), both of the ancient world and of the interpreter. Under traditional Marxist hermeneutics, the MP for the text is considered the "Asiatic mode of production," "oriental despotism," or "tributary MP."[116] However, I replace that language with Boer's model of tribute-exchange in *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*, as his model takes into account many important factors relevant to this analysis.[117] The ideology of form, the superstructure, for these passages will remain the same throughout this dissertation:

[116] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 88.

[117] Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*; For my own MP, I will rely Cedric Robinson's use of "racialized capitalism" in *Cedric J. Robinson, Black Marxism, Revised and Updated Third Edition: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983),* and other related works.

the masculine sufformative of קרא throughout *Geburtserzählungen.* In both Genesis 16 and 21, Abra(ha)m names the children, rather than the mothers, which is abnormal for the genre.

The first appearance of any name for the children is when Hagar flees from Sarai's abuse and ends up at Beer-Lahai-Roi, where a messenger of the deity speaks to her. The messenger says "You have conceived (הָרָה, Adj-FS, or in Greek, σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις, again) and will bear (וְיֹלֶדֶת, Qal-Part-FS, or τέξῃ) a son and you will call (קָרָאת, Qal-Perf-2FS, καλέσεις) his name Ishmael, for THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES has heard of your oppression" (Gen 16:11).[118] The Hebrew word for conceived, הָרָה, appears here in the adjectival form, It only appears two other times in this genre, in Gen 38:24-25 (also in quotation, relating directly to vv. 27-30) and in 1 Sam 4:19-21.[119] This difference is matched by the Greek σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις, which is also rare. The rest of this quotation is similar to Gen 17:19, which is the promise of Sarah's child: "Your wife, Sarah, will bear (יֹלֶדֶת, Qal-Part-FS, τέξεταί) for you a son, and you will call (וְקָרָאתָ, Qal-Perf-2MS, καλέσεις) his name Isaac." However, that comes after Ishmael's birth.

While at this well, Hagar also overturns the system of naming on her own: she is the first person in the text to provide a name for the deity. The narrator states, "And she called (וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3FS) the name of THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES, the one speaking to her, 'You are El-Roi,'" and provides an explanation (Gen 16:13). Williams suggests that this action had the potential to "strike against patriarchal power at its highest level, since the ultimate head of the

[118] Hagar is the first woman in the biblical text to receive and "annunciation," and for Trible that means that she is "the prototype of special mothers in Israel. For her unborn child signifies not just comfort but also suffering." Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 17.

[119] As in Gen 16:11, Gen 38:24-25 also appears in quotation. As in Gen 16:11, Gen 38 also appears in quotation. In Gen 17:19, Abraham is not told that Sarah will conceive, so I cannot make an accurate comparison between them on this point. However, I will do so when I discuss Gen 38.

ancient Hebrew family was its patriarchal God."[120] This act of naming, although it is not a part of a birth narrative on its own, is inserted into the story and is the first evidence that Hagar, and other foreign women, will continue to leave their mark on the inheritance and lineage of Abraham's descendants. Despite this, she must return to those who abuse her. In addition, this name is never used again in the biblical text and, after her expulsion and Isaac's ascension to firstborn status, Isaac inherits the well, Beer-lahai-roi.[121]

In time, Hagar gives birth: "And Hagar bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to Abram a son, and *Abram* called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS, ἐκάλεσεν) the name of his son, whom Hagar bore (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν), Ishmael" (16:15). Hagar's conception is not in this verse because it appears earlier in 16:4 (וַתַּהַר, Qal-Pret-3FS, συνέλαβεν), at which point Sarah the text states that she abused Hagar, and the enslaved woman fled. Excluding the masculine form of קרא, Hagar's story follows genre conventions until the text repeats, "whom Hagar bore," a repetition not present in the other stories. By remaining so similar to the other matriarchal stories, the text establishes Ishmael as a properly vetted and claimed firstborn son and the primary heir. After all, there are as yet no challenges to his inheritance.

However, the deity creates a problem for Ishmael's status in Gen. 17, through the creation of a new covenant and the use of circumcision. [122] The choice to create a new covenant

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[120] Williams phrases this as a question. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 26. Brett reads this action as undermining the dominant ideology that was just reinstated, Brett, *Genesis*, 59.

[121] This is the first place where Isaac dwells after inheriting from Abraham. Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 43.

[122] I will not relate the making of the covenant here, as that is not the purpose of this dissertation. However, it does include some effects that are important to my thesis. Every male is circumcised at eight days old, and all males older than that (those who are enslaved) are circumcised later (Gen 17:13-14). The fact that Ishmael is circumcised later in life than Isaac functions to separate the pair and makes Ishmael an outsider, circumcised at 13 (17:25). He, like the enslaved people in Abraham's household, was circumcised at an older age. According to Matthew Thiessen, the P-source sets this eight-day circumcision "to create distinctions among circumcised peoples" and therefore, "distinguishes between Isaac's covenantal circumcision and Ishmael's noncovenantal circumcision." Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 30. Ishmael, who never stood a chance at such an early circumcision, is further removed from the process of inheritance by this act alone, as are the rest of Abraham's household. For Savina

and introduce circumcision as an ethno-religious marker points the reader away from exogamy.[123] The deity also changes both Abram and Sarai's names (Gen 17:5, 15) and soon after, says, "Your wife, Sarah, will bear (יֹלֶדֶת, Qal-Part-FS, τέξεταί) for you a son, and you will call (וְקָרָאתָ, Qal-Perf-2MS, καλέσεις) his name Isaac" (Gen 17:19). Reading against this story, I tie this new covenant and renaming is echoed in the legal knots that people in the British North American colonies tied themselves in when instituting a race-based system of slavery. Some colonies, and later US states, first forbade people from enslaving Christians, which became a problem when enslaved people converted to Christianity, or at least claimed that they did such. The solution was to follow a race-based system instead, but even then, different states decided how to count race differently depending on how mixed a person was.[124] The solution in this text is that, unlike Hagar's story, *Abraham* is told to name Isaac, providing this act with divine ordination. Thus, Isaac is marked by the deity as the true descendant of Abraham, who had subverted the command for Hagar to name her child. If Hagar had named Ishmael, Abram's claim over him, and the genealogical connection created therein, would be tentative at best. Ishmael would be Egyptian, rather than a member of two kinship groups. This connection to the covenant is made explicit in vv. 20-21, where the deity promises that Ishmael will be a great

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Teubal, the introduction of circumcision was an attempt to extend endogamy to all males, "but matriliny remained the only authentic path to membership within the group." Savina J. Teubal, "Sarah and Hagar: Matriarchs and Visionaries," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 238. Brett, *Genesis,* 64 reads circumcision as a move towards inclusion; however, as demonstrated in the cases of both Ishmael and Esau, it does not necessarily function in that way. Therefore, everyone except Isaac is rendered useless in this new inheritance system. However, as demonstrated through Esau's story, circumcision itself is not sufficient to carry the covenantal promise.

[123] The need to create a new covenant and introduce circumcision as an ethno-religious marker points to the problem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. They, too, create (or renew) the covenant and (re)introduce forms ethno-religious practices in order to establish their power and control over a given people.

[124] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2016), 43-75.

nation, but says "I will raise up my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear (תֵּלֵד, Qal-Impf-3FS, τέξεταί) to you" (17:21). Thus, the covenant stays endogamous.[125]

The two birth announcements share a unique factor: the participial form of ילד: יֹלַדְתְּ (Hagar, Gen 16:11) and יֹלֶדֶת (Sarah, 17:19). These are the only two birth narratives that use the participial form of this verb, creating a further connection between the two stories. They also both appear in quotation, which is another rarity. In addition, the messenger uses קרא in the second person perfective form to provide a name for the new child. In this case, the verb appears in quotation, so its break with the conventions of the genre is necessary. In fact, these two quotations form their own subgenre within the *Geburtserzählung*, as they are the only two times when the deity, or a messenger, foretells a birth and provides a name in this way.[126]

At this point, the narrator turns to other stories, including the reassertion that Isaac will be born (18:1-15) and the story of Lot and his daughters (Gen 18:16-19:38). I will pause briefly here to note the language used to describe the birth of their children. The first is described, "And the firstborn daughter bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) a son and she called (וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-pret-3FS, ἐκάλεσεν) his name Moab" (19:37). The second: "And the younger also bore (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν) a son and called (וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-pret-3FS, ἐκάλεσεν) his name Ben-Ammi" (19:38). In both cases, קרא holds the Qal-Pret-3FS form, although ילד appears in the perfective

[125] Trible notes that Sarah never receives a birth announcement, like Hagar did, and so her story is mediated through Abraham, Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 19.

[126] In Judges 13:3, when a messenger foretells Samson's birth, הרה and ילד both appear in perfective form as well, although the speaker does not provide a name. Samson's birth and naming are both in Qal-Pret-3FS form, so there is little more to be said there. The perfective form of קרא appears elsewhere in Gen 29:34 (Levi), Gen 29:35 (Judah), Gen 30:5-6 (Dan), and 1 Chronicles 4:9 (Jabez). However, each of these appears outside a quotation, and so further work on comparisons to Hagar and Sarah's children is limited. The actual birth stories maintain the same parallels between the two women and their children depicted in the earlier chart, with Isaac receiving *more* than Ishmael so that the narrator might establish his higher power. As 1 Chronicles is a different document and textual tradition, I will not include it in the analysis for this chapter. The rest include Levi and Judah, both of whom are important for the history of Israel, and especially pertinent to the *golah* community led by Ezra, a Levite, and his predecessor, Zerubbabel, a Judahite. Levi's birth also uses a masculine form of the verb.

aspect, rather than the preterite. There is little to be said here, as קרא maintains the feminine sufformative. The insertion of these more normative stories into the narrative reasserts the normative function of naming with the correct aspects and genders used. Hagar and Sarah's birth narratives create a *Geburtserzählung* sandwich, with two normal birth narratives in the middle and two abnormal stories on either side.

Isaac's birth narrative is longer than Ishmael's and repeatedly establishes Sarah's maternity: "Sarah conceived (וַתַּהַר, Qal-Pret-3FS, συλλαβοῦσα) and bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to Abraham a son in his old age, at the time when God had spoken to him. And *Abraham* called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS, ἐκάλεσεν) the name of his son, who was born (הַנּוֹלַד, Niphal-Perf-3MS, γενομένου) to him, whom Sarah had born (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to him, Isaac" (Gen 21:2-3). For a proper comparison, here is Hagar's story: "And Hagar bore (וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν) to Abram a son, and *Abram* called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS, ἐκάλεσεν) the name of his son, whom Hagar bore (יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν), Ishmael" (16:15).

These are the only two birth narratives that use the perfective form of ילד. Sarah's birthing story is also longer than Hagar's, taking two verses and repeatedly establishing Sarah's maternity and Abraham's paternity. Isaac is also born to Abraham thrice, as compared to Ishmael's singular reference. The narrator twice says that Hagar and Sarah birth their respective children, first in preterite form, and second in perfective. The use of "to Abra(ha)m" in each follows other versions of the *Geburtserzählung* and functions to establish the full parentage of each child, and so both mother and father are referenced. The middle reference to Isaac's birth uses the niphal stem, the only time the form appears in a *Geburtserzählung.* The use of the niphal here separates Isaac out of Sarah's household and places him squarely within Abraham's.[127] This

[127] Following Levenson, Chapman argues that each mother's household had its own firstborn son, Jon D. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and*

difference appears in the Greek with the change to γενομένου for this specific clause, then returns to ἔτεκεν, further supporting the importance of this change in Abraham's claim over Isaac. In addition, the unique double reference to Sarah and Hagar birthing their children marks each of these stories as dealing with something broader than simple parentage. The narrator is specifically bringing attention to the mothers and the differences between the two, and additionally establishing Abraham's fatherhood over Isaac in particular, separate from the mother.

In both birth narratives, the paternal figure names his son, which is a firm break from the previously discussed examples. Both Kessler and Bridge have argued that the mother typically names the child.[128] However, neither does so. For Kessler, both Hagar and Sarah's missed naming events are P-source emendations.[129] If this is the case, and I believe it is, then there is clear tampering with the stories in order to ensure that Abra(ha)m names each of the children. The P-source emendations demonstrate that there is something special about these stories and the person who names the children, which would continue in the post-exilic period. Bridge provides further sociological context, pointing to the role the mother played in the child's enculturation and language acquisition, among other factors, particularly in light of the command to expel foreign wives and their children in Nehemiah.[130] Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael is a result of Sarah's fear that Ishmael and Isaac will inherit together. However, reading the story backwards, with the expulsion in Ezra and Nehemiah's time

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Christianity (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 46-47, 55-57, in Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (Yale University Press, 2016), 158.

[128] Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter;" Bridge, "A Mothers Influence."

[129] Kessler, "Benennung," 31.

[130] Bridge, "A Mother's Influence," 398-9.

at the forefront of one's mind, the narrator presents an alternative solution that is rooted in ancient laws: in order to incorporate exogamous unions and legitimize the child, the father, not the mother, must name the child.

As I have stated before, I read the Torah, Ruth, and most other biblical texts as post-exilic texts drawing on more ancient stories. E. Theodore Mullen Jr.'s analysis of these texts provides great insight into how they function as markers of ethnic discourse to create distinctions between Yehudim (what I am calling returnees) and other residents of the land and beyond.[131] At this point in time, there was a fear of losing the *golah* community's self-identification, especially in light of their developing differences as distinct from the remainee community.[132] From a Marxist analysis, these stories are "superstructural responses to the unavoidable structural shifts that occurred in the society of ancient Judah by virtue of the exile and its attendant modifications of the basic Judahite society and modes of production."[133] That is to say, with the exile and return of the upper class within Judahite society, now with the backing of the Persian government behind them, the entire system had to change in order to accommodate the needs of that upper class in order to remain in power.

Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this story through the lens of the world in which I grew up. My community frequently voiced fear of immigrants and other people taking their jobs, spoke about the welfare queen, and complained people taking advantage of "government handouts." These complaints and fears stem from the same place, albeit through a different mode of production. There is a fear of losing one's place in society, or somebody taking

[131] E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 64.

[132] Mullen, *Ethnic Myths*, 65.

[133] Mullen, *Ethnic Myths*, 65.

land or money that a person believes rightfully belongs to them. These depictions of the Other play on the same fear of a loss of identity through the redistribution of goods, in their various forms, which creates a more equal world. It is a fear of hybridization. Thus, the socio-spatial borders become a site of ever-increasing conflict. However, as in my analysis of this text, these conflicts frequently do not touch the actual oppressors. In the modern world, these are the upper-class people whose whole live and wealth are built off of skyrocketing stocks and company valuations, among others. In Yehud, the oppressors were the Persians who controlled the Persian Empire.

Under the Persian Empire, the economy of Yehud and many other provinces were under a significant strain, which Boer defines as a "strong extractive regime."[134] It was different from the two preceding empires, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian, in that it refined the process of extracting labor and wealth from conquered territories through a bureaucratic process of violence, particularly administratively, or through "covert violence."[135] Persia's system was able to last longer because it used a bureaucratic apparatus rather than military violence, taxation rather than direct plunder. However, new modes of production, or economic systems, tend to integrate and appropriate the old forms.[136] The primary MP for the vast majority of people remained neolithic agriculture, or what Boer calls subsistence.[137] Read with my womanist-accomplice lens, the dominant cultural marker for this group remained kinship, which takes its current form as race and nationality. When the Persian Empire sought to create dominance and loyalty to the empire to ensure proper payment of taxes, the ruler had to work within this system.

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[134] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 151.

[135] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 151.

[136] Ronald A. Simkins, "Class and Gender in Early Israel," in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, ed. Mark R. Sneed (Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1999), 74.

[137] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 2.

By allowing the *golah* community to return, the emperor achieved this goal. That is, by helping to create divisions, the upper class is able to ensure that the lower classes do not come together in solidarity, which is a primary root of race-based politics and divisions in the US. This action also leads to the development of religious adherence as the major cultural component in the Persian plunder-based regime and the US capitalist regime.[138]

The temple, rebuilt and guided by Ezra and Nehemiah, functioned as Persia's hand of control in within Yehud. Its role in taxation, both for the previous monarchies and for Persia, is evident in, "[t]he very need to dress a tax as a sacred duty" in Lev 27:30-33 and Num 18:25-26.[139] However, because there existed another temple in Egypt, the temple in Jerusalem could not claim dominance over all Yehudim. The leadership of the returnee community had to speak in the language of the populace, the language of kinship, to assure that their community received these taxes, rather than the temple in Egypt, so that they could continue to curry favor with Persia by meeting and exceeding their tax burden. Alongside this problem comes the fact that a significant portion of the Persian tax burden went directly to sustaining the temple and other aspects of the Persian bureaucracy within Yehud to maintain power.[140] By gathering taxes, the upper class was also enriching itself.

This class also enriched itself by loaning the money, often gathered through taxation, back to the local populace, and then taking land and people, for both field and sex work, when the lower classes could not pay off that debt burden, caused by the taxes. These loans reappear in

[138] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 88.

[139] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 151.

[140] Persia frequently used returning peoples to establish a community to do the taxing for them, and paid them in rebuilt temples or similar projects. Mullen, *Ethnic Myths*, 80.

modern pay-day loans that often target communities of color.[141] All of this after the returnees had already taken land from the remainees when they returned. This MP was impossible to maintain without setting up guardrails, which was the purpose of Persia's administrative apparatus in the first place. However, mere bureaucracy and threat of violence was not enough to justify the continual taxation and near-starvation level survival of many of these people. The ideological justification comes from the birth narratives: "We are descendants of Isaac, born to Abraham (thrice). Abraham exiled Hagar and Ishmael to maintain Isaac's claim. We must do the same." In addition, this explanation functions to deracinate the remainees, separating them from their historical land claims and culture in order to develop that land as the dominant class sees fit.[142] Financial exploitation of those who lived in the land and lower class people was necessary to ensure that *Yehud* fulfilled its tax burden *and* that the upper class could quickly establish itself as rulers. The remainees and returnees, as well as the upper and lower classes, can claim to be children of Abraham and live in the land, but only one can be a true heir.[143]

However, the remainees and members of other kinship groups still lived on the land. These were the people who had worked the land continuously throughout the Babylonian and Persian empires while the *golah* were away. As in 19th and 20th century sharecropping, and modern migrant labor, the local economy relied on the continued existence of marginalized

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[141] David Lazarus, "There's a Racial Gap in Marketing by Banks and Payday Lenders, Study Finds," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 9 April 2021), § Business, https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-04-09/racist-marketing-banks-payday-lenders.

[142] Aurora Vergara-Figueroa defines deracination as,

> An historical process by which racial, sexual, class, gender, and spatial categories condense to design and produce a marginalized other and naturalize the condition of who deserves to live and who deserves to die; as a process of allocation of targets in cultures, bodies and territories; and as a social relation of domination, as a mechanism, as well as a complex.

Aurora Vergara-Figueroa, *Afrodescendant Resistance to Deracination in Colombia: Massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 18.

[143] De Pury, "Abraham," 172.

people and their access to the land, they just could not own the land themselves. Unlike with Hagar and Ishmael, exile was not a genuine solution in Yehud. The women and children who returned to their father's household were almost certainly locals, whether their family had lived in the region for centuries or they were immigrants moved by Babylon several decades earlier. The modern division of people into tribes with distinct borders, both socially and physically, did not apply in the past, especially when many people were nomadic.[144] Kinship ties, as performed through genealogies, were malleable and moved beyond blood or genetic connections.[145] It is this malleability that creates a problem for the returnees and why they create stricter boundaries around intermarriage. On the outskirts of territories, and in nomadic communities, kinship claims were more difficult, as seen in Hagar's story and, in the next chapter, Ruth's. However, Babylon's system of displacement forced immigrants and local communities to adapt. Although there is little evidence of this fact within *Yehud*, there is plentiful evidence of Samarians and Judahites selling their services as mercenary soldiers, which frequently also allowed them to work land.[146]

Several texts from the Torah point toward the inclusion of foreigners in the community (Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19; 27:19). In Ezra-Nehemiah, the prohibition on intermarriage expands to include all foreign women, נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת, whereas earlier texts only exclude more local groups. Deuteronomy 7:1 lists seven groups and Jeremiah 29:6-7 includes a command to the *golah* community to incorporate themselves into their new city. There is little evidence to determine

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[144] George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, *Ancient Israel's Faith and History: Introduction to the Bible in Context*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 11.

[145] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 90.

[146] Van der Toorn says, "There were Judean colonies in the Nile Delta (Migdol, Tahpanhes), Memphis (Noph), and the southern province (Pathros—all places with garrisons. In light of Aramaic and Greek texts from Egypt, the names of Edfu…and Thebes may be added to the list," Karel Van Der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 90.

how the remainees responded to the influx of migrants; however, Ezra-Nehemiah makes no distinction between the remainees and those who were forced to settle in the land when Babylon conquered the region. Instead, they are all subsumed under the titles, עַמ־הָאָרֶץ (people of the land, Ezra 4:4) for the remainees, as distinct from עַמ־יְהוּדָה (people of *Yehud*, 4:4) or יֹשְׁבֵי יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָיִם (inhabitants of *Yehud* and Jerusalem, 4:6) for the returnees.[147] In Ezra 9:1, some officials report to Ezra that "the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites" did not separate themselves from the אַמֵּי הָאֲרצוֹת, and includes the list found in Deut. 7:1 while adding Moabites and Egyptians and excluding some others. It is at this point that all נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת are divorced and sent away. The language of "the people of the land," then, is primarily functioning to put all the people who were already living in the land under one title so they can be summarily divorced and sent away without needing to parse specifics. By sending these people away, Ezra and Nehemiah created an underclass. As Boer argues, "There was sharper distinction between ruling-class bodies and those of the estate and rural laborers."[148] These women are forced into positions as laborers producing children (other workers), products, and commodifying themselves.[149] So, too, are their

[147] The language of "people of the land" is "a categorical lable under which everyone 'not a member of the *golah* community was cast," and thus the people against whom dystopianism can be applied. See Jeremiah Cataldo, "Utopia in Agony: The Role of Prejudice in Ezra-Nehemiah's Ideal for Restoration," in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 620 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 156.

[148] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 94.

[149] Simkins, "Class and Gender," 81. I disagree with this to an extent. Women played multiple roles, one of which was an MP, but so too did men and children function as such. I lean more towards Meyers's description of heterarchy in this instance, Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196-7. However, Simkins's description of this process focuses on women, rather than balancing men and women. That is, Simkins describes the women in their role as field and dependent on men. However, he ignores that men were also a means of production. Marxism originated during the shift from agricultural to factory-based labor. One of the primary components of Marxist theory is the alienation of a person from their role in the means of production, and Simkins falls prey to this trap. The penis is a hoe that tills the ground and implants its seed in the land. Metonymically, my analogy uses penis to include the whole man, although I do not know if men in the ancient world differentiated themselves from their penis to this extent. My point is that, in the biblical world, men were also a means of production. By discussing women as a means of production which men use, without including men as another means of production, Simkins alienates men from the means of (re)production, cementing them as subjects in comparison to feminine objects. Although this is process is evident in the biblical texts in the dearth of women as agents throughout biblical texts, women are also occasional subjects.

children, alongside all the men and women who are considered interlopers. This solution is a far cry from utopia for the remainees and other inhabitants before the *golah* community returned.

Seeking Utopia

I incorporate this movement toward utopia at the end as my womanist-accomplice movement to find the inherent humanity and value of everyone within the community, both local and global, and to read against the text. In these texts, utopia is created through exclusion, as that is the only way in which the covenant can be fulfilled. Only by removing the exogamous unions can the Yehudim achieve the promised covenantal relationship with the deity. The same "utopia" is still being attempted, albeit through different means. This is the process by which the United States developed and continues "racial capitalism," which expands to the whole world.[150] The Europeans who traveled to the western hemisphere did so in order to expand their holdings and used both indigenous and imported labor to establish settlements and maintain systems of control. In the United States, nationalism is built with a mix of racial sensibility and the economic interests of national bourgeoisies.[151] In the Second Temple Period, scribes and others brought together these ancient stories to develop a nationalistic sensibility that would instill

Both men and women were treated as commodities in the ancient world through a class system, as were children. I would argue that this depiction is largely rooted in upper class dynamics wherein the scribes and redactors were more alienated from the means of production (see Sara R. Mandell, "Primary History as a Social Construction of a Privileged Class," in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, ed. Mark R. Sneed (Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1999), 21–36). Through this alienation, Simkins's analysis works much better, as these upper class men were alienated from the fields and did not work them. Although this description somewhat falls apart in that it means other men are working the fields (one could here discuss the fear of cuckolding and consequent ownership of women), but all metaphors are limited in their applicability. I do not intend to valorize the lower class here as inherently closer to the land and better to women, but to point out that the extant texts represent the ideology of the upper class, those alienated from the means of production, and so do not represent the relationship between the workers and the field in the way Simkins depicts.

[150] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 2.

[151] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 3.

obedience both to the ruling class, as represented by Ezra and Nehemiah, among others, and to the Persian Empire. The existence of the temple at Elephantine, as well as the evidence that many groups of *Yehudi* intermarried with others, created a challenge to this nationalistic sensibility and had to be dismantled to ensure that the returnee community could establish and maintain its power. As with any incorporation of multiple economic systems, neither capitalism nor plunder-exchange could become a "coherent, objective system, but remain[ed] wrapped in famines, wars, and social conflicts."[152] Expelling the remainees, who challenged the land claims of the returnees, and others who lived in the region, separated those people from the means of production and opened them up to further exploitation by the ruling class, including slavery. Reading this system of deracination in light of the United States's treatment of enslaved Africans, both economic systems retained the status quo by producing an ideology that can blame the "Other" for any economic hardships. Capitalism, and almost certainly plunder-exchange, relies on the people they exclude to perform manual labor.

Delores Williams especially focuses on enslaved women. As with Hagar, Black people's bodies were used as a method or production, akin to machines that reproduce machines.[153] Black women, especially, were treated as primarily reproductive instruments, due to their physical anatomy. Beyond house and field work, Black women's tasks "could range from birthing children to breastfeeding white children, to caring for the family needs of the master…to tending the children as she worked."[154] Hagar's role, too, would have been similar to that of a "house slave." And so, too, were those women who were sold to pay for the debts of their family to the wealthy families in Yehud. Sending a group of women and children back to their families, now

[152] Robinson, *Black Marxism,* 9.

[153] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 34.

[154] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, *38*.

under new governance and taxed to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple alongside Persia's normal taxes, were beneficial to that system because systems of slavery, indentured servitude, and other means of ensuring an underclass and lower class, were necessary for maintaining the Persian economic system and stratification. However, by sending women and children away from the families, the returnee community also loses a significant part of its workforce, as women and children performed important work for the maintenance of the community.[155] This utopia only exists for the upper-class Persians.

However, there is another utopic vision to be found in these texts: Hagar's flight and exile. The only time Hagar found relief was when she fled from Sarai, where she subsequently found a well and spoke with a messenger from the deity. Once again, when Abraham obeys Sarah and sends Hagar and Ishmael away, she meets a messenger from the deity and another well. It is only in the wilderness experiences away from the masters and mistresses that Hagar and Ishmael thrive. Dolores Williams writes about the language of wilderness experiences, saying,

> For the African-American woman, the wilderness experience – a sojourn in the wide world to find survival resources for self and children – has often involved mourning the death of her children. The end has not been caused by their starvation. Rather, it has been caused by the systematic effort of the State and some of its white supporters to discourage black progress by a form of destruction African Americans are today labeling genocide.[156]

Clearly, these experiences are awful and should be unnecessary. I include this quote specifically to say that this is not a valorization of abuse and flight: when Hagar runs away and is exiled, she finds a life separate from that system, despite the hardship. When enslaved women fled from

[155] Carol Meyers, "In the Household and Beyond," *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 63, no. 1 (May 1, 2009): 22.

[156] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 131.

those who enslaved them, they had a long and difficult road. And when they reached their destination, if they did, there were still many difficulties in survival, especially after the Fugitive Slave Act. However, it was only in leaving their situations that these women were able to attain freedom and dignity for themselves.

Before the exile, the people of Israel, as well as the surrounding peoples, were a mixture of stationary-agricultural people and nomadic-shepherd people, with many switching when necessary. Migration was relatively common, especially for refugees in times of famine and military conquest. Many of these people were literally fleeing from future slavery, either as debtors or potential bounties of war. In pre-exilic Judah and Israel, the monarchs and other members of the upper class acquired land and workers through debts, corvée labor, and force, amongst other means. Nehemiah 5:6-11 points to something similar happening at the same time, with the upper-class taking land from people who are struggling. This level of struggle was worsened by Persian taxation, especially after the Babylonian destruction of the local economy and battles between Egypt and Persia. And so, in Hagar's exile, one can also read the subconscious desire to flee from Persian control and set up somewhere else, particularly among the lower class. After all, Ishmael, Hagar's child who grew up in the wilderness, is also claimed by Abraham and retains a covenantal relationship with the deity. Hagar also finds him an Egyptian woman and together they have several children, forming their own twelve tribes a generation before Jacob does. In this way, Ishmael and his descendants, each with mixed kinship, outshine the Israelite story. Egypt represents a better future, and many people had already fled to Egypt and built their own temple.

The utopia represented here is *not* the nomadic lifestyle in and of itself, but rather an escape from oppressors, be they the Judahite monarchy, the Neo-Assyrians, the Neo-

Babylonians, the Persians, or even the upper-class returnees. Escape from this system comes through the example of the foreign women because it is ultimately rejected by the contributors, the literate elite. By having an enslaved woman represent this strategy of survival, the contributors present the notion as contrary to the desires of the deity, for whom they were building a temple. And so the elite also requires the removal of all foreign women and their children who represent alternative economic strategies outside the power of the returnee elite, from the temple economy, and from Persia. Ezra's "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2) are tax-paying citizens who will partake in the temple economy and will not challenge Persian rule. Even the Yehudi community in Egypt fell under Persian control.[157] Escaping from this economic system required a flight into the wilderness, a disconnection from systems of power. Hagar enters the wilderness twice, but she and her household can only thrive and grow when she remains. Together in Egypt, Hagar and Ishmael ensure that *their* line continues, without the help of Abraham. Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read them as maroons who, much like maroon communities in the US and, later, Black towns before they incorporated as municipalities, who were able to survive through mutual aid and developing their own systems of relation. Ishmael returns to bury Abraham, to bury the Persian Empire, then leaves again for his mother. Isaac inherits the flocks, the power, and land, even the land where Hagar first encountered the deity. However, Hagar's descendants travel the land and even play a role in the survival of Isaac's household by bringing an enslaved Joseph to Egypt, where he ensures the survival of Egypt and his brothers' families from a position of power.

[157] Yehudim in Egypt used this term for themselves, as well as "Judaean of Elephantine" or "An Aramean" or "Syenian" or "Aramean of Syene," Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 83.

In finding a life separate from systems of power, ancient people would be able to survive much easier, even under a subsistence-survival system, because they could properly plan for famines and set resources aside for those events, rather than barely surviving under Persian taxation systems. So, too, were enslaved people able to thrive separate from systems of power. On the outskirts of the racial slavocracy lived communities of people who had committed marronage and others who chose to live among them. These people were able to thrive through their own means and did not have to suffer under the bureaucratic controls of European colonizers and settlers. At least, until they were found. This system did not totally change with the rejection of slavery, but took another form.

Globally, Africans, Central and South Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, broadly construed, are the foundation upon which the global economy is built. Countries founded by western Europeans, especially, have ensured that people from these continents remain oppressed in a variety of ways. These methods include overthrowing governments, helping local dissenters overthrow governments, propping up dictators, and using economic controls to demolish economic conditions that benefit the local populace over the ruling European elite. Africans, Central and South Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, who perform the tasks that upper classes rely upon, such as mining, assemblage, and garment making, among many others, are essentially, and sometimes literally, functioning as enslaved peoples. Escape is often impossible for these people. Unlike in the ancient Afro-Asiatic, and unlike enslaved people in the US-South, there is no longer an escape from these systems at the individual level, nor for small communities. The bureaucratic systems of most modern states extend to the documentation of every birth and death, the location of each individual's home, the amount of each salary (still for purposes of taxation), and many other aspects of daily life. Those who do live on the edges of

society, such as refugees and undocumented migrants, do not have the protections of the State in which they are in, nor do they have the good will of many citizens. If the *subconscious* utopia presented in the Hagar and Sarah stories is one of escape and rebuilding outside the bounds of power, what is the utopia in a world where that is impossible?

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CHAPTER 3: THE WIDOWS OF JUDAH

In ancient west Asia, and throughout many Mediterranean cultures as well, many heroes had parents of mixed origins. In the Greek world, these unions were frequently between a deity and a human, which imbued their child with powers beyond those of typical mortals. However, in western Asia, these heroes also frequently came from mixed people groups.[1] This same trope takes place in Ruth's story, as David's great-grandmother, for Tamar and Bath-Shua, the mothers of the Judahite tribe, and for Bath-Sheba, Solomon's mother.[2] These four women, Bath-Shua, Tamar, Ruth, and Bath-Sheba, all contribute to the broader legacy of the Judahite lineage, especially David's line. In some ways, it is this connection to David and the Judahite monarchy that makes the inclusion of these women not just acceptable, but beneficial to the community. The central question for this text is one about what the returnee community can do to ensure that the land they have taken from the "people of the land" remains part of their own inheritance. The solutions include the father naming the child (as in Bath-Shua, Tamar, and Bath-Sheba's stories), the deity naming the child (Bath-Sheba), and having the community name the child (Ruth), all to ensure that inheritance follows the proper patrilineal line without undue influence from the

[1] Koosed says, "The very aspects of the story that we regard as shameful—Lot's daughters conceiving children with him, for example—are the very ones the original audiences would have regarded as sacred." Jennifer L. Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 34.

[2] Eleanor Ferris Beach, "An Iconographic Approach to Genesis 38," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 299.

mother.[3] Each of these women must trick the system, playing on the language of levirate marriage, redemption, and the boundaries of kinship.[4]

By playing with the concepts of levirate marriage (see Deut. 25:5-10) and redemption (see Lev 25), these stories focus on the responsibility people have for one another. [5] These systems existed in several cultures throughout ancient west Asia to ensure that the woman is cared for and that the land stays within the clan.[6] Levirate marriage laws ensured that Israel itself, as well as the name of the individual, continued.[7] Without implementing this law, there is a chance that her links to the clan would fade and she might marry a man outside the kinship system, putting the ownership and usufruct of the land in peril.[8] In this system, the woman and the land were intimately linked, both belonging to the בֵּית אָב and מִשְׁפָּחָה, and so must be passed

[3] Following Matheny, I put the title of the book in italics when I am referencing the books as a whole, Jennifer M. Matheny, *Judges 19-21: Canon as a Voice of Answerability*, vol. 200, Biblical Interpretation Series (Boston, MA: Brill, 2022).

[4] The use of trickster themes ties together Tamar, Ruth, and Bath-Sheba, see James Black, "Ruth in the Dark: Folktale, Law and Creative Ambiguity in the Old Testament," *Literature and Theology* 5, no. 1 (December 31, 1991): 20–36; Peter Bekins, "Tamar and Joseph in Genesis 38 and 39," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40, no. 4 (December 31, 2016): 375–97; Chi Wai Chan, "The Ultimate Trickster in the Story of Tamar from a Feminist Perspective," *Feminist Theology* 24, no. 1 (September 2015): 93–101; and Melissa A Jackson, "Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26, no. 4 (2002): 29–46.

[5] For LaCocque, Ruth is a commentary on the Torah, "anti-Moabite ostracism, mixed marriages, the right of gleaning, the right of redemption, levirate marriage, the zeal of Perez for the protection of priestly purity, the matriarchs of the historical people of Israel…the adoption of a child, and so on," Andre LaCocque, *Ruth: A Continental Commentary*, trans. K.C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 19. Also see Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, *Ruth & Esther: Women in Alien Lands* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 13; and Irmtraud Fischer, "The Book of Ruth: A 'Feminist' Commentary to the Torah?," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 42.

[6] Redemption is referenced in Article 39 of Codex Eshnunna; Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 113 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 60; as well as Hittite and Assyrian laws, Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, The JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2011), xxxii.

[7] E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 172; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xxxii.

[8] Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths*, 173; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 207.

through the family for safekeeping.[9] The child from a levirate union "will receive the juridical-social father's inheritance as the firstborn son, rather than the biological father's, potentially displacing the biological father. Or re-displacing him."[10] Each of these stories is important for the self-definition of the community returning from exile. The *golah* community has already defined itself as the heirs of the Judahite lineage.[11] Following Ellen van Wolde, "The ongoing life of the Judahites is…the main point in the frameworks" that "tell us about the role of certain foreign women who made this framework possible."[12] This system opens up many potential readings for the Second Temple Period because one of the major concerns is over who has the legal and traditional power to control the land, the returnees, read as the firstborn of the child of a levirate union, or the remainees, as the levir, who had been there the whole time.

Redemption exists for similar purposes but does not require the death of the patriarch or another marriage. According to Bendor, redemption is one of the primary duties of the מִשְׁפָּחָה.[13] A גֹּאֵל, a redeemer, was a fellow member of the בֵּית אָב or מִשְׁפָּחָה who would pay off a debt for a member of the family or pay to take the usufruct of the land for themself to ensure the original party survived.[14] The money from this latter act would then provide resources for the initial owner of that land, or their widows and orphans, to live on for a time. This duty extends to

[9] Westbrook, *Property and the Family*, 14, 72; Steffan Mathias, *Paternity, Progeny, and Perpetuation: Creating Lives after Death in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 2, 176.

[10] Shunya Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1996), 175.

[11] Among the first leaders of the returnees is Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2), the grandson of Jeconiah and descendant of David (1 Chr. 3:17-19).

[12] Ellen van Wolde, "Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 434.

[13] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 201; Westbrook, *Property and the Family*, 15; Bendor, *The Social Structure*, 103.

[14] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 201; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 109.

redeeming family members sold into slavery to pay off debts.[15] The original party who had usufruct of the land or owed the debt, had the ability to later compensate the גֹּאֵל and get their land back.[16] Levirate marriage and redemption are elements of a utopian imagination in which people imagined ways of providing for those who fell outside the normal scope, an attempt to incorporate more voices into the imagined future. However, it also becomes the site of ethnic conflict, to determine who can receive these benefits and who cannot.

One way in which redemption becomes a site of division is that it is also the process by which a father claimed a child. As any firstborn belonged to the deity, the father had to pay off the debt to keep the firstborn through a ritual. According to Chapman, "Any womb-opener, firstborn, required the firstborn ritual and redemption – not just to establish paternity, but also the inauguration of a uterine family or 'house of the mother.'"[17] Both levirate marriage and redemption ensured that the widow and any surviving members of her family could survive while ensuring that the land remained within the מִשְׁפָּחָה, even if it could not remain in the בֵּית אָב. For these reasons, widows, especially childless widows, were weak points in the social structure. Their relationship to the land could jeopardize the נַחֲלָה if a man did not step in to ensure its survival, and the survival of her husband's name. The stories of Tamar, Ruth, and Bath-Sheba all play on these themes.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of Bath-Sheba's life and her role in establishing the monarchy, as her story is the shortest and establishes the Davidic lineage. Second, I will turn to the beginning of the Judahite lineage with Tamar in Genesis 38, the matriarch of two-thirds of

[15] Westbrook, *Property and the Family*, 21.

[16] Westbrook, *Property and the Family*, 15.

[17] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 159.

Judah, and Bath-Shua.[18] Like Bath-Sheba, Tamar is married to another man and when he dies, she is forced to copulate with another. They differ in that Bath-Sheba's rape is different from Tamar being given to a *levir*, although in both cases the woman's consent is removed. I will end with Ruth, who has the longest story, which will make up the majority of my analysis. Like Bath-Sheba and Tamar, Ruth's first husband dies. After providing for herself and her mother-in-law, Ruth joins with Boaz to provide a child for her first husband. In each of these cases, a woman loses her husband and must use her wits afterwards to survive and establish her matrilineage.

Bath-Sheba Becomes the Queen-Mother

As with many other women I discuss in this dissertation, Bath-Sheba's story is not about her, but about the man who impregnates her. However, she also asserts her authority and takes control of her life, as do many of the other women discussed. Unlike the other two women, Tamar and Ruth, her story is divided between two books, 2 Sam. 11-12 and 1 Kings 1-2. However, I argue that she is connected to story of Esau and Jacob, because her second son, Solomon, is fourth in line for the inheritance, yet he becomes David's heir.

Bath-Sheba enters the story when David is at war with the Ammonites, but he chooses to remain at home (2 Sam 11:1). David looks out over Jerusalem and sees Bath-Sheba bathing (v. 2). Although some scholars have argued that this is happenstance, Bath-Sheba is repeatedly referred to as the אֵשֶׁת אוּרִיָּה, the woman of Uriah (11:3, 26; 12:10, 15), a man who is listed last among the Thirty, a group of thirty-seven men celebrated for their military service to David

[18] Following Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 88

(23:13-39, esp. v. 39).[19] Uriah is a Hittite, but Bath-Sheba's kinship is not named, which marks her as ethnically ambiguous, possibly also a Hittite.[20] When David sends for her, he is told that she is the woman of Uriah the Hittite (11:3), and rapes her.[21] After noticing that she is pregnant, she notifies David, who attempts to have Uriah sleep with her (11:5-13). After that plan fails, he has Joab, another member of the Thirty, abandon Uriah to the enemy (vv. 15-17), and proceeds to take Bath-Sheba into his palace, where she has a son (v. 27).

Nathan critiques David with a parable, and, as punishment, notifies David that the deity will ensure that that son dies (12:7-14).[22] The death of this child also protects David from any potential conflicts, such as somebody noticing their facial similarities when the child is older. With doubtful parentage, the first son could have been Uriah's heir, as Morrison argues that everybody would have assumed that the child was Uriah's.[23] In addition, the child dies seven

[19] Several of these men are named as being members of non-Israelite kinship groups, including several with whom David was at war. Zelek the Ammonite in 2 Sam 23:37 is notable here because David is at war with Ammon during the events of Bath-Sheba's story. In 4QSam[a] and *Ant*. 7.131, Uriah is "Joab's weapon-bearer," P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, vol. 9, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 279.

[20] See Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 212-214, for a discussion of Bath-Sheba's ethnic positions. Sara Koenig, "Bathsheba between the Lines and beneath the Surface," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Kings*, ed. Keith Bodner and J.M. Johnson, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 670 (T&T Clark, 2020), 37, notes that neither Eliam nor Ahithophel, her father and grandfather, are called non-Israelites; however, my point here is the ambiguity, particularly with a Hittite man.

[21] I use the language of rape here because Bath-Sheba does not initiate this liaison, which would be adultery, and she is placed in a position wherein she must disobey her king and his soldiers or acquiesce. The power dynamics here are such that both choices would end in violence, and submitting to David had the greatest chance of her personal survival. I follow Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 214; and J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 163 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 174.

[22] This parable contains within it a critique of class, but that is not my project here. In addition, as Exum notes, the crimes that Nathan lists are against *Uriah*, not against Bath-Sheba, "who is defined solely in terms of her realation to Uriah," Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 184.

[23] Craig E. Morrison, *2 Samuel*, ed. Jerome T. Walsh, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 149.

days after Nathan's parable.[24] If one reads these seven days beginning at the child's birth, the child dies the day before he is redeemed and circumcised, the day he would be named.

After the child dies, David "comforts" Bath-Sheba by raping her, again, and she has another son, Solomon. As is necessary for the *Geburtserzählung*, Bath-Sheba gives birth [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Preterite-3FS], to a son and that son receives a name. However, there is a *ketiv-qere* issue here. The Masoretic Text uses וַיִּקְרָא (Qal-Pret-3MS), "and he called," but the Masorah provides an emendation, ותקרא (Qal-Pret-3FS), which is echoed in the Targum's וּקְרַת (Peal-Perf-3FS) and the Syriac Peshitta.[25] I am inclined to read with the *ketiv* because Solomon (named by David), Isaac (named by Abraham), and Jacob (named by Isaac) share similar positions in that each of them replaces their older brother as the primary heir, and because, as a widow, Bath-Sheba's children could function within a *levir* or גֹּאֵל role in this situation by taking Bath-Sheba into his house. The *levir* system does not include sex with a king, but none of the three stories in this chapter follows the rules as written. As I will argue further in my analysis of Ruth's birth narrative, the boundaries of kinship ties are loose, and exogamy was more common than presented in Ezra-Nehemiah, particularly for royalty.[26]

Nathan also names the child, וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְדִידְיָהּ, because the deity loves him (12:24-25). By renaming him on behalf of the deity, Nathan presents an opposing claim to Solomon's lineage, claiming him as a child set apart for other things, claimed by the divine. Despite this second naming, Solomon retains the name his father gives him. He and his mother disappear

[24] Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 162, says that Nathan also ensures the child never joins the line of succession.

[25] McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, 303, ignores the *ketiv-qere* issue and reads with the *qere* without comment.

[26] Gary N. Knoppers, "Intermarriage, Social Complexity, and Ethnic Diversity in the Genealogy of Judah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 1 (2001), 22-23; and Yairah Amit, "Tamar, from Victim to Mother of a Dynasty," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 304.

from the story until 1 Kings 1:10, when Adonijah becomes the second son of David to try to set himself up as king, after Absalom, who had already killed Amnon, the firstborn. None of these older siblings has a *Geburtserzählung*, which literarily marked Solomon as the heir and the deity's favored child. After Adonijah gets others of prominence to join him by making him king, Nathan approaches Bath-Sheba and compels her to say to David, "Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your אָמָה, saying, "Solomon, your son, will rule after me, and he will dwell on my throne?" (1 Kgs 1:13). However, there is no textual evidence of this oath provided.[27] Nathan affirms her statement before the king, and David affirms his oath, on the word of Nathan, and he facilitates Solomon's ascension to monarch. In this way, Solomon surpasses his elder brothers as the first prince who received his father's blessing to become king. As in the case of Sarah and Isaac, the mother must step in to force the father to remove the opposing, elder parties who would take the primogeniture.[28]

In terms of the matriarchs discussed in the previous chapter, Bath-Sheba is closest to Rebekah. Although the text marks their children as set apart from their elder siblings through the act of naming, the reality is that each of them must bring that foretelling to fruition through trickery. Read through my womanist-accomplice approach, Bath-Sheba's position is even more difficult than Rebekah's, as her relationship to her son's father began through rape, the murder of her husband, a kidnapping by her rapist, David, and the death of their child, which led to a

[27] Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 2000), 159, suggests that Nathan fabricated this promise.

[28] This connection to the patriarchs also extends to the Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau. Bath-Sheba and Nathan also trick David into giving this younger son their position, which establishes the mother's role as dominant. Each fight over the נַחֲלָה ends in violence, with Hagar and Ishmael's exile, Jacob's self-imposed exile, and Solomon killing his brother. Another comparison here is that the deity provides a name for each of them. The deity renames Jacob and Solomon, and gives Abraham Isaac's only name.

subsequent rape and the birth of Solomon.[29] In 2 Samuel, Bath-Sheba's agency is removed at every point, including David's refusal to allow her to name either child.[30] David's decision to name Solomon is a literary marker to point to Solomon's later importance and establishes Solomon's place as the firstborn son. Clearly, his older siblings had not received the latter message, as two of them attempt to take the throne themselves.

There is a third reason David names Solomon: it keeps Bath-Sheba from performing her duty as the wife of Uriah by providing an heir. Even with Solomon's known patrilineage, Uriah could still function as the legal father if Bath-Sheba named him. As Gafney notes, Bath-Sheba is still called the wife of Uriah in Matthew 1:6.[31] Despite everything, Bath-Sheba is remembered as being within Uriah *the Hittite's* בֵּית אַב. By naming Solomon, David keeps him from functioning as Uriah's heir Bath-Sheba later takes advantage of this situation to establish herself and her son for the future. Her ethnic ambiguity notwithstanding, she becomes the queen-mother by manipulating how this system of inheritance works. Although there is no record of David swearing a particular oath to make Solomon king, David's decision to name him functions as a promise to move Solomon to the front of the line to become king. By enacting this trickery and taking advantage of social and cultural systems, Bath-Sheba echoes David's foremothers, Tamar and Ruth.

[29] I read the second time David and Bath-Sheba have sex as a rape because 1) there is no equality of consent between a monarch and the person with whom he chooses to have sex, and 2) she potentially assented to sex with the knowledge that she needed a child to survive within the palace walls.

[30] This first child dies before David can perform the redemption ritual, which is the means by which parents claimed their children, and so does not receive a name, Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 159.

[31] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 218.

Tamar's Struggle

Like Bath-Sheba, Tamar becomes a widow with no heirs, and is taken by another man, Judah, in order to have children, though this time for Er (Gen 38:6). However, Tamar's story begins with her mother-in-law. Judah leaves his family and lives near a man named Hirah (38:1).[32] He proceeds to marry [וַיִּקַּח֣וֹ], "The daughter of a Canaanite man, whose name was Shua" (38:2), so I will call her Bath-Shua. She conceives [וַתַּהַר] (38:3, 4) and bears [וַתֵּלֶד] (38:3, 4, 5) three sons. Judah names [וַיִּקְרָ֣א] the first son, Er (38:3), but Bath-Shua names [וַתִּקְרָ֣א] Onan and Shelah (38:4, 5).[33] This passage was crucial to the development of my understanding of the naming convention and its relationship to the firstborn and נַחֲלָה systems. As the daughter of a Canaanite man, Bath-Shua is a Canaanite woman, and therefore a potential challenge to Israel's claim to the inheritance. By naming Er, Judah establishes himself as Er's politico-legal parent. However, he need only name the firstborn because the land would go to the בְּכֹר, rather than the other two sons. Bath-Shua naming the other two does not create a problem because, at least initially, neither of them mattered as much within this system.[34]

Judah then takes [וַיִּקַּ֤ח] Tamar for Er (38:7). Although Tamar is never described as a Canaanite woman, she is also not listed as being among the children of Israel or related, so one

[32] Esler argues that one should read Judah as living in the town of Adullam with all the Canaanites as neighbors, Philip F. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 84.

[33] For Alexander Abasili, the quick succession with which each child appears is demonstrative of the narrator's focus on "the establishment of a family and the having of progeny as goals of his marriage," Alexander Izuchukwu Abasili, "Seeing Tamar through the Prism of an African Woman: A Contextual Reading of Genesis 38," *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 24, no. 3 (December 31, 2011, 557.

[34] Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warrior*s, 88, says that the different parents naming the children is important. Tying this naming story to that of 1930-40s Palestinian Arabs, he says that "the name reflected a situation current at the birth of the child," and says that there is no norm in the text. However, he goes on to note that "The fact that Judah did name his firstborn, while leaving it to his wife to name his second and third sons, does indicate a direct and interested role by him in that first birth." Esler also argues that Judah "was not very interested in the birth of his third son…since he had absented himself from her and their home at the time of her delivery" (89).

can safely assume that she is Canaanite.[35] After their union, the deity kills Er for his wickedness, after which Judah gives Tamar to Onan, the *levir*, who refuses to copulate with Tamar, who refuses to copulate because, "Onan knew that the seed would not be for him" (38:9), in an attempt to make himself the בְּכֹר.[36] The deity kills him for this, which leaves only Shelah, the youngest, to fulfill the duty of the *levir* (38:10).[37] Judah sends Tamar back to her בֵּית אַב, promising to bring her back and have Shelah perform his duty when he is older (38:11).[38] Yet, when Bath-Shua dies, Judah has not yet given Tamar to Shelah (38:12, 14).[39] If Judah were to

[35] Later interpreters attempted to read Tamar as an Aramean, such as in *Testament of Judah* 10:1 and *Jubilees* 41:1-2, and therefore related to Judah's family, or at least not a Canaanite. However, after all the migration and intermarriage stories earlier in Genesis, the choice to not provide Tamar a similar story points to her begin a Canaanite woman. Furthermore, the same interpreters create a story about Bath-Shua, the mother-in-law, which portrays her as divisive and evil, leading to the death of her two eldest sons. and these interpreters claim that the evil performed was led on by Bath-Shua attempting to make her descendants more like the Canaanites in both of these texts. This later interpretation blames Bath-Shua for the deaths of her children through her negative influence, demonstrating that Canaanite women were evil. Tamar could not be a Canaanite within this interpretation because she gives birth to the two heirs named in the later Judahite genealogies (1 Chr 2:4, Matt 1:3), see Moshe Reiss and David J Zucker, "Co-Opting the Secondary Matriarchs: Bilhah, Zilpah, Tamar, and Aseneth," *Biblical Interpretation* 22, no. 3 (December 31, 2014): 307–24; and Felix Opoku-Gyamfi, "Retelling the Story of Judah and Tamar in the Testament of Judah," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* 4, no. 2 (2014): 41–52. Although I do not follow this interpretation, it is certainly useful for demonstrating that later interpreters would rather claim that, through Tamar, Judahites derived from the area around Babylon and Persia (like Abraham, Sarah, and the exiles) rather than their neighbors, Edward Allen Jones, III, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 604 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 65-7. Amit and Esler also argue that Tamar was Canaanite, noting that Judah had married a Canaanite and clearly did not have a problem with it, Amit, "Tamar," 300; Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors*, 91. For more on *Testament of Judah*, see Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Sources: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, vol. 51, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (New York: Brill, 1997), 107-213.

[36] Eleanor Ferris Beach, "An Iconographic Approach to Genesis 38," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 292, also reads Onan as a person "exploited solely as a stud animal." In this text, both Tamar and Onan are subjected to the needs of the בְּכֹר, Er, and in some way both subjected to unwanted sexual contact. See also, LeAnn Snow Flesher, "Tamar Says #MeToo: Reading Genesis 38 through the Lens of Gender Justice," *Review & Expositor* 117, no. 2 (May 2020): 272–80.

[37] For Abasili, the central tension in this passage is the lack of children to inherit from Er, Abasili, "Seeing Tamar," 559. For Yairah Amit, "Narrative Analysis: Meaning, Context, and Origins of Genesis 38," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, Resources for Biblical Study 56 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 275, this death demonstrates that "the duty of levirate marriage as more important than the question of ethnic origin."

[38] In some ancient west Asian sources, such as Hittite laws, if the first *levir* dies, the father takes the child, Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 266.

[39] For Havea, Bath-Shua's death is silent, but she dies knowing that Judah had wronged her daughter-in-law, Jione Havea, *Losing Ground: Reading Ruth in the Pacific* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2021), 160.

give her to Shelah, she would be a part of Judah's household and have Er's children. Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, by forgetting or ignoring Tamar and his duty to her, Judah treats her "essentially as an object, as a woman whose primary function was to produce male heirs for Er and hence for Judah himself."[40] Tamar decides to take matters into her own hands, taking off her widow's clothing and wrapping herself up to hide her face (38:14).[41] When Judah crosses her path, he assumes that she is a *zonah*, and asks to sleep with her, ultimately giving her his signet, cord, and staff as a promise of payment (38:16-18). She becomes pregnant [הָרָה] with his children, and when he finds out, he tries to have her burned (38:24). However, she shows him his signet, cord, and staff, and he says, "She is more righteous than me, for I did not give her to Shelah, my son" (38:26), and does not kill her.

This birth narrative has multiple parallel elements to the births of another set of twins, Esau and Jacob: "And when it was time for her to give birth [לְדָתָהּ], there were twins in her womb. And in her laboring [בָּלְדָתָהּ]…" (38:27-8). Both sons are described as "coming out [יָצָא]," (38:29, 30). The use of the infinitive followed by יצא matches the birth of the other twins, Jacob and Esau in 25:25-26. The births of twins are also connected in other ways. The first to come out, Esau and Zerah, are marked with red. Esau is naturally red (Gen 25:25), but Zerah, whose hand is the first to come out (38:28), is marked with red twine. Both of these sons are also replaced with the second son. Jacob tricks Isaac and Esau, (Gen 25:34; 27), and Perez replaces Zerah is replaced because the latter pulls his hand back in and Perez forces his way out (38:29).[42]

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[40] Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors*, 99.

[41] Calum Carmichael, "Inheritance in Biblical Sources," *Law and Literature* 20, no. 2 (2008), says, "The story of Tamar has also shaped this subsequent rule about the shameless wife. Tamar interferes on behalf of her dead husband who, from beyond the grave, exerts a claim for a child from his resistant family…She literally seeks out his genitalia in order to ensure that the inheritance flows properly."

[42] Perez's name even comes from this break, פָּרַצְתָּ and פָּרֶץ.Adelman argues that this act, when Perez "audaciously breaks out ahead of his older brother," is the only reason the narrator draws attention to him, Rachel Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar and the Book of Ruth," *Nashim: A Journal*

The fact that both sets of twins in Genesis cause trouble for their parents and the birth order is demonstrative of the continual issue over who the real בְּכֹר is. Judah had previously made a mistake by letting Bath-Shua name their two younger sons, creating a mixed heritage, and therefore names both of Tamar's children [וַיִּקְרָא] (38:29, 30), but Perez first.[43] Furthermore, the birth of these twins leads to a happy ending, with the additional motif of the younger replacing the firstborn son, as does David, leading the reader to view Judah, both the person and tribe, in a more positive light.[44]

This story is also a break between the first chapter of the Joseph cycle (Gen 37) and the rest of his story (Gen 39-50).[45] Joseph story of exile, which I will discuss in the next chapter, has similar echoes, particularly when Joseph enters into a union with Asenath, an Egyptian woman. Both of these patriarchs are living amongst people not their own, and have children with the

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of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues, no. 23 (March 22, 2012), 88. She also argues that "It is she, Tamar, who imbues her son with the will to break forth, either as an inherited trait or as a Lamarckian-acquired characteristic at the moment of conception" (89). However, this reading implies more ethnocentrism in the text than is actually present.

[43] The Samaritan Pentateuch, Peshitta, and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* all have a feminine subject here, Menn, *Judah and Tamar*, 34. However, Menn reads the actors as the midwives, as the antecedents, but which makes no sense within the overall birth narrative genre.

The mistake with the red twine also led to potential complications with the control of the נַחֲלָה, as both of the younger children had matrilineal claims. Kessler argues that וַיִּקְרָא "cannot mean here that the father named the child," because "the children's father no longer had any contact with their mother," Rainer Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter," *Wort Und Dienst* 19 (1987), 29. However, Kessler misreads the text, as the reference he relies on, Gen 38:26, is לְדַעְתָּהּ, to know, which is an idiom for sexual contact, rather than all contact. Just because Judah does not sleep with Tamar again, does not mean that he never sees his children/grandchildren again.

[44] Amit, "Narrative Analysis," 278-9.

[45] Von Rad and Speiser say that there is no connection between these two stories, Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Revised Edition, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), 356; and E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, vol. I, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 299.

people of the land.[46] This relationship is an echo of the problems which the returnees faced upon the return, as Yairah Amit argues,

> The positive approach to intermarriage in the stories of Tamar and Judah, in Ruth and in Chronicles…reflects the time these stories were written. Mixed marriages, assimilation, and loss of identity were issues that Judean society had to deal with in the wake of the Assyrian practice of deportation of conquered groups…With the return to Zion the problem acquired a new dimension because of the need for a policy vis-à-vis marriages to local women among those who had not gone into exile in Babylon.[47]

Tamar and Asenath both function in light of assimilation and marriages to local women. Both of these women also contribute to the discrepancies between the post-exilic anti-exogamy claims and the two monarchies of Israel, sometimes called Joseph, and Judah.[48] Jacob's children have no problem intermarrying with locals. Tamar, like Asenath and Ruth, is counter to the anti-exogamy rhetoric earlier in Genesis and in other places within the Hebrew Bible.[49] This use of

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[46] There are multiple shared type-scenes between these two stories, see Jonathan Kruschwitz, "The Type-Scene Connection Between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 4 (June 2012): 383–410.

[47] Amit, "Tamar," 304-5

[48] Beach, "An Iconographic Approach," 299. References to the northern monarchy as Joseph include 1 Kgs 11:28; Ps 77:15, 78:67 (rejects Joseph, chooses Judah), 80:1; Ezek 37:16, 19; Amos 5:6, 15, 6:6; Obad 18; Zech 10:16 (paralleled with Judah). This conflict continues up until the post-exilic period in 1 Chr 5:1, wherein the text states that Joseph took the role of the בְּכֹר after Reuben.

[49] LaCocque and Sasson also make this connection, particularly through the children, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 24; Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 169. Furthermore, Judah and the Davidic lineage's power is still under threat even after the exile, as 1 Chronicles seems to argue that Judah's position of importance, and therefore the Davidic monarchy's role, usurps the place of Ephraim and Manasseh. Menn, *Judah and Tamar*, 85, argues that Genesis 38 was important for the Davidic monarchy and that Tamar and her foreignness were also important within this mythology. Among Jacob/Israel's heirs, Judah, the fourth-born son, breaks the system. Reuben should have primogeniture, but 1 Chronicles 5:1 states that Reuben was the firstborn, the בְּכוֹר, but he profaned his father's bed by sleeping with Bilhah (Gen 35:22, 1 Chr 5:1), so "the primogeniture [בְּכֹרָתוֹ] was given to the sons of Joseph, son of Israel," and in the next verse, "Judah became great among his brothers, and there came from him a ruler, but the primogeniture [הַבְּכֹרָה] belonged to Joseph" (5:2). Does this line not present a challenge to the returnees' claim that they have control over the land? After all, this group includes the Judahites, Benjaminites, priests, and Levites, but nobody from the north. They are not the heirs to the land, so it does not matter who their spouses are. The remainees, especially those from the north, maintain the greater claim to the land. The utopic vision of endogamy in Ezra-Nehemiah, or limited exogamy in the stories of Ruth, Tamar, and Bath-Sheba, cannot match the fact that Judah was never the בְּכֹר in the first place. So those who can claim descent from Joseph, through Ephraim and Manasseh, primarily the remainees and those who would become the Samaritans, have first claim to the land.

anti-exogamy rhetoric is tied into the rhetoric of limited inclusion into the household, as demonstrated by Judah's ability to send Tamar away, ultimately rejected in Ezra-Nehemiah, and his refusal to give her to Shelah.

I read this story through my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic as reminiscent of the history of colonialism and racial capitalism of the western European empires.[50] In the ancient world, Tamar was a local woman with whom the patriarch, Judah, copulated and had children, alongside his woman, Bath-Shua. In this way, Tamar would have functioned allegorically as the residents in the land in the return from exile, both remainees (including Judahites, Israelites, and the others who lived among them), and those who had been forcibly migrated.[51] In the United States, this system began with the abuse of indigenous peoples. Like modern-day immigrants, both documented and undocumented, indigenous and Black people, among other minoritized groups, serve as a reminder that borders and private property (always ultimately controlled by the nation-state, not the individual) were constructed and porous.[52] After the attempt to enslave indigenous peoples, or control them through other means, failed, the United States turned to forcing these people into smaller and smaller reservations, and continuing to ignore treaties made with the various groups. This system most closely aligns with the treatment of Tamar, who is sexualized, potentially raped (Tamar and Onan forced to sleep with one another),[53] and cast aside to live elsewhere, one might say it is "Where she belongs," her בֵּית אָב. Yet, even in this, she is

[50] Abasili reads this text in light of Igbo society, particularly childless women, Abasili, "Seeing Tamar," 555-575.

[51] Amit, "Narrative Analysis," 283-4, makes a similar argument.

[52] David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Picador, 2021), 186-91.

[53] Amit, "Tamar," 297.

able to "trick" Judah by acquiring markers of his promise and, after becoming pregnant, using them to force him to acknowledge his duty.

In reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, I also incorporate the notion of seeking the wholeness of all people, and so here I read the echo of *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, in which the US Congress ignored their treaties with the tribes they forced into territory, making up nearly half Oklahoma that belonged to ten tribes.[54] However, because Congress never dissolved the treaties, the tribes were able to "trick" the government into remanding *some, limited* forms of reservation control. This trick echoes the mothers of Moab and Ammon, particularly in terms of incest.[55] If Judah and the US government had fulfilled their duties, neither trick would be necessary. However, because Tamar (Canaanite) and the indigenous tribes in Oklahoma fall outside the kinship/ethnic categories necessitated for full inclusion: they are not considered as equal and fall outside the bounds of the law. This rhetoric of limited inclusion continues in Ruth's story.

Ruth's Survival

Ruth is the eponymous character of her own book, one of two in the Hebrew Bible, and one of three in the broader set of works attached to the Second Temple Period, with the others being Esther and Judith. Her story is unique amongst all the other texts I analyze in this dissertation for a variety of reasons. First, and critically for this dissertation, neither she nor the Boaz name Obed, but are replaced by a collection of women who do [וַתִּקְרֶאנָה, Ruth 4:17], only occurrence of the feminine plural form of קרא in a *Geburtserzählung*. There is also a *hapax legomena* in

[54] See Rebecca Nagle, *By the Fire We Carry: The Generations-Long Fight for Justice on Native Land* (New York: Harper, 2024).

[55] Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition," 89. I

4:13, וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָהּ הֵרָיוֹן, which is the only time the deity *gave conception*, a direct intervention.[56] Second, she enters the story by means of marriage, potentially rape-marriage, by a stranger in her own land.[57] Third, unlike the other women I discuss in this dissertation, Ruth's afterlives have include multiple perspectives as to whether Ruth was a proselyte and the degree to which her Moabite-ness affected her position within the community.[58] I follow scholars who do not read conversion into the text, as that concept derives from a later period.[59]

Ruth's central conflict is very similar to that of Genesis 38. Both Tamar and Ruth must provide an heir to continue the בֵּית אָב, even though the levirate system has failed.[60] Both women work outside this system and seduce an older kinsman, and are praised for doing so.[61] This

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[56] Other forms of intervention focus on the indirect act of opening the wombs of Leah and Rachel (וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמָהּ, Gen 29:31; 30:22), answering Isaac's prayer for Rebekah (Gen 25:21), and remembering and taking note of Hannah (1 Sam 1:19-20; 2:21).

[57] Wil Gafney, "Mother Knows Best: Messianic Surrogacy and Sexploitation in Ruth," in *Mother Goose, Mother Jones, Mommie Dearest: Biblical Mothers & Their Children*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan and Tina Pippin (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 24.

[58] *Ruth Rabbah* XX:i.2; Bonnie Honig, "Ruth, the Model Emigrée: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 53-4; Leila Leah Bronner, "A Thematic Approach to Ruth in Rabbinic Literature," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 152; Gale A. Yee, "'She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn': Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in *They Were All Together in One Place?: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, Semeia Studies 57 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 129; Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away* (San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1988), 28; Peter H.W. Lau, *Identity and Ethics in the Book of Ruth: A Social Identity Approach* (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 92; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 24;

[59] Erich S. Gruen, "Kinship Relations and Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 116; Edward F. Campbell, *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 7 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 80-82; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xliii; Kristin Moen Saxegaard, *Character Complexity in the Book of Ruth*, Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 133; Stephanie Day Powell, *Narrative Desire and the Book of Ruth*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 662 (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 17.

[60] Van Wolde makes many other references to their similarities, semantically and thematically, van Wolde, "Intertextuality," 426–51. Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 28, reads against the levirate system, instead reading Naomi's invocation as an expression of pain.

[61] Matheny also adds that both women are forced to fulfill the role a man could not, or refused to perform (finding the *levir*), Ruth is better at fulfilling her oath than Judah, both stories contain the motifs of death, seed, and clothing. For the final motif, Tamar's garments, including the veil, are echoed in Ruth's change of clothes, marking the importance of recognition and non-recognition of members of the community. Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 145-7.

breach in the system is the antinomy between this text and the post-exilic context in which I read it: Moabite women are explicitly disallowed from intermarriage, yet Ruth integrates into the community through trickery.[62]

Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, I see this inclusion of Moabite women points to the fact that people were always intermarrying, especially nomadic families and people who lived on the borders between two groups of people. Socio-spatial borders derive as a means of control, which is weakest where people meet and interact with each other as whole people. The solution, as presented in Ruth 4:16-17, is for the mother-in-law to adopt the child and for the women of the town to name him.[63] This solution protects against the complications presented by exogamous unions because the mother is circumvented by the community. This solution does not appear amongst the other birth narratives because, unlike Tamar in Genesis 38, both the socio-legal father, Mahlon, and grandfather, Elimelech, are dead (Ruth 1:3, 5).

Ruth and Tamar's stories are explicitly connected within the text itself, as the elders at the gate in Ruth 4:12 explicitly name Tamar's birth of Perez, alongside Rachel and Leah, as those who "together built up the house of Israel" (4:11). There is no reference to Bilhah or Zilpah present, which suggests that Ruth is as fully accepted in the lineage as the primary wives and matriarchs.[64] However, Ruth's status as a foreigner and a person of lower status is central to

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[62] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 175; Victor H. Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity in the Story of Ruth," in *The Family in Life and Death: The Family in Ancient Israel: Sociological and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 504 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 17. For more about Ruth as a trickster character in relation to Black women, see Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life in Death in the Book of Ruth," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith (Cascade Books, 2015), 265-279.

[63] Adopting child, bringing to chest counts, Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 124. However, Campbell and Saxegaard say that the women are overstating the case of adoption here, Campbell, *Ruth*, 165, Saxegaard, *Character Complexity*, 101. LaCocque compares this adoption to Jacob adopting Ephraim and Manasseh, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 19.

[64] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 139.

minoritized and feminist interpretations of the text. I begin with the two womanist interpreters who stand out on *Ruth*. Renita Weems reads the story in light of friendship between women who care for each other.[65] Wil Gafney, on the other hand, reads the text as one of "sexploitation" in "Mother Knows Best."[66] Alongside these two are several other scholars whose interpretations are useful for understanding *Ruth* through the lenses of assimilation, immigration, and other forms of minoritization that challenge traditional interpretations.[67] Writing in light of modern systems of control, these scholars bring Ruth's experience to life in ways that shed light on ancient structures of power. In addition, I will incorporate Jameson's symptomatic reading of systems and class.

First Horizon (The Literal Phase)

The first horizon is concerned with the form of the text itself, which is the superstructure of *Ruth*, and the base is the context in which the text was written. Scholars disagree as to when this happened and therefore disagree as to its ideological conflicts. For some, including, Nielsen, Leonard-Fleckman, and Linafelt, *Ruth* is a defense of David's ascension to the throne *despite* the fact that he has a Moabite great-grandmother.[68] For this group of scholars, *Ruth* is pro-David

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[65] Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 23–38.

[66] Wil Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 23–36.

[67] Laura E. Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 130–44; Bonnie Honig, "Ruth, the Model Emigrée," 50–74; Athalya Brenner, "Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 158–62; Athalya Brenner, "From Ruth to the 'Global Woman': Social and Legal Aspects," *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 162–68; Sin-Lung Tong, "The Key to Successful Migration? Rereading Ruth's Confession (1:16-17) through the Lens of Bhabha's Mimicry," in *Reading Ruth in Asia*, ed. Jione Havea and Peter H.W. Lau, International Voices in Biblical Studies 7 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 35–46; Jione Havea and Peter H.W. Lau, "Reading Ruth Again, in Asia," in *Reading Ruth in Asia*, ed. Jione Havea and Peter H.W. Lau, International Voices in Biblical Studies 7 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 1–14.

[68] Kirsten Nielsen, *Ruth: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 23. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal, *Ruth and Esther*, ed. David W. Cotter, Berit Olam

propaganda, and Ruth is portrayed as an אֵשֶׁת חַיִל (Ruth 3:11), a woman of importance, who shows greater חֶסֶד than the Judahites around her. Her status in the community redeems her.[69] Other scholars, whose position I follow, read *Ruth* in light of Persian Yehud, as a response to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah that removed foreign women from the kinship group.[70] The story itself takes place in the pre-monarchical period, in "the time when the judges judged," (Ruth 1:1). More specifically, *Targum Ruth* 1:4 holds that the story took place during Judges 3, because Ruth and Orpah are the daughters of King Eglon, a Moabite who, at the time, had conquered a portion of Israel with the Ammonites and Amalekites. As before, I will work to bridge the chronological gaps to read the text allegorically in the second phase.

Ruth begins in Beth-lehem, following Elimelech (1:1-2).[71] There is a famine, and this man and his family, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilyon, leave for the fields of Moab (1:2).[72] At some

(Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), from *Ruth*, xxiv; Alice L. Laffey and Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, vol. 8, Wisdom Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), Leonard-Fleckman takes this position in pp. lvi-lix.

[69] This particular note, that חֶסֶד redeems Ruth, appears in both readings, although the word itself only appears thrice in the text (Ruth 1:8, 2:20, 3:10). However, in each case, it functions to maintain the foundation of goodness and adherence to Torah. Simply being Israelite does not automatically make one good, but it does make things easier. Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 60.

[70] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 4; Linafelt and Beal, *Ruth*, xviii; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xvi; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 23; Fischer, "The Book of Ruth," 23; Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth/Esther*, vol. 9, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1996), 30; Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 5; Van Wijk-Bos, *Ruth and Esther*, 12; Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, Laffey takes this position in pp. lix-lxii.

[71] I translate the city this way, signaling the irony that there was a family in the house-of-bread, following, Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 18.

[72] The phrase, "fields of Moab," is difficult to place, what Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 25. Campbell is one of few who seriously considers where Naomi and her family live in Moab. He claims they would have lived in and around the table land where the major cities of Heshbon and Dibon were, as this land was the most fertile. Campbell, *Ruth*, 51. However, both of these cities fall in the land of what is traditionally assigned to Reuben, so Campbell seems to be reading Ruth outside traditional Moab and in light of shifting borders. LaCocque notes that the country is "field of Moab" in Genesis 36:35 and "plains of Moab" in Numbers, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 38. *Ruth Rabbah* 2:9 states that Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of Eglon, which means they are reading the text alongside Judges 3:13. Moab, Ammon, and Amalek gather together and defeat Israel, or at least part of Israel, "and took possession of the city of palms," which is most likely Jericho. This action would require Moab and Ammon to take land traditionally assigned to Reuben, then cross the Jordan River. If the contributors to the story intended this period, then the fields of Moab could be some forty miles away from Beth-lehem, if not closer. If Eglon took Ruth and Orpah's mother through rape marriage, then she could be an Israelite, from one of the many tribes around Jericho. If the contributors instead meant that Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion went to traditional Moab, they would

point over the next ten years, Elimelech dies, and Mahlon and Chilyon take two Moabite women: Orpah and Ruth.[73] Wil Gafney and David Shepherd read the verb, נשׂא, alongside Judges 21:23: rape-marriage. Gafney defines rape-marriage as "forcible conjugal cohabitation…typified by the seizing of sexually immature and inexperienced girl as conjugal partners."[74] In this reading, Ruth and Orpah are both acquired through rape-marriage, the only means by which one could acquire a Moabite woman and follow the laws laid out in Deuteronomy 20 and 21. As Gafney writes, the women from people "designated as 'the enemy' are now available for forced conjugal cohabitation" if they are taken as spoils of war.[75] In this way, use of נשׂא creates a loophole wherein Mahlon and Chilion could kidnap and rape Ruth and Orpah, legitimizing their union. At the end of the ten years, the two sons die (vv. 3-5). According to the *Targum Ruth* 1:5, the two men die because they married Moabite women, although this prohibition and explanation do not appear directly in Ruth.

After the death of her children, Naomi decides to return to Beth-lehem with her daughters-in-law because she heard the famine had eased or ended (Ruth 1:5), as Jione Havea says, "back to a land that she had the right to occupy, since the death of her husband and sons."[76]

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have traveled much further, crossing either the Jordan River or going south, around the Dead Sea. Because they likely would have brought their flock, crossing a river would be more difficult. In addition, reading *Ruth* as a post-exilic text, Moab had ceased being an autonomous group when the Babylonians invaded, Brenner, "Ruth," 308. All of this is to say that the geography and kinship markers at play are malleable.

[73] In *Ruth Rabbah Petihta* IV:i.3, Elimelech dies because he betrayed the young people of Beth-lehem rather than bearing the burden of famine with them, Jacob Neusner, *The Mother of the Messiah in Judaism: The Book of Ruth*, The Bible of Judaism Library (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 38-9.

[74] Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 26; David J. Shepherd, "Ruth in the Days of the Judges: Women, Foreignness and Violence," *Biblical Interpretation* 26, no. 4–5 (October 22, 2018), 530; Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 156.

[75] Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 28, goes on to say, "(2) the Israelite men may choose women for conjugal relations based on their appearance; (3) abducted women are no longer required to be sexually uninitiated; and (4) the Israelites have developed a protocol for breaking in their new women. The humiliation-based breaking-in process consists of shaving the woman's head, cutting her nails…and stripping her…no mention is made of clothing her."

[76] Havea, *Losing Ground*, 77.

On the way, she tells the two women to return, each לְבֵית אִמָּהּ, to her mother's house (1:8).[77] Although both Orpah and Ruth insist on remaining with Naomi at first, she eventually sways Orpah to leave by noting that there will be no children to partake in the role of *levir*.[78] Rather than leaving, Ruth remains with Naomi and speaks an oath (1:16).[79] In the Targum, this oath is interspersed with Naomi laying out the rules for what it means to be Jewish, and the laws Ruth

[77] The mother's house only appears in Song of Songs, which also centers a woman's life and perspective (Song 3:4), and when Rebekah reports to her mother's house that Abraham's servant had appeared (Gen 24:28). However, as I argued in the previous chapter, following Cynthia Chapman, the mother's house is a matrilineal link within the בֵּית אָב that has a history of being overlooked by scholars who overlook or dismiss this language, Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 60. In this way, both motherhood and connections through women are centered in the story. See also Carol Meyers, "Returning Home: Ruth 1.8 and the Gendering of the Book of Ruth," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 65–114. For Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 32, this action signifies that "there is no extension of levirate marriage."

[78] The reference to the *levir* is not explicit, but implied, Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 25. The word translated sister-in-law in 1:15, יְבִמְתֵּךְ, only appears in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, concerning levirate laws, and Genesis 38, which also deals with the levirate system, Sasson, *Ruth*, 28. As revealed in Ruth 4:10, Ruth was joined to Mahlon. The land seems to have passed to him, which would mean that he was the oldest, so the *levir* only matters to Ruth. Despite Orpah obeying her mother-in-law, there is a history of interpretation around Orpah that understands her as traitorous and evil in some way, both in Jewish and Christian traditions. However, Laura Donaldson reads her return alongside indigenous people in the United States and presents this act as one of returning to her people and culture, taking the more difficult path; Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah," 142. Weems states that Orpah trusts Naomi, "rather than the sentimentality of her young heart." Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 27. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 72, do not read any negative intent in Orpah's behavior, but, following the Targum, argue that Naomi tells Orpah and Ruth to leave because she blames them for her sons' deaths, and *Targum Ruth 1:5*. In addition, *Ruth Rabbah* XVIII:i.3 suggests that Orpah was raped by multiple men and a dog, Neusner, *The Mother of the Messiah*, 80.

[79] This oath is often used at weddings between a man and a woman, although in this case it is two women. Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 28. In addition, Ruth cleaves to Naomi, with the word דבק, which is the language of marital unions and does not appear with a woman as a subject beyond *Ruth*, Jon L Berquist, "Role Dedifferentiation in the Book of Ruth," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 18, no. 57 (March 1993), 27. It is also similar to political treaties between two peoples, Laffey and Leonard Fleckman, *Ruth*, 42.

would have to follow (*Targum Ruth* 1:16-17).[80] After this oath, Naomi goes quiet.[81] When they reach Beth-lehem, the women of the town ask, "Is this Naomi?" (1:19) Naomi's response comprises the first two of four appearances of קרא as a form of naming in this text. Naomi says to the women of the town, "*Women, you will* not *call* me Naomi, call me Mara" (1:20), and, "Why *would all of you women call* me Naomi" (1:21).[82] This initial act of naming marks the only

[80] This tradition is dependent on Hasmonean and later conceptions of conversion, and also appears in Ruth Rabbah XX:i.2, see Neusner, *The Mother of the Messiah*, 82. For the development of this tradition, see Reiss and Zucker, "Co-Opting the Secondary Matriarchs: Bilhah, Zilpah, Tamar, and Aseneth," *Biblical Interpretation* 22, no. 3 (December 31, 2014): 307-324. More recent interpreters have read this oath as one of loyalty, particularly of marriage. Rebecca Alpert, "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth," in *Reading Ruth*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 91–96, reads this oath as a lesbian relationship between the women, while Weems reads it as one of friendship and community, see also Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 23–38. This oath has been the center of much discussion in academic circles, particularly as it relates to ethnic negotiations. Ilona Rashkow, "Ruth: The Discourse of Power and the Power of Discourse," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 31, reads the oath in the future, rather than present, tense, and therefore hopeful. Neil Glover, "Your People, My People: An Exploration of Ethnicity in Ruth," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, no. 3 (March 1, 2009), 296, argues that it "may constitute an impassioned lune at Israelite ethnicity, but without an Israelite response, it remains isolated and meaningless.". For Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 92, this oath is not a conversion, but a step toward Judaization which would "eventually incorporate her religious conversion." Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 21, compares this oath to the one Ittai the Gittite swears to David in 2 Sam 15:21. For Glover, "Your People, My People," 302, this oath points to a sympathetic constructivist perspective of ethnicity. For Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, II (Abingdon, 1982), 168, Ruth chooses cultural death.

[81] For Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 27, and Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 74, Naomi's silence after Ruth's oath is oppositional.

[82] I argue that the women of the town reverse Naomi's name change when they name Obed. The women only speak to her again once her bitterness has left and she has an adopted son, reconnecting her to the land, the genealogy, and the community, see Havea, *Losing Ground*, 88.

time a woman, or any other person in the Hebrew Bible, names themself.[83] Yet, she does not mention Ruth, marking her invisibility and the community's refusal to accept her.[84]

The next chapter "highlights the precariousness of Ruth's position…by showing her lack of acceptance by Naomi and the rest of the townspeople,"[85] except Boaz, whom the narrator briefly introduces as a man of great status [חַיִל אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר], and a kinsperson of Elimelech (2:1).[86] Ruth tells Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of barley, behind someone, so that I might find favor in his eyes" (2:2).[87] The language of finding favor in somebody's eyes has sexual overtones, which lends itself to the sexualization of Black women's bodies.[88] By not providing systems to help Ruth, the women of the town and Naomi push the Moabite woman towards sex work. Many scholars have noted the importance of the repeated appellation, "the

[83] This act of renaming further ties *Ruth*, and Naomi in particular, into Genesis and the story of Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham, as well as Joseph, whom Pharaoh renames Zaphenath-paneah in 41:45, which I discuss in the next chapter. LaCocque also ties Joseph into Naomi's story of leaving her homeland, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 10. This renaming ties Naomi/Mara into the exilic experience, when people took on the names of the people around them, and marks her "inability…to fully re-enter her previous discourse community," Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 24. Another post-exilic example of renaming includes Daniel and his fellows in Daniel 1:7, when the palace official renames the four Judahite boys. However, like Joseph and Daniel, the narrator and the characters do not acknowledge Naomi/Mara's changed name beyond a single reference. Because Naomi changes her own name, there is a possibility of reading her through the lens of trans identity and deadnaming, but I will not do that work here.

[84] Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 74, read this silence as an implicit rejection of Ruth as family and as a member of the community. Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 49-50, agree. See also, Norton, "Silenced Struggles," 269.

[85] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 9.

[86] Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 83, translate this phrase as man of worth, explaining "The label may merely reflect the narrative community's perception of Boaz…It carries in it an invitation to the reader to evaluate, to measure worth. I translated אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִל as a man of great status I am focusing on class, race, and gender.

[87] For Stephanie Day Powell, *Ruth*, 66, "Perhaps the most plaguing aspect of [Ruth 2] is Naomi's failure to warn Ruth of the dangers of gleaning. Boaz orders his men not "to molest" (*nāgaʿ*) Ruth, a term that, similar to *pāgaʿ* in 2:22, is laden with sexually violent associations."

[88] Norton, "Silenced Survival," 273; Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption,* 101; and Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 35. An alternative explanation would be that if it is a problem for the Israelites to intermarry with Moabites, then perhaps this command to the men not to touch her points out to the men that she is a Moabite and therefore is not for sexual contact, even within a marriage. However, this is unlikely because Naomi is also wary of an attack in 2:22. I discuss the implications of these overtones in my forthcoming piece for the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, "How Can I Do This Work Well?" Forthcoming, JFSR.

Moabite woman," which carries with it the themes of incest and conflict between Israel and Moab.[89] Athalya Brenner also adds that at this point in the story, Ruth's role is similar to that of a foreign worker and therefore, she "should be especially mindful of her reputation…and if she wasn't to be accepted by the host community, a foreigner…ought to maintain a stereotype of apparent modesty and reticence."[90] Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, Ruth's best chance for survival is to find a man to marry, or at least to impregnate her. Luckily, she finds Boaz, a person who ends up taking care of both women.

When Boaz directly appears in the story, he sees Ruth and asks, "Whose young woman is this?" (2:5).[91] His head servant explains who she is, her relationship to Naomi, and that she asked to glean behind the reapers, and has been gleaning all day (2:6-7). Boaz tells her to keep gleaning in his field, that she should stay close to his female servants and avoid the male servants, alongside some other orders (2:8-9). Ruth asks him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, to recognize me, when I am a not one of your kin [נָכְרִיָּה]?" (2:10).[92] For Victor Matthews, Ruth's

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[89] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 23; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 26; Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 19, are some. According to *Targum Ruth* 1:4, she is the daughter of King Eglon, which, from a post-Second Temple text, brings with it the memory of conflict between the two nations, Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 15; Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 31.

[90] Brenner, "Ruth as a Foreign Worker," 160.

[91] Trible, "A Human Comedy," 171, argues that Boaz cannot identify her through a "(male) lord," and instead the servant must describe Ruth through "her own strangeness and from another woman."

[92] I follow Sasson, *Ruth*, 51, here. He argues that נָכְרִיָּה is best understood as somebody who is merely not a member of the kinship group, as opposed to a גֵּר, who is a sojourner. He uses the examples of Gen 31:15, Ex. 21:8, Ps 6*9:9*, and Job 19:15 to form his argument. However, Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn," 128, argues that the use of נָכְרִיָּה, rather than גֵּר, creates a negative connotation which "underscore[s]…the fact that Ruth was a Moabite, one of Israel's hated enemies." However, I do not agree with Yee's argument that the Moabites were among the hated enemies of Israel. At least, no more hate than one would have with any other neighboring people with whom one fought at times, who at other times were allies to repel invaders. Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 22, reads the distinction between נָכְרִיָּה and גֵּר much differently, with a גֵּר intending to stay and a נָכְרִיָּה intending to move on.. The issue with Matthews's reading is that Ruth has already voiced her desire to stay where Naomi stays, so she has no desire to move on. In addition, both Matthews and Yee have created a false dichotomy between גֵּר and נָכְרִיָּה, as גֵּר does not appear anywhere in *Ruth*. I posit, alongside Sasson, that the term is a little more malleable. This position is bolstered by the Septuagint's ξένη, marking unfamiliarity and foreignness. Instead, Ruth seems to go through a transition. Ruth calls herself a נָכְרִיָּה, and Boaz tells her to stay her נַעֲרֹתָי, "my female servants/slaves/young women." Soon after, she calls herself a שִׁפְחָה (2:13), and even later an אָמָה (3:9). In my analysis of Hagar in the previous, I discuss the use of both terms in footnote 37, identifying the former as a J-source term and the latter as E-source. I do not have the ease of separating the terms so easily in *Ruth*, as it is generally

request to glean, and her subsequent self-identification as a foreigner, נָכְרִיָּה, "may function as a way to solicit hospitality or חסד…from Boaz…an indirect attempt to assert her rights to glean as a widow if she can obtain an acknowledgment from Boaz that she is actually a member of Elimelech's household."[93] Boaz says that he is helping her because of what she has done for Naomi since her husband's death, leaving her family, and blesses her. He proceeds to provide her with food and has his female servants give her additional barley.[94] By allowing Ruth to glean and providing her with special privileges, such as additional protection from men and having them serve her water, Boaz simultaneously acknowledges her right to glean and his additional duty to her and Naomi as a kinsperson.[95] Boaz sends her back to Naomi, where she explains what had happened during the day. Naomi then lets her know that they are related to Boaz, and says that she should continue going to his field (2:20-22).

Later, at the end of the barley and wheat harvests, Naomi tells Ruth that, as the mother, she must find a place for Ruth to settle, and suggests that the younger woman, clean herself and dress up, go to Boaz after he eats and drinks his dinner. Ruth must then uncover his legs, lie

considered of a single source. However, reading with these three analyses in mind, Ruth seems to be describing her shifting status among the people, but always in a submissive posture. In addition, Naomi and Boaz are the only two who speak to Ruth with familial language, with each calling her "my daughter" multiple times (2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 10, 11, 16, 18). Notably, Boaz calls her "my daughter" in 2:8, before she calls herself a נָכְרִיָּה, perhaps because he knows their relationship through Naomi before she does. In this way, he is already extending familial care. Contradicting all of this, *Ruth Rabbah* 5:5 reads Ruth's statement, "And I am not like one of your שִׁפְחֹתֶיךָ," very differently, having Boaz respond, "You are not one of the הָאֲמוֹת, but one of the matriarchs," LaCocque, *Ruth*, 73. I do not give this reading much credence as direct analysis, as Ruth later calls herself an אָמָה. However, it is useful in describing how Ruth, as a foreigner, is given high status. Van Wijk-Bos, *Ruth and Esther*, 37, simply says that Ruth is using the incorrect term here.

[93] Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 22.

[94] According to Koosed, Ruth gleaning during the barley harvest is an additional sign of her poverty, as it is a less nutritional grain and "underscores her dependence and destitution." Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 68.

[95] This subversion expresses itself on the ethnic or racial plane on one hand, and on the sexual plane on the other. There is, in fact, a double reversal in that a Judean servs a Moabite and a woman drinks water drawn by men," LaCocque, *Ruth*, 69.

down, and do as he says (3:1-5), actions tied to marriage in Mesopotamian societies.[96] Ruth does so, but when Boaz asks who she is, she says, "I am Ruth, your slave woman [אֲמָתֶךָ], spread your wings over your slave woman, for you are a redeemer [גֹּאֵל]" (3:9).[97] In this way, Ruth makes her own path forward and does not go along with Naomi's plan, which changes the power dynamics in their relationship.[98] Through my womanist-accomplice lens, this moment is Ruth's trick, also marked by her shift in self-description from נָכְרִיָּה to אֲמָתֶךָ, brings about a change in her role within the community, or at least in relation to Boaz.[99] Sin-Lung Tong reads Ruth's consistent submissive language as "part and parcel to her successful migration" and "allow[s] her to reclaim her subjectivity and pose challenges to the hegemon."[100] Ruth is mimicking the other women around her who show deference to Boaz as an act of "gazing-back" at Boaz and other important men in the village to regain her subjectivity.[101] With Jones, I read this piece as undercutting what it means to be a true Israelite, "by showing that Ruth, a Gentile, embodies the ideals of the nation while Bethlehemites do not,"[102] as they do not show hospitality to the foreigner in their midst,

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[96] Sasson, *Ruth*, 67.

[97] For Sarojini Nadar, "A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 168, the use of wing-language here points to Ruth's acknowledgment of the necessity for her to marry Boaz for her survival.

[98] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 46.

[99] Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 58. An אָמָה is somebody within the community who plays a role within the household, somebody available to become a concubine or wife, even if it is submissive, Sasson, *Ruth*, 81; Nadar, "A South-African Indian Womanist Reading," 164-5, reads against the submissiveness in this chapter. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Hagar is called both שִׁפְחָה and אָמָה, but in Gen 16 and 21 separately, representing two traditions. Bath-Sheba also refers to herself as אֲמָתֶךָ before David in 1 Kgs 1:15, paired with Nathan's עַבְדֶּךָ in 1:26.

[100] Tong, "The Key to Successful Migration?", 36.

[101] For Tong, "The Key to Successful Migration?", 39, 41, this gazing-back is an act of resistance that helps one regain their subjectivity, particularly for Ruth's initial oath to Naomi. When Ruth is read as a convert, this submission is instead read as demonstrating the proper attitude toward conversion, with Ruth as "a paragon of docile, loyal, compliant female behavior," Bronner, "A Thematic Approach," 152.

[102] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 10. In opposition to this reading, scholars often tie Ruth's submission to both Naomi and Boaz, as well as her seduction of Boaz, to Ruth's foremother, Moab's mother, in a reversal of the Moabite stereotype. Lau, Identity and Ethics, 19; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 5; Havea, *Losing Ground*, 19. Glover, "Your People, My People," 303, reading this text through the lens of optimistic constructivism, says, "She must counter

aside from Boaz. In response, Boaz praises her for not going to younger men, poor or rich, and says that there is another, closer גֹּאֵל, and that he will take care of the situation (3:12-13). He also tells her to stay with him, and when she leaves at dawn, he provides her more barley (3:15). Ruth reports back to Naomi, and they wait.

The final chapter begins with Boaz going to the gate, meeting the גֹּאֵל and, collecting the elders, and making a deal. Boaz first states, "There is a portion of the field which was for our brother, Elimelech. Naomi, who has returned from the field of Moab, is selling it" (4:3). This phrasing implicitly rejects Ruth's claim to the land and as the wife of Mahlon. As the text states that Elimelech died first, the נַחֲלָה would have already passed to Mahlon. In this case, the land would belong to Ruth, as the heir's spouse. Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read that Boaz excludes her claim to the land, which also calls into question the idea that Ruth's child would be Mahlon's heir. Either the closer kinspersons did not know about Ruth or did not consider her legitimate until Boaz brings her into the conversation later.[103] However, the text does not provide any evidence for Naomi approving the sale of the land, nor is there proof that she knew she had access, or if she did know, that she told Ruth.[104] Boaz seems to be acting of his

Moabite stereotypes and align herself with the heroes and heroines of the Israelite tradition." In this way, Ruth is stuck as the perpetual foreigner and must constantly prove her loyalty and devotion to the legal and cultural systems of the people among whom she now lives. Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn," 134; Katherine E. Southwood, "Will Naomi's Nation Be Ruth's Nation?: Ethnic Translation as a Metaphor for Ruth's Assimilation within Judah," *Humanities* 3, no. 2 (June 2014), 112. Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition," 88, includes Tamar's story to form a "narrative triptych that constitutes the backdrop to the Davidic dynasty."

[103] Jeremy Schipper, ed., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7D, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 173, argues that the land might have belonged to the clan.

[104] Naomi's ability to own the land is likely a later practice, another symbol of the text's late provenance, Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 127.

own accord here, enriching himself while he also takes care of the two women, as is his duty in taking the land.[105]

Boaz offers to give the גֹּאֵל the first chance to acquire it, with the caveat that if the גֹּאֵל does not, Boaz will.[106] After the גֹּאֵל agrees to redeem it, Boaz adds, "On the day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, I will acquire Ruth, the Moabite woman who is the wife of the dead man, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance [נַחֲלָתוֹ]" (4:5).[107] Here, the גֹּאֵל withdraws from the transaction, allowing Boaz to continue.[108] By acquiring Ruth and asserting that she is the wife of the dead man, Boaz takes upon himself the role of the *levir*, although he is not Mahlon's younger brother.[109] He echoes Tamar's story by working outside the typical bounds of the system, making him a trickster as well. If the גֹּאֵל had fulfilled his duty and taken the land, paying Naomi for it, and then Boaz and Ruth had a child, that child would have been

[105] Following this logic, Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 79, and Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 31, read this part of the story negatively. Fewell and Gunn suggest the possibility that Boaz and Naomi had discussed the arrangement beforehand. Both read this story as though Naomi were taking advantage of Ruth, or, in Gafney's words, "Mother Knows Best."

[106] The reason that the closer kinsman would have agreed was that, assuming Naomi never had a proper heir to replace Mahlon, the land would have remained with him and become a part of his family's inheritance. Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 49; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, 75.

[107] There is an issue between the *ketib* and *qere* in this section, where the *ketib* has Boaz acquiring Ruth and the *qere* has the kinsman acquiring her. I read with the *ketib*, but for more on this topic see Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 48; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xxxvi; Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 90.

[108] In her reflection on her Pasifika Bible Studies group readings of this text, Jione Havea notes that the kinsman, "literarily represents many Judean men who withdrew from redeeming Elimelek and his family," Havea, *Losing Ground*, 203.

[109] As several scholars have noted, the *levir* and *go'el* roles are never specifically associated with each other, the text seems to be bringing them together here. Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 48. Lemos also asks about from whom Boaz acquires Ruth, as the text never provides an answer, T. M. Lemos, "Were Israelite Women Chattel?: Shedding New Light on an Old Question," in *Worship, Women, and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*, ed. John J. Collins, T. M. Lemos, and Saul M. Olyan, Brown Judaic Studies 357 (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University, 2015), 234. This is related to Boaz's earlier question, "To whom does this נערה belong," which similarly remains unanswered, Leeb, 139. However, for Rashi and Ibn Ezra, this is not a levirate union, and Eskenazi finds it difficult to bridge the two because Ruth does not use *y-b-m* in the text, Obed is called Boaz's son in the genealogy, and some other reasons, Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xxxv-vi.

able to buy the land back from the גֹּאֵל, which is why that kinsman said that it would ruin his נַחֲלָה.

The elders of the town bless Boaz, and through him, the two women. This blessing references Rachel and Leah, saying that they build up the house of Israel while ignoring Bilhah and Zilpah.[110] The elders also reference Tamar, saying that she bore Perez to Judah (4:11-12), connecting Ruth to these other women and their importance to Israel. Referencing Tamar provides implicit permission to continue the practice of exogamy and places Ruth among the matriarchs and secondary matriarchs, as Kaniel says,

> The antinomian linguistic and literary element underlying the Sages' perception of Yael and of the Davidic maternal dynasty of Ruth, Tamar and Lot's daughters led them to propose the daring statement, "Greater is a transgression performed with good intention than a commandment performed with no intent."[111]

Ruth 4:13 begins immediately after the elders bless Boaz, "And Boaz took [וַיִּקַּח, ἔλαβεν] Ruth and she was, for him, a woman. And he entered her and THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES gave to her conception [הֵרָיוֹן, κύησιν], and she bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν] a son." Eskenazi compares this language to the birth narratives of the matriarchs, but she misses the unique formulation in which the deity directly gives a woman conception in this manner.[112] The deity breaches the boundary between Moabite and Judahite by inserting themself into the marital bed, separating the child into a special category that signifies both his and David's special position within Israel and Judah.

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[110] Bush, *Ruth/Esther*, 240, notes that it is strange that Rachel is named first, as Leah was Judah's mother.

[111] Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, ""Gedolah Aveirah Lishmah": Mothers of the Davidic Dynasty, Feminine Seduction and the Development of Messianic Though, from Rabbinic Literature to R. Moshe Haim Luzzatto," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, no. 24 (Spring 2013), 44.

[112] Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, 88.

The narrative continues its deviation from other forms by also having the women of the town intrude on the *Geburtserzählung* as well. They bless Naomi, and this act of blessing functions as an adoption.[113] Ruth's name does not appear after she becomes Boaz's wife, and is instead replaced by Naomi.[114] The specific language here is that the child, not Ruth or Boaz, is Naomi's גֹּאֵל (Ruth 4:14).[115] By displacing Boaz and Ruth as the parents, the women of the town return the child and Naomi to their place within Elimelech's בֵּית אַב and subvert Ruth and Boaz's claims to the land.[116] The next verse, 4:16, further circumvents Ruth's claim to both the child and, therefore, to the community and to the land. Here, "Naomi took [וַתִּקַּח] the child and put him at her bosom and was for him an אֹמֶנֶת." לקח here functions as a parallel: Boaz takes Ruth, Naomi takes Obed. Obed functions become the בְּכֹר for Elimelech's בֵּית אַב through Naomi.[117]

Furthermore, for Vanessa Ochs, the use of אֹמֶנֶת renders Ruth obsolete through the creation of an alternate reality where Ruth barely exists.[118] Furthering this separation between

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[113] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 130.

[114] Jones says, "In vv. 1-12, the elders and townspeople express their ambivalence toward Ruth and satirize Boaz for associating with her. Now, in vv. 13-17, the townswomen also marginalize Ruth and demote Boaz when he produces a child with her," Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 56.

[115] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 54.

[116] Trible, "A Human Comedy," 187, argues that the women's decision not to reference the inheritance means they do not care as much about the נַחֲלָה perspective, and points to Naomi saying she wants to find a home for Ruth as evidence. However, this reading ignores that that women of the town keep Ruth from naming her own child. Instead, she argues that they replace Elimelech with Naomi in doing this (189). Because it is normally the mother who names, I argue that, even with Trible's reading, this act would only refocus the narrative on the lineage and inheritance.

[117] The last word, אֹמֶנֶת, I leave untranslated because, although the NRSV translates it as "became his nurse," and Powell connects this verse with Genesis 21:7 and Exodus 2:7 and Chapman's analysis of breastfeeding, this word is different, Powell, *Ruth*, 74. Both Genesis 21:7 and Exodus 2:7 use the root ינק, but Ruth uses אמן. Instead, I suggest that it instead be translated as "guardian."

[118] Vanessa L. Ochs, "Reading Ruth: Where Are the Women?," in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994), 296. Jione Havea provides an alternative, though similar, reading, wherein Obed "was bicultural" and had neither a mother nor a father, as both parents disappeared from the narrative, so the women of the town, whom she calls "aunties," give him to his grandmother, Havea, *Losing Ground*, 215. Although Havea interprets the text more positively, the point that neither parent is considered the child's proper parents is important. Given the issue that Boaz is replacing Mahlon, or even Elimelech, and that Ruth cannot be considered the true mother for the purposes of the נַחֲלָה, this solution helps provide closure for the issue of intermarriage. 2 Sam 4:4 uses אֹמַנְתּוֹ, also a feminine

Ruth and the child, the women of the town name Obed. The text here is somewhat convoluted, "And the women of the town called [וַתִּקְרֶאנָה] for him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' And they called [וַתִּקְרֶאנָה] his name Obed. And he became the father of Jesse, the father of David" (4:17).

Including both second and third person plural forms, תקראנה appears only six times in the Hebrew Bible, and four of those appearances are in *Ruth*.[119] These latter two uses simultaneously provide a name for Obed and bring Naomi/Mara back into the community, now that Elimelech's נַחֲלָה can be fully established, particularly with their statement that, "A son has been born to Naomi."[120] The double appearance here ensures that the reader does not miss the point that the women of the town name Obed and that Naomi is functioning as his mother in the legal fiction they create together. This replacement functions as the final piece of closure necessary to assure the audience that Obed, and therefore David, is properly Judahite. The final genealogy seemingly displaces Ruth in favor of David. However, if, as I argued in the previous section, Tamar is an allegory for the women of the people of the land, including the remainees, then Ruth is an allegory for Persian and other women who intermarried with the *golah* men and returned with them to Yehud. The solution in this phase is to keep the children and ignore the mother.

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singular participle, to reference the nurse who flees with Mephibosheth. What differentiates Naomi and this unnamed nurse, Obed and Mephibosheth, is class. This nursemaid serves at the monarch's command to care for his children. Naomi, on the other hand, takes up the duty herself as the grandmother. However, both function as the child's guardian, or as Chapman describes, "a man or woman who metaphorically was wet nurse," Cynthia R. Chapman, "'Oh That You Were like a Brother to Me, One Who Had Nursed at My Mother's Breasts.' Breast Milk as a Kinship-Forging Substance," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12 (2012), 38.

[119] The two appearances outside *Ruth* are in Exodus 1:10 and Leviticus 10:19, neither of which are relevant, as neither is in reference to naming.

[120] "The inalienability of the land is linked to the perpetuation of the family line. Legally, the parcel belongs to Elimelek's descendants," LaCocque, *Ruth*, 112. In addition, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 145, reads 4:17 as two separate traditions, with "A son has been born to Naomi," as an explanation of a name that had been lost, Obednoam, and these scholars attempted to reconstruct that name. Brenner inserts "Ben Noam," instead, Athalya Brenner, "Naomi and Ruth," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 71.

My womanist-accomplice lens draws me to draw a connection to my sister, who had a Black father and a white mother, but never knew her father. Growing up in a white family, both before and after my family adopted her, left her with a sense of something missing. Furthermore, when she was in elementary school and middle school, my parents sought to keep her from spending time with friends who were Black. During her middle school years, my parents moved to a town that used to be a sundown town, though they did not know that at the time. Thus, she was further cut off from other Black people. Through her experience, I read Obed's inclusion in the community, and the exclusion of Ruth's motherhood, as a tragedy. Mere inclusion through a person's social and legal status, and a name change, is not enough when people look different or know that there is a part of them that they must leave behind to fit in. In fact, they never fully function in either place, but must find their own way. Thus, the solution in Ruth ultimately fails.

Second Horizon (The Social Phase)

In this second phase, the text and ideology are the superstructure and class is the base. Reading *Ruth* as a post-exilic text places it within the national allegory of the return. Through this lens, the famine in Ruth 1, and Elimelech's decision to move with his family, corresponds to the exile. As discussed in the previous chapter, the exile involved more than just the forced migration to Babylon, but a broader flight to surrounding regions, seeking hospitality from other peoples. As Roland Boer accurately notes, *Ruth* is concerned with which woman is Obed's mother and "faces the problem of succession of transition from male to male, when there is no male to continue the line. What happens when only women are left?"[121] However, I take this question a step further:

[121] Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 77-8.

What happens when the only woman left is a foreign woman, with no connections to the land? Unlike Tamar, Ruth is not from the same region in which she lives at the end of her story, and therefore has no claims to the land.

The antinomy in this phase is found by analyzing the ideological conflict in the text, identifying the ideologeme, and reading it alongside class. For scholars who read *Ruth* as a post-exilic text, the ideological conflict is generally accepted as being about foreign women's presence in the returnee community.[122] I take this perspective with my womanist-accomplice lens because this story repeatedly plays on the permeability of social and geographical boundaries, with Ruth's role as a trickster character critiquing Ezra's rhetoric of the "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2).[123] The class distinctions in the text are an important factor in the story, particularly Boaz's status as an אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִל, and Ruth's shift in status from a נָכְרִיָּה (2:10) and a שִׁפְחָה (2:13), to an אָמָה (3:9), an אֵשֶׁת חַיִל (3:11), and finally an אִשָּׁה to Boaz (4:13).[124] For Neil Glover, the titles and the relational language within *Ruth* demonstrate a more constructivist understanding of ethnicity.[125] These titles demonstrate a shift in Ruth's relationship to the rest of the Beth-Lehem community, and therefore the post-exilic community, and create a breach in the ethnic and geographic boundaries that divided the people.

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[122] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 78.

[123] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 89. For Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 130, "*Ruth* is a progenitive threshold. The question of זרע (offspring/seed) drives the last chapter of Judges and the first chapter of *Ruth*." Berquist, "Role Dediffentiation," 34, argues that Boaz is also a trickster figure.

[124] The movement from אֵשֶׁת חַיִל (Ruth 3:11) to an אִשָּׁה of Boaz (4:13) marks a recension of her status in favor of Boaz's חַיִל. Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 78, says that the change in status is not obvious.

[125] Glover, "Your People, My People," 301. However, Glover also notes that ethnic actors tend to be Hard Primordialists, (298). The implied author, then, is subconsciously acknowledging and exploring the boundaries of ethnicity.

The ideologeme in this text is the boundary, both social and geographical, which determines usufruct of the land.[126] Class analysis of this text is often subsumed within the questions of gender and ethnicity, but is particularly common as one aspect of intersectional work among minoritized scholars.[127] Ruth must serve both Naomi and Boaz, and is placed at a disadvantage to them because she is the "perpetual foreigner," and a widow, who must always work to the benefits of the higher classes.[128] Both Naomi and Ruth are widows, but do not share the same status because Naomi is a "remigrant" and Ruth is a foreigner.[129] Read with all these perspectives in mind, I understand Ruth through the construction of the Black woman who is marked by her skin and treated as "enduringly carnal."[130]

Naomi relies on Ruth for sustenance and, later, for access to protection within the patriarchal system. As Weems notes, neither of these women compete with each other, although she also notes that Naomi may be too old to provide for herself.[131] However, this reliance does not keep Naomi and Boaz from exploiting Ruth for her physical and reproductive labor.[132] In

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[126] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 24, says that the foreigner functions both geographically and philosophically.

[127] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 78. Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn," 119-140; Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 23-38; Madipoane J Masenya, "A Woman with Multiple Identities: Reading the Ruth Character in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Old Testament Essays (New Series)* 36, no. 1 (December 31, 2023): 189–201; also see LaCocque, *Ruth*, 26, who says, "This is a document for the minorities of every time and every place. Its message is revolutionary because it orients toward solutions marked by *ḥesed*—that is, generosity, compassion, love."

[128] Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn," 130.

[129] Havea and Lau, "Reading Ruth Again," 5, argue that Naomi is a remigrant, who, amongst modern Asian communities, are seen as Westerners, and therefore fulfill a different role. Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 18, agrees,.

[130] Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles," 267.

[131] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 24, 30.

[132] Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 31; Judith E. McKinlay, "A Son Is Born to Naomi: A Harvest for Israel," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 155, further argues that this act is a "*rediviva*" of Hagar.

contrast to these two women, Boaz is a prominent man who has several נַעֲרֹת and נַעֲרִים who work for him. He even has a hierarchical structure to oversee their work, with somebody specifically in command of the reapers (2:5), which implies that there are other workers in his employ.

Naomi and Ruth ostensibly share a class status, but Naomi has local familial connections that she does not reveal to Ruth, thereby exploiting Ruth, to whom she has made no vow.[133] The older woman does not partake in any work necessary for her own survival, leaving that duty to Ruth.[134] Naomi also has a portion of land, from Elimelech's household (Ruth 4:3). Under normal circumstances, the land should have belonged to Ruth, as the wife of the heir who inherited after Elimelech's death. However, Ruth *cannot be acknowledged as the heir* because she is a Moabite woman. This issue is the crux of the *Geburtserzählung* in this story.

Ruth begins among the lowest class in the text. She is already a Moabite woman, explicitly excluded in Nehemiah 13:1, referencing Deut 23:3, and a common enemy of Israel in their mutual histories. As a widow, with her sister-in-law gone, Ruth's closest connection is the mother of the man who kidnapped and raped her. For Victor Matthews, the oath she swears to Naomi "expunge[es her] of her Moabite heritage" and "she becomes doubly liminal through the combination of her social status with her decision to immigrate."[135] However, I read with Yolanda Norton who argues that the ideological function of the text is to argue that, "it is a worthy endeavor to sacrifice your land, your people, your god, and even yourself for the

[133] Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 76.

[134] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 80.

[135] Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity," 18. When reading *Ruth*, it is important to not use the text for assimilationist views (which Matthews is not doing), nor should it be read as an attempt to leave her Moabiteness behind, as her ethnicity stays with her throughout the story, Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 32; Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 208.

supposed privilege of participating in what the texts depicts [sic] as the most desirable community."[136] Matheny connects the duality inherent in migration to the use of שוב in Ruth 1,

> The term, שוב creates a loophole in Ruth's identity, providing an evasive maneuver rather than any simple reading. The dichotomization of Ruth's complete assimilation or ultimate resistance to Israelite status is ultimately defied by the double-voiced utterance of שוב. This return is double-voiced because of its intertextual nuances, which anticipates and resists a single-voiced sense of return.[137]

Despite Ruth's oath, Naomi and the women communally shun her in a way that ensures she does not find solidarity among her fellow women.[138] Ruth's oath is similar to those of Hittite and Ugaritic treaties, marking her submission to her mother-in-law, a cessation of her resistance.[139] Instead, Ruth initiates her own attempts at survival and does the work that only widows and poor people do, glean. In this way, her ethnicity, class, and gender are all central to the text. Ruth falls far outside the scope of normality for the community she has entered. This status, like the positionality of many Black women, then opens her up to sexual exploitation, both by the locals and by her kin, namely, Naomi and Boaz.

The narrative further differentiates Ruth through the focus on her kinship relations. Everyone except Naomi and Boaz, including the narrator, refers to her as some version of "the Moabite woman," fourteen times, reasserting her status as foreigner.[140] Ruth herself repeatedly

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[136] Norton, "Silenced Struggles," 265.

[137] Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 207.

[138] Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 30.

[139] Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, 18.

[140] The most recurrent title for Ruth is "the Moabite woman," which appears 14 times in the text. Early on, as in Ruth 2:6, she is referred to as "A Moabite woman from the field of Moab," which Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah," 135, says, "emphasizes the text's construction of Ruth not only as a *gērāh*…but also as an alien from a despised and barbaric country." The majority of scholars read *Ruth* along these lines, with Ruth coming from a hated country known for its sexual impropriety and an especially hated neighboring state, see Glover, "Your People, My People," 303, Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah," 144, Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 14-21, Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 91; Havea, *Losing Ground*, 84-6; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xlvii-viii. This connection is primarily due to the story of Lot and his two daughters (Gen 19) and the prohibition on intermarriage with Moabites (Deut 23:3-9 prohibits Ammonites and Moabites from entering the assembly, which Ezra and Nehemiah use, in conjunction with

uses language that denotes her status, including cohortative forms in her speech (Ruth 2:2, 7) as an act of submission, and refers to herself with other language that signifies low status. Furthermore, although Boaz sees Ruth and provides special privileges to her, he does not hire her, which would include her within the larger clan structure.[141] When he finally motions to include her in the community, it is through a business transaction to acquire land, and only secondarily Ruth (4:10).[142] Ruth, then, represents the foreign women and widows who joined the *golah* community when they returned to Yehud.

Boaz represents the upper-class remainees, those who had established themselves and their land, and maintained genealogies.[143] Athalya Brenner notes that, "The conflict between the self-styled 'returnees' and the locals is more economic than ethnic or religious and is tightly linked to the question of land and its ownership."[144] As with some of the remainees, he is open to

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Deut 7:1 to prohibit the intermarriage, see LaCocque, *Ruth*, 19). However, the prohibition on intermarriage becomes stronger in the Hasmonean period, deriving most strongly in the post-exilic period from Ezra-Nehemiah's use of Deuteronomy 23:3-9 and 7:1, which demonstrates that there was a need to enforce the prohibition, but primarily later, Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), xxxix, Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 33. These texts represent the establishment of the prohibition, rather than a demonstration of its long-term existence. In *Mishnah Yevamot* 8:3, only male Moabites and Ammonites are forbidden, so the post-Second Temple boundaries were permeable as well, Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition," 91. The Genesis text does not malign Lot's daughters for their actions, nor does it criticize Judah for his. As demonstrated earlier, Judah acknowledges his own fault, challenging the prohibition on intermarrying the people of the land. It is clear from Ruth 1*,* Judges 3, Numbers 21, and the Mesha Stele, that migration within the surrounding lands and the shifting of borders were well within the scope of possibility, Sasson, *Ruth*, 113. Deut 2:29 even includes Moabites welcoming Israel.

[141] Athalya Brenner analyzes Ruth as a migrant worker in two separate articles. In "From Ruth to the 'Global Woman': Social and Legal Aspects," 166, she discusses migrant workers in Israel from all over the world. Many migrant workers overstay their permits for numerous reasons, but because Israel is Jewish State, in which the Jewish religion "dictat[es] personal status," and the only way to become a permanent resident is "through marriage and/or conversion." This reading echoes the issue for Ruth, in that she must *again* marry somebody in order to become a permanent resident. The other article is Athalya Brenner, "Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy," 158–62.

[142] Fischer, "The Book of Ruth," 31.

[143] Boaz is upper class, particularly because he is involved in land control, oversight, and capable of getting the elders of the town to gather and go along with his scheme, Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 57. Boaz is also the only male character who is active, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 10. Norton, "Silenced Survival," 276, argues that Boaz represents all of Israel.

[144] Brenner, "Ruth," 309.

helping the returnees as long as he retains his class status.[145] As one of the returnees, Naomi has *claims* to the land, but cannot take that land without displacing others. [146] She retains a relatively high class status over others who may not have the same direct claims to the land, or whose genealogies were lost.[147] Yet, the returnees likely underwent significant changes as they assimilated into their new lands.[148] Before Boaz's deal to acquire the land and Ruth, Naomi is among the lowest status people in Beth-Lehem. She has nobody else to work for her, no currently viable land holdings, and it seems as though her kin are ignoring her. Both of these people must use Ruth, her usufruct rights and her body, in order to establish their own claims over that land.[149]

In my earlier connection to Tamar and indigenous communities in the United States, I use my womanist-accomplice approach, with the goal of seeking to incorporate the perspectives and wholeness of all people, to do the same here. During the oil boom of the early 20th century, many white men intermarried with Native American women whose tribal lands allowed them to become wealthy. After marrying these women, these men would kill their wives through a

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[145] This hierarchy means that Boaz controls the means of production and is the person "for whom the rest labour." Later, in Ruth 4, Boaz has the status necessary to sell somebody else's land, Naomi's land, without the elders questioning his right to do so. Besides commanding others on where and how to work and taking part in potentially illicit business transactions, Boaz does not "engage in any work as such" and is not "involved in the production of the necessary items for human existence…he lives off the surplus labour of those who do," Roland Boer, "Terry Eagleton: The Class Struggles of Ruth," in *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 79. Boaz's class is found even in the form of his words, with imperative and jussives making up the vast majority of his speech, Boer, "Terry Eagleton," 80. See also, Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 38.

[146] Read in this light, Koosed argues that Naomi functions as a stand-in for the returnees who came back to the land and had to re-establish kinship ties, land claims, and survive, Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 13.

[147] Naomi frequently uses volitional forms when speaking with Ruth, taking the higher status (Ruth 1:8, 11, 12, 15; 2:2, 22; 3:3, 4, 18), Boer, "Terry Eagleton," 80. Through this language, she demonstrates a willingness to use Ruth's body for her own ends. See also Gafney, "Mother Knows Best," 31, Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 80.

[148] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 171.

[149] For LaCocque, *Ruth*, 130, Boaz must redeem the land from Naomi, ensuring that the older woman could use it her whole life, because redeeming the land from Ruth, then marrying her, would create problems with ownership.

variety of means, and the US justice system, sheriffs, justices, etc., alongside banks and doctors, helped the men and protected them.[150] In addition, although tribes who freed those they enslaved incorporated those people into their communities, the United States government often refused to do so, and so many Black people who lived with those tribes and married into them were excluded through legal documentation and the tribal roles,[151] which connects with the genealogical lists in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The list of those who returned in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 focuses on the male lines of descent, leaving the widows homeless and potentially excluded from the community.[152] In addition, both lists name those who could not prove their genealogies (Ezra 2:59-63, Neh 7:61-65) and over seven thousand male and female slaves (Ezra 2:65, Neh 7:67) who are not counted among the 42,360 of the official genealogy of the original returnees. The existence of these genealogies means that the *golah* community kept their own genealogies during the exile and potentially excluded the genealogies of those who never left the land.[153] This list alone provides the structure of the returning tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as well as the Levites, priests, and others who saw to the care of Jerusalem and the temple.[154] Notably, the people who do not appear in the genealogy are allowed to return and only those who would have been priests have any sort of limit placed upon them (Ezra 2:62-3; Neh 7:64-5).

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[150] David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2017).

[151] See Katherine Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press and The American Philosophical Society, 2017), 103-123.

[152] For an in-depth look at all the lists of peoples in Ezra and Nehemiah, and the function of those lists within the story, see Maria Häusl, "It's All in the Lists! Building the Community through the Lists in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott et al. (Sheffield: equinox, 2022), 168–94.

[153] Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 34.

[154] The Levites are not listed with Judah and Benjamin, but instead alongside the keepers of the temple and Jerusalem, so I have maintained that in this section.

Due to the group-focused nature of these genealogies, individuals and their lives are subsumed into their cities of origin. However, bringing my womanist-accomplice perspective to bear, I also wish to center those who consistently fall outside the anthropocentric nature of genealogies and these large stories of migration in the biblical text. The people most likely to fall outside these genealogies are women, particularly lower-class and/or widowed women, those who may have lost connection to their בֵּית אַב through the loss of the *paterfamilias*. For widows, this problem would have been particularly pronounced, as a woman who inherited property could only marry someone from her own tribe. Without a genealogy, her tribal claims were unverified.[155] Unlike Naomi, whose husband had himself lived on and worked the land, these women did not have evidence that their ancestors, or their husbands' ancestors, had lived on and worked the land. They were alienated, although this fact is ignored in the anthropocentric nature of Ezra and Nehemiah's genealogies.

The existence of these lists, at least within Ezra and Nehemiah, implies a structure for maintaining status and connection within the *golah* community. But what happened to those who were unable to stay on the official roll? There were almost certainly cases like those of Naomi and Ruth, whose husbands died and left them without proof that they, too, are Yehudim. However, this issue extends beyond this singular instance to all widows from exogamous unions, which is why Ruth and Tamar's stories are tied together at the end of Ruth. Being a widow displaces women from genealogical claims to the נַחֲלָה, and therefore any children they might have who are not explicitly connected through male lines. According to Eskenazi,

> It should be noted that the issue is not whether foreigners may or may not live with Jews, but rather whether they may be reckoned as members of the Jewish community. Indeed, it is precisely the difficulty of securing extensive independent

[155] The ability of a widow to marry somebody within her own tribe comes from Numbers 36:6 and 8, specifically in reference to Hoglah, Milcah, Tirzah, and their sisters, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 115, also connects this.

> physical space for Jewish life…that undergirds the drive for creating a separate social and religious sphere.[156]

With this analysis in mind, the antinomy in this second horizon is that the boundaries set around what it means to be among the Yehudim were always already breached, and that survival relies on the permeability of kinship and class structures.

Ruth provides the imaginary solution to this real problem by simplifying Obed's parentage into a unilineal framework, so Ruth is never fully included. When Boaz references Ruth in the initial deal for land, it is "to raise up the name of the dead over his נַחֲלָה" (Ruth 4:6).[157] Although the *levir* is never explicitly referenced in *Ruth*, this statement is "an off-handed reference to the levirate custom."[158] However, in the genealogy at the end, the narrative "released the dead – Mahlon, Chilion, Elimelek – into non-remembrance," and this non-remembrance remains in later genealogies (1 Chr 2:12; Matt 1:5).[159] These men are lost in the genealogies, even though Boaz stated that his intent was to maintain their place and for Obed to take up their names.

The patrilineage is also corrected through the blessing, as both the men and the women bless the union and the children in their own ways. Neither blessing references the deceased, as Boaz had. Instead, the men's blessing focuses on "the woman entering your house," telling Boaz to "make חַיִל in Ephrathah, and קָרָא a name in Beth-Lehem." Although the *NRSV* translates חַיִל here as "children" (4:11), this statement should be read alongside Boaz's position as an אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר

[156] Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, xli.

[157] In Numbers 27, the proper order would be the man's brother, then paternal uncles, and then the nearest relative from the clan.

[158] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 25. Sasson, *Ruth*, 133-4, sharply disagrees with this reading, arguing that only a brother could perform the levirate rite and that Ruth could marry whomever she desired. However, Jones demonstrates that there were situations throughout Mesopotamia that allowed for a broader group of kinsman to perform this rite.

[159] Havea, *Losing Ground*, 215.

חַיִל, and the statement that he should make a name in Beth-lehem, "And increase your power in Ephrathah, and name a name for yourself in Beth-Lehem."[160] These statements are about Boaz's status, perhaps through children, but still center his position in the patrilineage and control of the נַחֲלָה, as further demonstrated by references to the matriarchs who "both built the house of Israel" (4:11). Children are more explicitly referenced only later, in 4:12: "and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the children whom THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES gives to you through this נַעֲרָה." Here, the elders and others at the gate say that the children are given *to Boaz*, rather than to Elimelech. The reference to Tamar also functions as a tie to another instance wherein the levirate system failed, and an exogamous union required alternative methods to ensure the Judahite lineage survived. As I previously referenced, Judah names both Perez and Zerah because he had to replace Er and Onan as their father. Neither son has any official descendants. Thus, in both Ruth and Tamar's stories, the patrilineage is clarified and the issues of descent are circumvented. Obed is made explicitly Boaz's, separating Ruth and her children from Elimelech and Mahlon.

The matrilineage is corrected by the women of the neighborhood after the Ruth gives birth to Obed. The women of the town talk to Naomi and first acknowledge that "your daughter-in-law, who loves you, has borne him" (4:15). Ibn Ezra reads this blessing as a correction of the genealogy outside biological fact.[161] The development of this genealogical fiction creates a *de jure* genealogy to maintain Naomi's בֵּית עַם and Elimelech's בֵּית אַב and maintain the clan's control over the land. After this birth, Naomi lays the child at her bosom, an act of adoption,[162] and, "The female inhabitants called [Qal-Pret-3FP] for him a name, saying, 'A son has been born

[160] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 52, reads this as a wish for Boaz to become even greater.

[161] Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, 102, fn. 235.

[162] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 124.

[Pual-Perf-3MS] to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed" (4:17). In this way, then, the men subvert the patriliny, rejecting Boaz's use of the levirate system, and the women subvert the matriliny, after Naomi essentially adopts the child, by binding him to the community.[163] The women never state that Naomi bears the child, but rather that Obed is "born to Naomi," which places Ruth is a similar position to that of Bilhah and Zilpah.[164] As Norton argues, "Ruth is there to serve Naomi's purpose for redemption and restoration; she is there to highlight the ostensible altruism of Boaz."[165]

The solution provided in *Ruth* is much less individually focused. *Ruth Rabbah* seems to agree, as in both texts there is "consideration of Isarel's capacity to naturalize the outsider, so to define itself as to extend its own limits."[166] *Ruth* does not, as many scholars suggest, focus on conversion and proselytizing.[167] Instead, through my womanist-accomplice approach, I argue that it is about widows, both foreign and domestic, their usufruct of the land, and communal actions taken to ensure a child's inclusion in the community.[168] Despite all the holes created within *Ruth*, what Neil Glover calls "Constructivist escape hatches," Ruth is ultimately excluded from the community.[169] She is allowed to continue living in Beth-lehem, even to become an אִשָּׁה

[163] Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 150.

[164] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 165. Fischer, "The Book of Ruth," 32, also adds, "Ruth neither gives birth to a child for her deceased husband…nor for her husband Boaz…[she] gives birth to a child for…Naomi (4.15). This is confirmed by the women of Bethlehem."

[165] Norton, "Silenced Survival," 276.

[166] Neusner, *The Mother of the Messiah*, 6.

[167] Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 92. Those who do not read conversion here include Campbell, *Ruth*, 80-82; Bronner, "A Thematic Approach," 152; Jonathan A. Thambyrajah, "Israelite or Moabite?: Ethnicity in the Book of Ruth," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46, no. 1 (September 1, 2021), 63; Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 9.

[168] Campbell, *Ruth*, 80-82.

[169] Glover, "Your People, My People," 309, cf. Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 208, "[Ruth's] foreignness and 'otherness' adds a distinct voice in the dialogue, as a rejoinder yet becoming something new, retaining a loophole in her identity." Norton, "Silenced Survival," 277, agrees.

of Boaz, functioning as the *de facto* mother and caretaker for Obed. However, the narrator cuts her off from legal claims to the land and child, creating an ideological boundary around the land and genealogy. This connection to the land is severed when the men bless Boaz and pass Elimelech's בֵּית אַב into the ether of forgotten memories. Her connection to the genealogy is severed by the women's blessing, Naomi's actions, and the women's decision to name Obed. Although she appears in later genealogies, she is removed from the list in her own story.[170]

The inclusion of David at the end of this story draws the issues presented in both Ezra-Nehemiah and *Ruth* together. LaCocque calls this final genealogy a "criterion of ethnicity," that subverts "an ultra-conservative interpretation of 'scripture' in the service of power."[171] By tying Ruth to the governor of Judah, the author criticizes the exclusion of foreign women and endogamous marriage.[172] In a time of transition and the loss of family lines, the author of Ruth presents the inclusion of foreign women as important and necessary, and provides a means of excising that foreignness from the community without removing the women and children.[173] This strange utopian dream is a mixture of the utopian and the dystopian, in which difference is ignored or submerged, rather than acknowledged and integrated.

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[170] According to Neusner, *The Mother of the Messiah*, 2, when talking about *Ruth Rabbah*, "Genealogy formed a supernatural indicator, not merely one concerning secular familial status. Just as they believed that we inherit from our ancestors the advantage of unearned grace…so too they believed that the Messiah is what he is because of his grandmother, the alien, the outsider, the pauper, the nullity. Ruth, the mother of the Messiah, stands for everything weak and foolish."

[171] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 13. LaCocque bases this reading on the idea that, as a post-exilic text, Ruth is not commenting on David's legitimacy.

[172] For Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 4, "Ruth is a socio-political defense of the Davidic house's right to rule over Isarel, it is a counter statement to exclusivist tendencies evident in certain people/groups in the Restoration period."

[173] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 71; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 122.

Third Horizon (The Historical Phase)

The third horizon takes the genre of the text as the superstructure and the mode of production (MP), both ancient and modern, as the base. The genre in this case is that of the *Geburtserzählung.* However, *Ruth*'s genre also plays a key role in how one reads the text as a whole, influencing how one reads the *Geburtserzählung*. I agree with LaCocque that *Ruth* is a folk story.[174] For this reason, although the broader MP is that of tribute-exchange, as it was in Hagar's story, *Ruth* itself focuses on subsistence-survival and the local economy. As Terry Eagleton has noted, all former MPs continue existing within the general mode of production.[175] In this way, *Ruth* uses mythic history and the subsistence-survival MP, in which the majority of remainees and returnees lived, to critique the ways in which culture shifted around the tribute-exchange MP.

When the returnees entered the land they meant to take, they instigated a conflict over who would maintain control and usufruct of the land with the people who already lived there. A major issue that this group came up against was that all this land was part of the Persian province of עֵבֶר־נָהָרָה (4:11), and many ancient boundaries, in their limited form, largely disappeared. In addition, the Assyrians had moved people around (4:2), and so the kinship and geographic boundaries that defined people were rendered meaningless. Furthermore, as Jones III argues,

> In Neh 13:23-27 there is record of men actually marrying Ashdodite, Moabite, and Ammonite women…Nehemiah's character rebukes these men for behaviors that he believes are similar to Solomon's…Nehemiah is concerned that the children of these marriages could not speak Hebrew (v. 24). Thus, the inclusion of Moabites…appears to have been a significant problem for a certain group(s) in the Restoration community…As the original Canaanite peoples had polluted the land (Ezra 9:11), so will the Moabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians re-pollute the land if they are allowed to take up residence after its cleansing during the exile. Ironic as

[174] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 10.

[175] Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (New York, NY: Verso Books, 2006), 45.

> it may be, when the only attested case of such integration fails to induce impieties (Neh. 13:23-27), Nehemiah takes socio-cultural dissimilation as sure evidence that religion heterodoxy will soon follow.[176]

However, this explanation falls short. First, the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 1-9 presents a counter-narrative to Ezra-Nehemiah, particularly through the descendants of Judah, in which mixed marriages were "generally viewed as [a sign] of divine blessing."[177] Second, like Ruth, the people of the land had begun following the deity of the land, rather than maintaining their own (Ezra 4:2), but this shift was not enough for the returnees, who maintained their own genealogies.[178] In addition, the returnees were willing to allow people who were not in their genealogies to return, but did not incorporate the remainees into their community upon entering the land. The exile alone marked "the holy seed" (Ezra 9:2). When the Persian government funded the remigration to Yehud, they ensured that the upper-class returnees had little need to integrate into the local populace, which itself would have troubled their Persian rulers.[179]

Through my womanist-accomplice reading, I read *Ruth* as a contrast to 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, as written from the perspective of a small town and poor migrants.[180] This focus on the microscopic, local aspects of migration and remigration is useful in understanding the shifting nature of economic, cultural, and socio-legal dynamics in this

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[176] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 143-4.

[177] Gary N. Knoppers, "'Married into Moab': The Exogamy Practiced by Judah and His Descendants in the Judahite Lineages," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 189.

[178] For Peter H.W. Lau, "Another Postcolonial Reading of the Book of Ruth," in *Reading Ruth in Asia*, ed. Jione Havea and Peter H.W. Lau, International Voices in Biblical Studies 7 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 30, the people of the land both "maintain some elements of Israelite identity and freedom" and "resisted other elements of Israelite identity and imperial rule."

[179] Inchol Yang, "Mixed Marriage in Ezra 9-10: The Disappearance of Ezra as a Mimic Man for the Persian Empire," *The Expository Times* 134, no. 2 (2022), 54.

[180] LaCocque reads this as nostalgia, as Ezra-Nehemiah does not reference lower courts, LaCocque, *Ruth*, 125. However, in doing so, it questions the legitimacy of Persian-era systems.

period because it concerns the reproduction of the means of production. As Althusser argues, the MP incorporates its own reproduction into its system. This reproduction cannot be thought of at the level of "the firm," what Terry Eagleton calls the general mode of production (GMP), as it does not exist at that level in real conditions.[181] Instead, one must examine how the system ensures enough raw materials, buildings, machines, and people to continue production. In this way, *Ruth* shifts its focus away from tribute-exchange to the subsistence-survival of the local populace. In doing so, *Ruth* presents the antinomy, that despite the power structures, survival depends on everyone, and strict maintenance of social-legal-cultural divisions leads to extinction. So, too, does the division of people along the lines of race and gender lead to the fear among white people that they will lose their majority status in the United States.

Ruth 4:13-17 is the only *Geburtserzählung* in which קרא appears in the feminine plural, and it does so twice.[182] However, the birth narrative begins in 4:13, "And Boaz took [וַיִּקַּח, ἔλαβεν] Ruth and she was, for him, a woman. And he entered her and THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES gave to her conception [הֵרָיוֹן, κύησιν], and she bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἔτεκεν] a son."[183] As I noted in the first horizon, the use of הֵרָיוֹן is unique to this text.[184] The Greek form, κύησιν, is just

[181] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso Books, 2020), 3.

[182] As I referenced in the first horizon, this feminine plural echoes the Naomi's attempt to rename herself Mara in 1:20-21, in which she uses second-person feminine plural to tell the women to call her something else. The only *formal* difference between the two appearances is that in the latter, the words appear as preterites, the narrator's tense. By renaming herself, Naomi creates a new boundary by which she is separated from the women of Beth-lehem. However, this singular act of a woman renaming herself is also a reclaiming of personal identity in the wake of death and remigration. She is no longer Naomi, the woman of Elimelech, but her own person. As in Hagar's story, when she becomes the only person to give a name to the deity (Gen 16:13), Naomi becomes the only person to name herself.

[183] Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 94-9, reads this as a barren mother type-scene, but I see no reason to add barrenness to this text.

[184] This form also appears in Hosea 9:1, but not with the language of the deity giving conception. There are four other uses of the הרה as an adjective, הָרָה, in a *Geburtserzählung*. The three that are most important for this dissertation are Hagar in Gen 16:11, Tamar in Gen 38:24, and again in v. 25, tying the stories of Tamar and Ruth even further together. The fourth is 1 Samuel 4:19.

as rare. Even beyond the form of הרה, this formulation, the deity giving conception to a woman, is unique. The deity is involved in other birth narratives, but nowhere else does the deity "give conception," which implies involvement beyond the simple opening of a womb. In this way, the narrator marks the child of this union as a special person, or the ancestor of a special person, who is later revealed to be David. Other than this, the rest of the conception and birth follow typical genre conventions. The women of the town return to this birth in 4:15, saying, "your daughter-in-law, who loves you, has borne him [יְלָדַתּוּ, Qal-Perf-3FS, ἔτεκεν], which also follows conventional forms.

The text again deviates in Ruth 4:16, "And Naomi took [וַתִּקַּח, ἔλαβεν] the child and set him at her breast, and she was for him an אֹמֶנֶת." As I referenced in the first horizon, this use of אמן is unique and does not imply breastfeeding. The act of placing a child to one's breast does take on adoptive forms in other ancient west Asian cultures, and so this act draws on those cultural backgrounds to begin the shift to Naomi as "*virtual* mother."[185] However, Naomi does not name the child. This shift is continued during the actual naming event. The first use of קרא in 4:17a is, "And the female inhabitants called [וַתִּקְרֶאנָה, Qal-Pret-3FP, ἐκάλεσαν] for him a name, saying…" This first act is itself unique because there is no name provided at the end of this phrase. It is so unique that several interpreters have argued that this phrase and the second appearance of וַתִּקְרֶאנָה, later in the verse, represent two traditions. These scholars have attempted to recreate a name out of the next line, 4:17b, "A son has been born [יֻלַּד־בֵּן, Pual-Perf-3MS,

[185] Marjo C.A. Korpel, *The Structure of the Book of Ruth*, Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity (Assen, The Netherlands: Koninklijke van Gorcum, 2001), 208. , Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 165, argues that Ruth serves as Naomi's surrogate, as Hagar did. Sasson, *Ruth*, 158, agrees, saying, "The birth of a son to [Ruth] and Boaz would, legalistically speaking, terminate this special relationship with her former mother-in-law; for that son will become Mahlon's (and Naomi's), while Ruth will remain Boaz's wife." Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 83, disagrees, saying that the physical and symbolic transfer, "is distressing to many women from cultures…in which authority for the rearing of children has been vested in their paternal grandmother, with the mother having little or no opportunity to participate."

Ἐτέχθη) to/for Naomi." This attempt relies on the explanations of names that appear in several birth narratives, but such explanations of names are not required within this genre.[186]

Instead, the women are establishing the child's connection to Naomi, rather than Ruth.[187] In line with this explanation, the narrator uses the niphal form in Gen 21:3, when Abraham's son "was born [הַנּוֹלַד, Niphal-perf-3ms, γενομένου] to him." In both cases, the passive form distances the child's birth from the biological mother, Ruth and Sarah, and closer to the lineal figure who maintains the נַחֲלָה. The pual form also appears in Gen 41:50, when two sons are borne to Joseph, superseding Asenath's claim to the children.[188] By establishing Naomi as the matrilineal figure, the women of the town efface Ruth's claim to the child and displace her from the community.

This separation of the child and Ruth is completed in 4:17c, "They called [וַתִּקְרֶאנָה, Qal-Pret-3FP, ἐκάλεσαν] his name Obed." This statement is the only time that somebody who is not a parent names the child, and one of two occurrences when קרא appears in a plural form within the genre.[189] This second occurrence, when the women actually name Obed, fixes multiple problems for the community. First, the child has no legal father who is available to perform this ceremony. In his statement to the closer kinsman, Boaz says that he is acquiring Ruth "to retain the name of the dead over his נַחֲלָה" (4:5). This statement references the role of the *levir*, which means that the biological father of the child is not the socio-legal father of the child.[190] Despite the genealogy that comes at the end of the chapter, Boaz is not Ruth's husband, nor is he the child's *legal*

[186] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 145.

[187] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 145; Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 104. Meyers says that this is a way for the women to show solidarity with Ruth, Carol Meyers, "'Women of the Neighborhood' (Ruth 4.17): Informal Female Networks in Ancient Israel," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 120.

[188] The pual perfect form also appears in Gen 4:26 and Isaiah 9:5 (9:6 in NRSV), but the first of these is a genealogy and the second has a separate function.

[189] The other occurrence is the birth of Jacob in Gen 25:26, discussed in the previous chapter.

[190] Westbrook, *Property and Family*, 64.

father. Ruth, or at least her firstborn child, still belongs to Elimelech's בֵּית אַב to fulfill the need for a בְּכֹר.[191] In Gen 38:14 Judah makes no claim to function as the *levir*, and in fact admits that he is at fault for not giving Tamar to his youngest son. Tamar's children would have been bastards if Judah had not claimed them as his own. Boaz, on the other hand, could not be the father because this whole process is to ensure that Elimelech's נַחֲלָה does not die out with him, which requires an heir. Ruth also cannot name the child because she is a Moabite woman.[192]

Because there is no acceptable biological parent who can name the child, the women of the town come together to claim him as a member of the community, marking his socio-legal status as a בְּכֹר and inheritor of the נַחֲלָה. Therefore, when the women of the town name Obed, they reject Ruth's attempt to change her ethnicity, but allow her child to enter the community as long as Naomi can function as the matrilineal link. Sasson agrees, saying, "By means of this twofold birth narrative, the storyteller responded to a difficulty…how to successfully integrate an ending in which Ruth's child will be considered as the son both of her deceased husband, Mahlon, and of…Boaz."[193] The genealogical claim that Obed is also of the line of Boaz is a

[191] Although, as Mahlon's wife and Obed's mother, Ruth *should* have legal claim to the land, the separation of the child, alongside Boaz's statement that Naomi is selling the land (4:3) and his redemption of it in her name, ensures that she cannot make those claims.

[192] Several scholars follow the tradition that Ruth converts, or in some way joins, the Bethlehemite community. There is a long Jewish and Christian tradition that Ruth converts, which is a means of answering the problem of how a Moabite woman was able to infiltrate the endogamy of Israel-Judah-Yehud. These explanations frequently rely on Ruth's oath in Ruth 1:16-17, as well as her acts of חֶסֶד (1:8, 3:10). However, these acts benefit the insiders first and foremost. Some of these arguments rely on the fact that Ruth ceases to be "Ruth the Moabite" after 4:10; however, her name only appears once more in 4:13 in a familial context, where the appellation tends to disappear. As Southwood, "Nation, 112, argues, "Ruth's ethnicity may be translated for the purposes of assimilation, but this does not mean the original fades away." This reading of Ruth follows that of Yee's "perpetual foreigner" who must always prove herself worthy of assimilation, Gale A. Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn,"119–40. Villiers also agrees, pointing to both Judith and Ruth to demonstrate that, although they are legally excluded, they "demonstrate their solidarity with Israel and are consequently integrated in the community," Gezina G. de Villiers, "African Biblical Hermeneutics and the Book of Ruth: Some Observations," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (January 2021), 4. It is through mimicry that Ruth is able to incorporate herself into the community, a solution necessary for her own survival. Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 114.

[193] Sasson, *Ruth*, 160.

further demonstration that all kinship and ethnic claims are permeable, adding another hole to the patrilineal system, and therefore to claims around the land and ethnic negotiation.

This limited inclusion of Ruth, and the full inclusion of her child, was performed as a means of survival in the economic system in which the majority lived, and presents an alternative to the anti-exogamous rhetoric in Ezra-Nehemiah. Ancient ethnic divisions were largely, though not wholly, determined by genealogical and geographical borders.[194] However, these boundaries were always in flux, as Israel-Judah conquered land, lost their control over that land, and were themselves conquered. Although *Ruth* begins with a journey into the fields of Moab, that phrase *cannot* be a claim to the modern category of borders, as such a system did not exist.[195] People would have intermarried with the towns around them, regardless of boundaries, and their kinship affiliations would have been established through long centuries of intermarriage. Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this story as one in which the MP requires the occasional ability to cross boundaries because without that limited capacity, the underclass would no longer have the hope of crossing the borders that control class and other systems of power, and rise up against that system.

In the same way, the racial divisions for indigenous people and Black people, among others, according to blood quanta, ensured that with enough mixing, some of their descendants would become acceptable to white society.[196] In the modern world, one can, in some ways, acquire such positions of privilege through wealth by taking part in the same capitalist structures

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[194] I particularly draw this idea, in connection to Ruth, from Matheny, *Judges 19-21*, 150-161. LaCocque, *Ruth*, 24; Brenner, "Naomi and Ruth," 77; and the geographical sometimes overpowers the genealogical, Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109.

[195] Koosed also makes this point, and connects the story to Anzaldua's *La Frontera*, noting how the US exerts power over Mexico, but the borderland "is not bound to the physical border culture…And conflict does not define even her conflict-ridden space. IT is also a space of creativity," Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 47.

[196] Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell*, 123-147.

that erode the rights of other humans and maintain those divisions. However, the person who crosses the socio-spatial barrier of class cannot ultimately cross the race and gender barriers without giving up their communities and culture.

Drawing on Althusser and my womanist-accomplice approach, I argue that *Ruth*, slavery, and immigration in the modern system are ways of ensuring the reproduction of labor power in order to maintain the means of production.[197] Obed was born to work and maintain Elimelech's field, and Ruth's final act is to give birth to him, continuing the production and reproduction of labor power to maintain the system.[198] The superstructure has two levels, the politico-legal and ideological.[199] In *Ruth*, the women of the town naming Obed, and Naomi claiming him, function as the politico-legal level of the superstructure. Ruth's oath, obedience, and acts of חסד function as the ideological aspects of the superstructure. By reading *Ruth* through the lens of conversion without acknowledging its limitations and Ruth's ultimate exclusion, scholars reify the superstructure and the means by which the MP, and especially the ideological state apparatus, ensures its continued survival. Instead, I read with Athalya Brenner who has tied Ruth to migrant workers in Israel, many of whom first move there under work visas and overstay that visa.[200] Although these people are often not treated fairly when they have work visas, they are treated worse without them. The only means to legally remain in Israel are to convert or marry an Israeli. Ruth falls into this category of undocumented migrant who lives among the Israelites,

[197] Korpel, *The Structure*, 215, writes that Obed was born to work his grandfather's field. This can be read through the lens and is thus tied to the reproduction of labor power.

[198] Korpel, *The Structure*, 215.

[199] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 8.

[200] Brenner, "Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy," 158–62; Brenner, "From Ruth to the 'Global Woman': Social and Legal Aspects," 162–68.

and so do those who do not appear in Ezra-Nehemiah's genealogy. These people are given some freedoms, but only limited freedoms.

Reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, I find ties between *Ruth*, Black people, and the current status of migrants, although, as Norton notes, Ruth is able to "articulate and superficially transcend her social, political status" in a way that "is not available to diasporic black women."[201] Each of these categories demonstrates the limits of the systems of the hegemonic powers that control and derive from the economic systems in which they live. Like the people of the land whom the Assyrians forcibly migrated, the transatlantic slave trade was a forced migration that separated people from their cultures, families, land, and other connections related to group- and self-identification. Many of these enslaved people and their descendants assimilated into the US systems, including worshipping the god of the Europeans. In this way, they are connected both to the people of the land and to Ruth, both of whom sought some form of integration into the local way of life, although their attempts were ultimately rejected. However, although none of these groups of migrants, in the ancient and modern worlds, can fully assimilate into the communities in which they live, they are incorporated into the economic systems.

Africans were initially brought to the western hemisphere as a means of ensuring labor power, working alongside indigenous peoples and indentured laborers. Laws against intermarriage among these groups quickly arose as a means of separating these groups into manageable units as a means of controlling how workers reproduced and the growing solidarity amongst each other.[202] These divisions then led to the development of racial capitalism and

[201] Norton, "Silenced Struggles," 266.

[202] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 24-5.

chattel slavery, including laws limiting the rights of Black people, both enslaved and not. One of the systems that functioned in both ideological and repressive apparatuses is that of documentation, specifically the requirement that free Black people carry their papers with them at all times in order to prove that they were free. After the Civil War, these papers were replaced with Black Codes, particularly those against vagrancy and the existence of convict leasing.[203] This requirement has become one of the chief systems of state repression, particularly, but not exclusively, for minoritized peoples and immigrants.

This emphasis on documentation, the obligation to prove that one has the legal right to exist freely in a given country, to buy, sell, and travel, ties the long history of slavery to the modern crisis of borders, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security using force to revoke visas and the status of permanent legal residents without due process.[204] I turn to this topic because, through my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, I seek out wholeness and freedom for all people. The image of the Black woman has historically been that of the Other, against the white male, and this image is used as a symbol to manufacture consent for the repression of poor white people, activists, and others who stand in solidarity with the oppressed, or might do so. In the same way, the border is a site where the socio-spatial boundaries of identity might be breached, and immigrants are the Other against which the citizen is defined. The project of freedom requires that one fight the powers of unfreedom wherever they occur, and the oppression of Black people and immigrants are historically linked together as the non-white, non-citizen. In particular, I think of the 14th

[203] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 28.

[204] Rafael Bernal, "Donald Trump to Target Legal Immigration, Denaturalization in Second Term," *The Hill*, November 22, 2024, https://thehill.com/latino/5002972-trump-immigration-crackdown-denaturalization-naturalized-citizens-green-cards-visas/.

amendment to the US Constitution, which gave citizenship to all people born on US-American soil with the intent to make all enslaved people citizens, which is the US government is now seeking to re-interpret to ensure that the children of undocumented migrants cannot become citizens.[205] This reinterpretation could retroactively remove citizenship from most Black citizens in the United States if taken moderately further.

In order to maintain the current economic system, citizenship takes its place as more valuable than humanness, because it is a means of controlling the social reproduction of labor, with the majority of the working class and underclass kept in the Global South. The oath of citizenship echoes Ruth's oath in 1:16-17, and its failure to assimilate Ruth, which Tong says, "exposes the domination-subordination relationship between the hegemon and the immigrant."[206] Femininity, submission, and the devaluation of labor, are all tied together, as Bohrer notes that intersectional understandings of class,

> …Ground conversations about gender in ways that…extended beyond the realm of work, whether paid or unpaid, to question the construction of femininity as a concept, as a social narrative, as a set of coercive expectations, and as a naturalized position.[207]

This system also ties itself to virtue, with those in the imperial center, the United States or Persia, as the virtuous, and those in the periphery as wild and untamed. Ruth must show her חֶסֶד, but to the benefit of the people of Beth-Lehem and their culture, rather than to herself and her own people. The necessity of the oath, of the socio-legal fiction of documentation, and acts of loyalty

[205] Amy Howe, "Supreme Court Does Not Act on Trump's Attempt to End Birthright Citizenship – for Now," *SCOTUSblog*, 24 November 2025, https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/11/supreme-court-does-not-act-on-trumps-attempt-to-end-birthright-citizenship-for-now/.

[206] Tong, The Key to Successful Migration?", 35.

[207] Ashley J Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism*, Edition Moderne Postmoderne (Bielefeld, Germany: transcript publishing, 2019), 133.

belie, "anxiety in the process of suppressing the voices of the colonized."[208] In the early late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the requirement for documentation expanded to all people in the form of birth certificates, social security numbers, driver's licenses, passports, visas, green cards, and ankle monitors, among other forms of state control. The requirement that migrants keep their documents with them at all times is the same racial-nationalist system that is rooted in the racial capitalism that was developed under the reservation system, slavery, and Jim Crow, among other race-based systems of categorization and exclusion.[209]

Documentation, and the State's decision to accept that documentation (an increasingly unlikely prospect), has become the new system of state repression. And like the freedom papers held by Black people, that documentation can always be destroyed or ignored in favor of the State's need for labor power. This power has been expanded during the "War on Drugs," which overwhelmingly affected Black and Latino/a people, with (primarily) men becoming enslaved through the prison system, and women and children having to survive with one less person than is the accepted norm.[210] This "War" also provided the rhetoric needed to excuse US intervention in the Global South, and therefore the destruction of those economies.[211] In this way, production and reproduction of the neoliberal, racial, capitalist, imperial order, has been increasingly shifted to the periphery.

This labor occurs largely in the Global South, although it also occurs in prisons and farms within the imperial center in places, performed by migrants and imprisoned people who fall

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[208] Tong, The Key to Successful Migration?", 38.

[209] Harsha Walia, *Border & Rule: GLobal Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 19-37. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is a part of the same system. Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 190-200.

[210] Walia, *Border & Rule*, 40-45.

[211] Walia, *Border & Rule*, 45-53.

outside the protected status of citizens.[212] As in the pre-US Civil War system, documentation and origin, or lack thereof, defines one's status within the global hegemonic order, but this system has expanded to encompass the world. As documentation-maintained slavery in the US, this system is the means by which the MP ensures its labor power. Restricting the movements of a vast number of people keeps them in the underclass, and therefore as workers, giving birth to more workers, maintaining the reproduction of labor power by keeping them in the periphery. By limiting access to the imperial center to a few people who are willing to join and reproduce the hegemonic apparatuses of control, the upper class and otherwise privileged members of society (typically white and male) maintain a system wherein the lower classes seek inclusion within that system, rather than its transformation. Those who escape from the periphery to the center reinforce the identity of those in the center through the idea that only a few from the periphery can "make it."[213]

In the US-American context, Obed would be called an anchor baby. The only reason Ruth is allowed to join the greater Beth-Lehem community is that she can produce an heir to maintain Elimelech's ancestral claim to the land. She remains on the periphery of acceptable society. Both the male and female blessings are focused on her ability to reproduce, to create another generation to maintain the MP. As Honig argues, "Ruth, the Moabite, has been recuperated by her readers for a kind of nationalist narrative that Ruth's story does not only nor unambivalently support."[214] Ruth remains because she is necessary to maintain the subsistence-

[212] Laffey and Leonard-Fleckman, *Ruth*, 10, also make this connection.

[213] Lau, "Another," 24.

[214] Honig, "Ruth, the Model Emigrée," 51.

survival economy in which the returnees and the characters in her own story lived. Yet, by including Ruth in this limited fashion, the text also subverts the Persian extractive regime.[215]

As I discussed in my previous chapter, the extractive MP, which is the GMP, required guardrails to maintain the Persian administrative apparatus and birth narratives that deracinate migrants to control the land as the dominant class sees fit. *Ruth* and Genesis 38 challenge those previous narratives by breaching the narratives. These breaches are necessary for maintaining the upper class's claim on virtue and its hierarchies, in a similar manner to the claims to colorblindness in modern legal systems.[216] Yet, like in Ruth's story, Black and brown women, including immigrants, are largely unable to change their class status without an upper-class person bringing them up for their own benefit. Allowing limited crossing of these borders takes on the danger of the underclass developing solidarity that the politico-legal apparatus disrupts, but even now, the repressive and ideological state apparatuses do not have the capacity to enforce such their borders at all times. Instead, there are cases like Ruth, wherein an immigrant marries rich, providing hope for others that keeps people working to increase their limited freedoms, leading to their "disappearance from the active stage."[217]

Seeking Utopia

Although the stories of Bath-Sheba, Tamar, and Ruth involve the limited inclusion of women outside the kinship group, their stories also signify that survival exists only through inclusion. Drawing on my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, they do so through the breach in socio-

[215] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 151.

[216] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 13.

[217] Brenner, "Ruth," 308.

cultural boundaries, presenting the entire Judahite lineage, and the Davidic monarchy in particular, as one of mutual reliance, which Thambyrajah argues is the main purpose of *Ruth*.[218] These stories represent alternatives to the ethnic separation of Ezra-Nehemiah by inserting foreign, or ethnically ambiguous, women into the monarchical system itself, in much the same way that minoritized communities have always created alternative ways of life and survival in the face of oppression. Ruth and Tamar's stories both present alternatives to Abraham and Sarah's treatment of Hagar. The pair exile Hagar and Ishmael from the בֵּית אַב as a means of ensuring that Isaac alone receives the נַחֲלָה. Naomi sends Orpah and Ruth back to their בֵּית עֵמּוֹת (Ruth 4:8) and Judah sends Tamar back to her בֵּית־אַב (Gen 38:11). However, Judah acknowledges that his action was a mistake (38:26) and Naomi can only reintegrate back into the community when Ruth provides a son for her. Judah's lineage proceeds through two בֵּית עֵמּוֹת, that of Bath-Shua and that of Tamar. Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 both present a genealogy that focuses on the lineages of Judah and Benjamin, and the former simply would not exist without exogamy. In addition, heroes within Judahite lineage come from families who "transgress normal ethics, laws, and customs."[219] The Davidic monarchy would not exist without Ruth or Bath-Sheba. Yet, these three women, Tamar, Ruth, and Bath-Sheba, must all trick powerful men in order to establish themselves and their descendants.[220]

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[218] Thambyrajah, "Israelite or Moabite?", 63.

[219] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 34, also goes on to say that these people born from such transgressions "are the very ones the original audiences would have regarded as sacred."

[220] Both Tamar and Ruth must trick the kinsperson who should have fulfilled their duty, Judah and Boaz, through the use of their bodies and sexuality, but each man acknowledges his duty to them afterwards. Hagar, on the other hand, is forced into this position as an enslaved woman. Ruth shares many of the same appellations as Hagar, שִׁפְחָה (Gen 16:5; Ruth 2:13), אָמָה (Gen 21:10; Ruth 3:9), and אִשָּׁה (Gen 16:3; Ruth 4:13). However, because Ruth remains a free woman, and because she has access to land, she is brought into the community, albeit in a limited manner. This difference, I argue, is due to the story's emphasis on survival, both of individuals (the two widows) and the patrilineage, rather than disputing claims of primogeniture. Both Ruth and Tamar's stories gesture toward mutual inclusivity, and *Ruth* itself gives more credence to the claims of the people of the land, signified by Boaz, than Ezra-Nehemiah. This difference is furthered through the *Geburtserzählung*.

This last point, that the women must trick the men, signals the failure of this utopic dream, and connects to the limited inclusivity of modern nation-states. The United States, and many other industrialized nations, relies on migrant labor for the survival of its agricultural sector, and therefore the survival of all citizens. For the citizens of the United States, the relationship to these migrants is a constant struggle between acceptance (borne by necessity) and hatred (borne by fear). As I write this chapter, the United States is purging migrants, permanent legal residents, and child citizens born to migrants.[221] Like Ruth, many of these people attempt to assimilate in some form, either by becoming permanent residents, becoming citizens, or simply working and living with their fellow people. However, as demonstrated by *Ruth*, which presents חֶסֶד and following the "moral logic underlying the law" as a means of crossing the border between periphery and center, by the US government's actions, especially but not exclusively under the current Trump regime, this acceptance was always mere moments from being withdrawn.[222]

In addition, for Schweitzer, the exile "serves as the spatial-temporal line of demarcation" between the dystopian Davidic monarchy and the possibility of a newly established political system, also Davidic, that is a "*better alternative reality*."[223] Following my womanist-accomplice approach, I turn to Renita Weems's reading of *Ruth* to find another utopic vision: mutual aid and care for one another.[224] Weems reads Ruth's oath as an attachment to the person of Naomi, rather

[221] Ashley Wu and Albert Sun, "How Trump Has Targeted New Groups for Deportation," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2025, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/05/21/us/trump-immigration-policy.html.

[222] Lau, "Another Postcolonial Reading," 32.

[223] Steven J. Schweitzer, "Exile, Empire, and Prophecy: Reframing Utopian Concerns in Chronicles," in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 620 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 88-9.

[224] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 23-38; also see Meyers, "Women of the Neighborhood," 110-129, esp. "The ground work for inter-family and inter-village mutual aid was laid by the marital ties of the Israelite villagers and/or

than to the dead men or the socio-legal components of the *levir* and גֹּאֵל systems.[225] Instead, the first commandment of friendship is "to be a sister to a friend even when she is neither in a position nor disposition to reciprocate the sisterhood."[226] Ruth performs this role despite Naomi's inability to return the role. Naomi then survives long enough to ensure safety for Ruth and for herself through Boaz. Naomi initial statement to her two daughters-in-law are that she would be incapable of producing children *for them*, and thus sends them away. In this way, she seeks their best futures as well. Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz's actions seem to follow Enrique Dussel's *Ethics of Liberation*, in that each develops a co-responsibility with one another. For Dussel,

> We find the victims constituting themselves as a community, a formal intersubjective antihegemonic discourse, which critically *negates* and interpellates the victims themselves as part of their own process of acquiring a *critical consciousness*, and who direct themselves initially…to the other victims who have not yet acquired consciousness (an originary intersubjective interpellation that generates solidarity) and…which is then secondarily directed to those capable of acting upon and expressing solidarity.[227]

In this instance, all characters are victims of the Persian hegemony, but Naomi and Ruth are victims in a greater number of ways as lower or under-class, widowed migrants. Ruth is the first person to acquire a critical consciousness, who, by swearing her oath to Naomi, rejects the boundaries that divide the Moabites from the people of Judah, the division between the remainees, the returnees, and the hangers-on without a home or a familial connection.[228] She

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by the fictional ties created by genealogical constructions of lineages. The actual mechanisms for carrying out the socio-economic functions of allied groups were likely to have been women's networks" (117).

[225] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 28.

[226] Weems, *Just a Sister Away*, 30.

[227] Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, ed. Alejandro A. Vallega, trans. Eduardo Mendieta et al., Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 213.

[228] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 46.

then turns to keeping Naomi alive long enough for the older woman to come to her own critical consciousness. Although we were in very different circumstances, my sister was the first to come to critical consciousness, although she did not have the language to describe it. However, I was able to gain a critical consciousness by paying attention to the world around me and how other people are forced to function differently. This moment of gaining critical consciousness and responding in solidarity, a willingness to face punishment and continue fighting for the other person's right to exist as a person, is at the heart of my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic.

Unlike these two women, Boaz is a member of the system and benefits from it. However, when Ruth disobeys Naomi's advice, advice that works within the system, and asks Boaz to "cover" her (Ruth 4:9), she pushes Boaz to include her in the limited ways the community allows. It is not Boaz who replaces Ruth with Naomi, but the women of the town. Following Dussel,

> When someone 'in the system' is moved by the victims explicit interpellation and accepts…another moment of the pre-discursive 'ethical-preoriginary' reason' is accomplished," and "the dignity of the Other as ethical subject is recognized and his or her almost unintelligible word is 'taken as true.'[229]

Together, Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth then transform the נַחֲלָה system, including the social and geographical boundaries. As Sakenfeld has argued, Ruth is a counterpoint to Judges, in that it demonstrates that there was good without a king, it moves from the tribal to familial level, and "from warfare to constructive and peaceful individual action."[230] Many scholars have noted that the scene at the gate, when Boaz tricks the closer kinsman into letting Boaz acquire the land and Ruth, makes no sense according to the laws provided in the Torah.

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[229] Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 303.

[230] Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 18.

However, when read alongside Dussel's *Ethics*, the obfuscation and conflation of laws make more sense as a method of shifting the system to incorporate the victims of exile, of poverty, of death, and many other forms. As Dussel says, "The transforming action…judges and modifies the formal system from the life and re-sponsible discursiveness of any human subject, and, as the ultimate reference, of the victims."[231] Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz's actions transform the whole community, moving the men and women of the town to bless the union and all their descendants, accepting "the Moabite woman" and all her children. Although the text provides a caveat by giving the child to Naomi in the end, the undercurrent of inclusion remains.[232]

Womanist interpretation, ethics, and theology beings with this starting point, the belief that by beginning with the victims, one can change the system to bring liberation to all. Dussel's *Ethics* follows the same model, arguing that, "The future utopia is the 'possible' *development* of the life of every single subject in the community…The subjects in question are primarily the victims, but also, *in the long run*, the oppressor."[233] This utopic vision involves the dissolution of boundaries as a means of controlling people, but not the acknowledgment of difference, which is crucial to the utopic visions of womanists and many others who seek liberation.

[231] Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 395.

[232] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 109, says, "The entire story of Ruth depends on an all-inclusive interpretation of the Torah."

[233] Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 341.

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CHAPTER 4: WHAT IF THE FATHERS ARE ALSO THE PROBLEM?

Joseph and Moses are both characters who are deeply connected to Egypt and symbolic of Israel's relationship with the superpower. Unlike Hagar in the second chapter, these stories are not about an Egyptian living amongst the Israelites and the subsequent Egyptian influence, but about Israelites living in Egypt, representative of exile and diaspora experiences broadly, and specifically of the Babylonian exile.[1] Through my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, I read these men as representing two different perspectives on this topic: Joseph eventually prospers within and ultimately controls the Egyptian governmental apparatus and economy, leading to the subjugation of all Egypt (except the priests) and Joseph's family's immigration into the mythical land of Goshen (Gen 47:27);[2] Moses leads the descendants of Israel out of Egypt, rupturing its economy and leaving a vast number of dead children and armies in his wake (Exod 12:29).[3] Both figures save their people and demonstrate the dual nature of the specter of Egypt as both savior and dominator, but within their duality demonstrate competing ideological responses to Egypt's influence: assimilation or separation. For me, these two perspectives also represent the response that my sister and I have struggled with as we both came to terms with as we developed a critical consciousness. We ultimately went separate ways, partially due to our positionality vis-à-vis our

[1] Andreas Kunz, "Ägypten in der Perspektive Israels am Beispiel der Josephsgeschichte (Gen 37–50)," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 47.2 (2003): 228.

[2] F.V. Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 361 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 39-40, reads Goshen as an ideological concept meant to maintain a separate identity. There is no land of Goshen attested outside the biblical text.

[3] Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation Versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 2, says, "The Torah portrays Joseph and Moses as opposites so as to reveal the fateful choices that exist concerning what form of rule and what type of relationships with foreign peoples are to guide Jewish life."

age, relationship to our family, and within society. That is, she has largely chosen to assimilate into the white conservative world, except when explicit racism and sexism is directed against her, and so refuses to find solidarity with migrants, poor people and others who are oppressed by these systems. I am trying to dismantle those structures (albeit also within a system structured by and for white male dominance).

What ties these Joseph and Moses together, besides leading their people into and out of Egypt, is that both men are born Hebrews/Israelites and *become* Egyptian, which allows them to save their people.[4] Although this duality allows them to travel in both worlds, they, like my sister, are accepted in neither, which I will demonstrate in my analysis of their stories and the stories of their children. The ideological conflict does not appear in their persons and actions as much as it does in how the narrators circumvent their Egyptian-ness and the non-Israelite influence of their wives and children.

As I argued in the chapter on the matriarchs, women typically name their children and incorporate those children into the community through that act of naming.[5] In exogamous unions, the father will name the male child to ensure that the child is brought into his community, rather than the mother's, which functions to delineate who has the usufruct rights to the land, who receives an inheritance, and who counts as a member of the community. For example, Abraham had to expel Hagar and Ishmael from his household to ensure that Ishmael, as

[4] For Joseph, see Safwat Marzouk, "Forced Migration and Reconciliation in the Joseph Narrative," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 95. For Moses, see Federico Alfredo Roth, *Hyphenating Moses: A Postcolonial Exegesis of Identity in Exodus 1:1-3:15*, vol. 154 of *Biblical Interpretation Series* (Boston: BRILL, 2017).

[5] For more on the function of naming, see Rainer Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter," *Wort Und Dienst* 19 (1987): 25–35; and Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 64.3 (2014): 389–400. For information on mother's role in ethnic and familial relations, see Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

the firstborn and paternally named son, did not receive the inheritance that was supposed to go to Isaac. This story, I argued, also reflected the conflict between those who returned from exile and those who both remained in the land or fled to Egypt. The expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael was also an expulsion of Egyptian influence and an assertion that the *golah* community were the true heirs to the land. The Joseph and Moses stories reflect more nuanced responses by asking, "What if the fathers have multi-cultural, multi-ethnic identities?"

Unlike the other chapters in this dissertation, these men are the weak link in the patrilineage of their children. Even though they perform the naming rite, their Egyptian identity provides enough confusion that the implied author must establish a surer lineage through adoption by a grandfather or separation, with the latter echoed in the actions of Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13. In Joseph's story, before he can have children, Pharaoh renames him, calling him Tsaphenath-Paneah, and gives him Asenath, the daughter of the Egyptian priest of On, which is the process by which Pharaoh incorporated the Hebrew slave into the Egyptian hierarchy (Gen 41:45). This act, along with new raiment and other signifiers of status, imbues Joseph with enough Egyptian identity to provide him with significant power within the region. However, he remains in a liminal space, dining with neither Egyptians nor Hebrews in 43:32. Therefore, when Joseph names both of his sons, neither parent is of the correct kinship group and Jacob must adopt them (48:5) to ensure their position within his household. In this adoption, Ephraim and Manasseh replace the now bi-cultural/ethnic Joseph as the firstborn son(s) of Rachel (in 48:22, Jacob says Joseph receives a double portion, divided between the two sons), with Ephraim as the primary heir between them (48:14-20).[6]

[6] Alan T. Levenson, *Joseph: Portraits through the Ages* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 103-5, argues that Esther and Daniel are "fairly blatant" allusions to the Joseph story (103). However, I disagree because, although both stories depict minoritized people rising to high levels within the royal governmental apparatus, that is where the similarities stop. They are "meditations on the difficulties of Jewish diaspora existence"

Moses, whom Karen Winslow and Susan Ackerman have argued is a reversal of the Joseph narrative,[7] never receives a second name—three months after his birth, his mother sets him adrift on the Nile, watched by his sister, until the pharaoh's daughter, whom Gafney names Sheshan,[8] finds him and names him (Exod 2:1-10). Sheshan pays Jochebed, Moses' biological mother, to breastfeed him and raise him for an unspecified amount of time (2:9-10). As a child raised in two households, two cultural-ethnic groups, and among people of two disparate classes, with an Egyptian theophoric name that is only grammatically correct in Hebrew,[9] Moses straddles the two peoples and, until he flees, seems to struggle with his multiple identities. After killing an Egyptian and being rejected by a Hebrew man, Moses flees to Midian, where he marries Zipporah and seemingly joins the Midianite clan (Exod 2:11-21). When Zipporah gives birth to Gershom, Moses names him (2:22), but apparently does not perform the rite of

(104), and so they have similarities rather than allusions. Daniel also contains a story of renaming (Daniel 1:6-7); however, I will not discuss Daniel and his comrades in this dissertation because he does not have children or spouses. I will briefly note that, unlike the two stories in this chapter, Daniel and his colleagues do not assimilate, a key point throughout their story. Thomas Römer, "How 'Persian' or 'Hellenistic' Is the Joseph Narrative?," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 43; and Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 285, also connect Joseph and Daniel, with Römer connecting Esther as well.

[7] Karen Strand Winslow, *Early Jewish and Christian Memories of Moses' Wives: Exogamist Marriage and Ethnic Identity*, vol. 66 of *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 5; and Susan Ackerman, "Why Is Miriam Also among the Prophets? (And Is Zipporah among the Priests?)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121.1 (2002): 70.

[8] Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 99.

[9] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 62; Judy Fentress-Williams, "Exodus," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page, Jr. et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 83; Randall C. Bailey, "'Is That Any Name for a Nice Hebrew Boy?' Exodus 2:1-10: The De-Africanization of an Israelite Hero," in *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, ed. Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 31; J. Cheryl Exum, "'You Shall Let Every Daughter Live': A Study of Exodus 1.8-2.10," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible 6 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 56-59; Jorge Pixley, "Liberation Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Methods in Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 154; Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44; Roth, *Hyphenating*, 110-2; and Mary Jerome Obiorah and Nneka Okafor, "Moses' Mother in Exodus 2:1-10 and Mothers in Personal Names Among the Igbo People, South-East Nigeria," *Acta Theologica* 40.1 (2020): 83–101.

circumcision on him, as Zipporah does so in 4:24-26. I will argue that Zipporah's act of circumcision seals Gershom's identity as Midianite, superseding Moses' claim on him through naming.

There are many explanations for this discrepancy, most of which rely on Moses' liminal identity and integration within the Midianite clan he joined.[10] However, what I find most notable is that after Gershom's circumcision, Zipporah and her children exit the story until Exodus 18, when Jethro brings them back to Moses, who had sent them away off-screen. Yet even this act seemingly fails because Zipporah, a Midianite, is replaced by a Cushite woman in Num 12.[11] Moses cannot cross the borders that he sets up, and, later, will be used to maintain socio-spatial borders. The language in Exodus 18:2-4 is reminiscent of the expulsion of foreign women in Neh 13:23-26 and Ezra 10—although the verbiage is different (שׁלח in Exodus; יצא in Ezra-Nehemiah), both send their women and children away. Unlike Joseph, who is ultimately buried in Shechem (Josh 23:32), Moses is buried outside the land, in Moab (Deut 34:5-6) and none of his descendants are mentioned again. Moses, then, is cut off from the land and from the people, and he and his descendants have no place in Israel.

[10] See Ursula Rapp, "Zipporah: The Vanishing of a Wife," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., vol. 1 of *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 313–28; Thomas Römer, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17) as an Identity Marker of Nascent Judaism," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott et al. (Sheffield: equinox, 2022), 10–26; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 95-6; Athena E. Gorospe, *Narrative and Identity: An Ethical Reading of Exodus 4*, vol. 86 of *Biblical Interpretation Series* (Boston: BRILL, 2007), 179-182, 201-224; Fred Blumenthal, "The Circumcision Performed by Zipporah," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35.4 (2007): 255–59; Cleusa Caldeira, "African Priestesses in the Biblical World. Decolonial Reading of Exodus 4: 24-26," *Estudos Feministas* 28.3 (2020); and Christopher B. Hays, "'Lest Ye Perish in the Way': Ritual and Kinship in Exodus 4:24-26," *Hebrew Studies* 48 (2007): 39–55; among others.

[11] Rapp, "Zipporah," 315, takes the Cushite woman as Zipporah. John van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 238; and Winslow, *Wives*, 97-112, argue that they are two separate women. Winslow (161-408) further examines the Jewish and Christian traditions around this woman from the Greek period onward, which are varied.

For these reasons, I will spend more time on Joseph and Moses' complicated identities and less time on Asenath and Zipporah as mothers, as well as the other women in the texts, than I do in other chapters in this dissertation. These two stories depict strikingly different responses to the problem that people with multiple identities represent to the returnee community. Both men lose their children, the first through adoption (reincorporation) and the other through separation/divorce. In both cases, the father names the children, fulfilling the role of ethnic claiming at birth; however, due to their own identities as both Hebrew and Egyptian, as men named and claimed by the Egyptian royal family, even that rite is not enough to establish the children's patrilineage.

I will begin this chapter with an analysis of the Joseph's birth in Gen 30:22-24 and the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37 and 39-50, focusing particularly on Joseph's rebirth as Egyptian and the birth of his children (41:45-52) and Jacob's adoption of those children (Gen 48). I will then turn to Moses and Zipporah, beginning with Moses' *Geburtserzählung* and his flight from Egypt, focusing particularly on the role that the many women play in his survival as a child, and how their influences generate multiple identities for him (Exod 2:1-15a). As with the Judahite lineage discussed in the previous chapter, these multiple identities mark Moses (and Joseph) as a future hero. As Sara Mandell argues,

> Under certain conditions, the Israelite as a member of the privileged class is delineated by insider-outsider relationships. It occurs when the insider is a forefather (or foremother) of the Israelites or he is an Israelite in a non-Israelite setting (as Joseph or Moses in Egypt), and the outsider was not of that line or was of a different ethnicity or nationality altogether. And, in all cases, the outsider is of a privileged class.[12]

[12] Sara R. Mandell, "Primary History as a Social Construction of a Privileged Class," in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, ed. Mark R. Sneed (Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1999), 27.

I will then turn to the union of Moses and Zipporah and the birth of their child (Exod 215b-22), Zipporah's act of circumcision (4:24-26), and the final reference to their family unit in Exodus 18. Although I will incorporate the Cushite woman in Numbers 10, the genocide against the Midianites in Numbers 25, and Moses' death in Deuteronomy 34, I will not provide a deeper analysis of those texts. Instead, I will argue that the received narrative ultimately subverts Moses' authority and establishes the priesthood as the leaders of Israel and, therefore, Yehud.

Joseph and His Family

The general consensus among scholars is that the Joseph narrative reflects a northern tradition, represented especially by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.[13] Furthermore, the Tamar narrative in Gen 38, which I discussed in the third chapter, divides the Joseph story between his being sold to Egypt and the story of his rise to power, which acts as a Judahite interpolation that serves the Davidic monarchy (and Yehudim ideology) to counteract the narrative of Judah selling Joseph into slavery, as well as asserting Perez (and therefore the Judah and the Davidic line) as the messiah, with Joseph as the antihero, "demonstrating for all to see the path the Hebrew people ought to take," which is not to flee to Egypt.[14] This conflict is echoed in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2, which I previously discussed asserts that the birthright went to Joseph, though

[13] For an overview of these perspectives, see Levenson, *Joseph*, xx. See also Römer, "Joseph Narrative," 41. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, vol. I of *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 285-378, divides the story along the J, E, and P sources, with various interpolations. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Revised., vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 348, also argues that the story is a mixture of J and E source texts with some P emendations. Strangely, the rest of the Hebrew Bible is mostly unaware of the Joseph narrative, although they retain the sojourn in Egypt, and, when there is a person named, it is usually Jacob (Deut 26:5, Num 20:15, 1 Sam 12:8, and Ezek 20:5), which Thomas Römer argues, "means that the priestly texts of the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus (37:1; 46:6-7; 47:27b-29; 49:1a, 28b-33; 50:12-13; Exod 1:1-5a, 7, 13) do not show an awareness of a Joseph narrative," Römer, "Joseph Narrative," 43.

[14] Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 32. Yairah Amit, "The Joseph Story: Between a Family and a Polemical Story," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott et al. (Sheffield: equinox, 2022), 71-2, argues that the interpolation of Genesis 38 is intended to give Judah an ideological advantage over Joseph. See also Raymond De Hoop, "'Then Israel Bowed Himself…' (Genesis 47.31)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28.4 (2004): 477.

Judah becomes the ruler.[15] Here, then, I return to the argument I made in the second chapter of this dissertation, that, even if the story did not originate in post-exilic Yehud, it should be read as a collected text in light of the conflicts that arose between the returnee communities, the remainee community, and the influence of Egypt, Egyptian Yehudim, Persia, and the *golah* community that remained behind.[16]

Joseph's Life

Joseph's story begins with the rest of his brothers, besides Benjamin, at his birth in Genesis 30:22-24, but he is only a side character until he takes over the narrative completely in Genesis 37 and 39-50. The *Geburtserzählung* itself is almost perfectly in line with the rest of Joseph's brothers but is closest to Reuben's birth (29:31-32) because both are the firstborn sons of their mothers.[17] As the firstborn sons of Rachel and Leah, respectively, they are also the womb-openers, which created a special bond between the child and their mother and required a sacrifice or other form of redemption to establish paternity and "the inauguration of a uterine family."[18] While Reuben had multiple uterine siblings (Levi in 29:34, Judah in 29:35, Issachar in 30:17-18,

[15] Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 32.

[16] See Bernd-Jørg Diebner, "Le Roman de Joseph, Ou Israël Égypte: Un Midrash Post-Exilique de La Tora," in *Le Livre de Traverse: De l'exégèse Biblique à l'anthropologie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 55–71. Camille Guerin, "The Joseph Story from an Egyptological Perspective," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 136, reads this text as originating in the Jewish Diaspora during the Persian period, edited through the Ptolemaic period to extend the Jacob cycle into the Exodus narrative. Furthermore, she argues, "The Joseph story seems to have been adapted to the actual political and cultural conditions that characterized life in the Jewish Diaspora during that time. For example, in using Egyptian-sounding names, the text's author wanted to give the story a strong Egyptian coloring. As a result, Jews in the Diaspora must have identified with the figure of Joseph, since they too were surrounded by people bearing Egyptian names."

[17] One notable difference is that Joseph's name has two explanations, the first in Gen 30:23, "God has withdrawn [אָסַף] my disgrace" (E source), and the second in v. 24: "May THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES add [יֹסֵף] another son for me" (J source). See Speiser, *Genesis*, 231-233 for more analysis.

[18] Chapman, *House*, 124, 159.

Zebulun in 30:19-20, and Dinah in 30:21); Joseph had only Ben-Oni/Benjamin, whose birth led to Rachel's death and was born much later and in a different land (35:16-19). However, as the firstborn son of Jacob's favorite wife, he received special treatment, which led to his brothers' hatred of him (37:3-4). This elevation of Joseph and hatred amongst his brothers begins his story.[19]

Joseph repeatedly acted in ways that angered his brothers as well, including giving a negative report of their behavior as shepherds (37:2) and telling them his dreams in which he was superior to them (37:5-11). One day, when Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers, they attack him and throw him in a pit (37:12-24).[20] When some Ishmaelites pass by, Judah convinces his brothers to sell him, and the Ishmaelites take him to Egypt as a slave (37:25-28).[21] They lie to Jacob about Joseph's demise, while Joseph ends up as the slave of Potiphar, the captain of the Pharoh's guard (37:29-36). Here, the narrative is broken by the story of Tamar (Gen 38), which I discussed in the preceding chapter.[22] Joseph's story re-emerges in Genesis 39, restating that Joseph was in Egypt and that the Ishmaelites had sold him to Potiphar (39:1). Joseph prospers in this arrangement, rising through the ranks to oversee everything Potiphar owned (39:3-6a). However, everything crashes down around Joseph as Potiphar's woman tries to have sex with Joseph, and, upon his refusal, accuses him of attempted rape, which ends with Joseph in prison

[19] According to Robert A Harris, "Sexual Orientation in the Presentation of Joseph's Character in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature," *AJS Review* 43.1 (2019): 67-104, Joseph is also a queer character, frequently treated and described in ways similar to women. For a deeper analysis, see the dissertation of my colleague, Erin Beall.

[20] For Amit, "Joseph," 69-92, this whole story is a fight about who has the right of the firstborn son between Reuben, Judah, and Joseph.

[21] There is also a brief mention of Midianites in this passage. For Seth D. Kunin, "The Bridegroom of Blood: A Structuralist Analysis," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21.70 (1996): 13, the use of Midian here is a connection to Moses, and how Moses reverses the Joseph story, led out of Egypt by Midianites.

[22] For connections between Tamar and Zipporah, see Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 32-46.

(39:6b-20). However, even here, Joseph prospers and, essentially, becomes the prison warden (39:21-23).

While serving in this position, both enslaved and imprisoned, Joseph interprets the dreams of two former servants of the pharaoh (Gen 40). The surviving member of the pair, returned to Pharaoh's court and, upon hearing that nobody could (or, perhaps, would) interpret Pharaoh's dreams, suggests Joseph as a viable alternative (41:1-13). After Joseph interprets the dreams, a warning from Joseph's deity about a future famine, he also provides advice on how to respond to those dreams (41:25-36). In response, Pharaoh appoints Joseph over his house and all his people, second only to the pharaoh himself (41:39-41). As signs of this new arrangement, Pharaoh places his signet ring on Joseph's hand, dresses him in fine clothing, puts a gold chain on his neck, and gives him a chariot (41:42-43).[23] Finally, Pharaoh re-names Joseph and gives him Asenath, the daughter of the priest of On (41:45).

These last two points are where I will focus my discussion of Joseph becoming Egyptian. First, the act of giving the royal signet ring to a vizier, as well as the other raiment of royalty, to the vizier was common in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures.[24] Notably, this link is not made to Egypt establishing viziers, but specifically of Ashurbanipal investing Necho I as an Assyrian vassal in Ashurbanipal Prism C and A, from the seventh century B.C.E.[25] These two sources have both Egyptian and Assyrian elements, similar to what Cyrus would do a century

[23] According to Roland Boer and Christina Petterson, "Economic Relationships Found in the Worlds of the Bible," in *Economics and Empire in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Matthew J.M. Coomber, vol. 1 of *Guide to the Bible and Economics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023), 79, "While the various metaphorical items in the story—golden cups, foreign places, hostages, and then enslavement—indicate the convoluted strategies used to co-opt labor for the estates, they also indicate the constituent resistance of village communities to co-option."

[24] Sarna, *Genesis*, 286; Speiser, *Genesis*, 316-7; von Rad, *Genesis*, 377; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 95.

[25] Bernd Ulrich Schipper, "Gen 41:42 and the Egyptian Background to the Investiture of Joseph," *Revue Biblique* 118.3 (2011): 333.

later in the Cyrus Cylinder and Ezra 1. This mixture also matches the Joseph narrative, which similarly mixes Hebrew and Egyptian elements throughout. [26] Cross-cultural appointments of this kind seem to have a formula of some kind in which the two peoples are brought together through the narrative, with the gold chain connected to the Egyptian "gold of honor," or a golden collar, which was given to foreigners awarded a position.[27] However, as Greifenhagen argues, the act of placing a foreigner at such a high position is not historically plausible in Egypt, or any ruling apparatus at this time, but is instead "a finely designed literary construct in which historical accuracy is subordinated to the logic or ideology of the narrative."[28]

The act of renaming Joseph, echoed in the renaming of Daniel and his cohort (Daniel 1:6-7), also asserts a claim of the royal household upon an individual, although Joseph assimilates where Daniel and his friends do not.[29] Joseph's renaming is simple, "Pharaoh called (וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS) the name of Joseph Tsaphenat-Paneah" (Gen 41:45), which follows the majority of the other naming events, except that it is masculine.[30] By naming Joseph, the pharaoh inserts him into the royal genealogy, albeit in a lower position, and, as a slave, Joseph has no choice in this

[26] Levenson, *Joseph*, 99.

[27] Schipper, "Gen 41:42," 336. Schipper (334) also argues that the golden chain is a *hapax legomenon.*. Although Speiser, *Genesis*, 316-7; Sarna, *Genesis*, 286; and von Rad, *Genesis*, 377, all claim that the golden chain was a common symbol in Egyptian culture, according to Westermann*, Genesis*, 95, the golden chain as a symbol of investing power appears in the seventh through second centuries B.C.E., linked it to Assyrian and Mesopotamian traditions rather than Egyptian.

[28] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 6.

[29] Levenson, *Joseph*, 104. Levenson here also includes Esther and Mordecai among the diasporic stories related to Joseph, but her renaming is an act of hiding, represented by her name itself, אֶסְתֵּר (from the root סתר, meaning hidden), rather than a ruler re-naming her; and Mordecai, who is closer to Joseph in narrative beats, is not renamed.

[30] Samuel Arnet, "Aspects of Jewish Identity in the Joseph Story," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 82.

action.[31] By bringing Joseph into his own household, Pharaoh removes him from Jacob's household.[32] This act was necessary in ancient Egypt, because the claim to a position within the governmental apparatus (including the priesthood) derived through genealogical systems grounded in a "moral or legal claim" and also "aims at elevating the reputation of the implicated person."[33] Furthermore, Joseph Egyptianizes himself before seeing Pharaoh by shaving his beard and cutting his hair, marking his willingness to assimilate.[34]

However, following my womanist-accomplice reading, this text also demonstrates the struggle that many Black and brown people have when attempting to integrate into white-dominant systems of power. Black people's hair is especially poignant here, as "proper" (i.e. white) hairstyles has often been required in schools, jobs, and generally in public. These hairstyles often require significant additional maintenance and hair damage to maintain long-term for Black men and women, as well as others who do not have straight hair (myself included). Throughout high school, and up until recently, my sister has kept her hair straight, despite my mother's encouragement to leave it curly. For my sister, maintaining straight hair is an act of taking control of her life, or what little she could, not necessarily to assimilate, but to control the image she wants others to see.

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[31] Irmtraud Fischer, "On the Significance of the 'Women Texts' in the Ancestral Narratives," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., vol. 1 of *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 291. See also, Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 28.

[32] Westermann, *Genesis*, 96, also adds that this act was common in Egypt for Palestinian-Syrian slaves. See also, Iain Provan, *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 213-237. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 379, argues that Joseph becomes fully Egyptian. See also, Wildavskky, *Assimilation*, 82, who argues, "Slavery terminates a family relationship, especially when one is sold into bondage by one's family. Instigator and victim, cause and effect, Joseph has played an integral role in this self-destructive family…Twice sold, Joseph entered as a slave in to the home of Potiphar, the chief steward and adviser of the Pharaoh."

[33] Thomas Hieke, "Genealogy as a Means of Historical Representation in the Torah and the Role of Women in the Genealogical System," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., vol. 1 of *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 155, 156.

[34] Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 119.

By giving Asenath to Joseph, Pharaoh takes the place of Asenath's father or caretaker (cf. Josh 15:17, Judg 1:13, and 1 Kings 11:19), further incorporating the Hebrew into a hybrid Hebrew-Egyptian identity.[35] According to Gafney, her biological father, Potiphera, was "likely a high ranking priest" in the temple of On,[36] and so Joseph is integrated both into the royal household and Egyptian religious systems. Asenath acts as a foil to Hagar; unlike the other Egyptian woman, Asenath's children are incorporated into the covenant, albeit by Jacob adopting them.[37] The union between Joseph and Asenath (esp. her father's position as a priest of a foreign deity), without comment, legitimates exogamous unions.[38] The adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48 points to methods of incorporating children of exogamous unions, similar to that of Ruth 4:16-17.[39]

According to Greifenhagen, the Hebrew Bible primarily uses the Phoenicians (or Canaanites), Philistines, and Babylon, among other, smaller groups, to generate an

[35] Levenson, *Joseph*, 99.

[36] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 71.

[37] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 71; Diebner, "Le Roman," 66.

[38] Amit, "Joseph," 73.

[39] However, Asenath's legitimacy would later become a bigger problem, as rabbinic sources would later argue that she either converted to Judaism or was born the daughter of Dinah and Shechem, the latter falling under the umbrella of later Jewish traditions of matrilineage., see Levenson, *Joseph*, 89; and Edgar Kellenberger, "Asenat: Why Have the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh an Egyptian Ancestress?," *Studia Biblica Slovaca* 10.1 (2018): 7. The notion that Asenath was Dinah's daughter is in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 41:45. For the story of Asenath's conversion, see the pseudepigraphic *Joseph and Aseneth*, and for a deeper analysis of that text in its myriad forms, see Jonathan Stuart Wright, *Joseph and Aseneth After Antiquity: A Study in Manuscript Transmission*, vol. 12 of *Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. John R. Levison (Boston: De Gruyter, 2025). The *Testament of Joseph* 19:3 does not comment on Asenath either way, but does acknowledge her. See also Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 270, for Cohen's examination of both Joseph and Moses. Strangely, in *Jubilees* 40:10, Asenath has no name, but is "the daughter of Potiphar, the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis, the chief cook." *Jubilees* often provides commentary against intermarriage, such as Er's mother, Bath-Shua, pushing him toward wickedness and marriage with Canaanites (*Jubilees* 41:1-2), so this acceptance of Asenath is notable, particularly against depictions of intermarriage with Canaanites. It shows that, as Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 71, writes, "The people of Israel…are a product of a multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual mélange."

Israelite/Judahite identity against those other groups.[40] Within the Torah, Egypt is "the major 'other' over against biblical Israel," and "a very significant component in the process of ethnogenesis."[41] The creation of hybrid identities in the Joseph story, both of Joseph and his two children, provides more nuance to the symbolic relationship with Egypt presented in the text. As Greifenhagen writes,

> The narrative presupposes some sort of distinction between Egyptian and Hebrew, but Egypt itself is thereby not denigrated or made into a place that Israel is to avoid. On the contrary, the superior Hebrew is able to flourish in Egypt, as the account of Joseph's elevation to power in Egypt demonstrates.[42]

This elevation of power allows Joseph to consolidate power for himself, as the ostensible ruler of Egypt, and the pharaoh, by taking over the subsistence-survival economy. Under this mode of production (MP), most households and towns grew enough food to eat and to set aside some for more difficult years.[43] However, the plan that Joseph derives from the dreams and provides the pharaoh takes that power away from the people and gives it to the governing body, which "reflects a world in which wealth rather than survival determines who will work and who will not."[44] He tells the ruler to gather one-fifth of all produce for seven years and store that food for the coming seven years of famine (41:34-36). Ostensibly, if the people had the necessary information to plan, they would store the food themselves. However, by shifting agency from the common people to Pharaoh, the collectors gather so much grain "that he stopped counting it because it was beyond counting" (41:49). Then, when the famine begins to role in, after Asenath

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[40] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 4, 9.

[41] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 9.

[42] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 35.

[43] Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 123.

[44] Mandell, "Primary History," 29, continues, saying, "Only someone who does not know what it is to lead a pastoralist's life would depict Jacob/Israel at home with Joseph and Benjamin while his remaining sons are working.

has given birth twice, Joseph sells the produce back to the Egyptians and their neighbors (41:56-57), to the point that he takes control of all their livestock and fields, and, ultimately, the people themselves, except for the priests, as well as one-fifth of all their future produce (47:13-26). Again, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this economic structure through the lens of sharecropping, payday loans, and the loans that some immigrants have to take out and repay just to work and survive. After some trickery with his brothers, Joseph ensures that his paternal family will *increase* their land holdings and wealth in the land of Goshen (47:6) over and against the Egyptians' loss of land. This transfer of land from the Egyptians to Pharaoh, and later to the Israelites, functions as an ideological tool.

Similarly, in Esther 10:3, another exilic text, Mordecai becomes second to the ruler, Ahashverosh, and uses his position to "seek good for his people and speak up for the welfare of all his descendants." Nehemiah, too, as cupbearer to the king (Neh 1:11), uses his position to acquire land for the *golah* community (2:5-8). Moses, whom I will discuss later in this chapter, is adopted by the pharaoh's daughter (Exod 2:1-10) and uses his position to fight for the Hebrews (2:11), but is rejected, only to return and take them out of Egypt permanently. These stories seem to be pro-assimilation, to a limited extent, on the condition that one retain their cultural practices and ethnic ties to their people, and work to the benefit of their people. In Nehemiah and Exodus, the goal of assimilation is to acquire enough power to go home; but in Joseph's story and Esther, it is to take control of the oppressive government and direct its resources to the benefit of one's own people.[45] That is not to place any moral argument on these ideological commentaries, but, through my womanist-accomplice lens, to say that there are varied responses to oppression and

[45] Kunz, "Ägypten," 209, says, "Gegenüber der Tradition der *mosaischen Unterscheidung* Israels von Ägypten, der Unterscheidung der Peripheriemacht von der Großmacht, der Unterscheidung der Unterdrückten von den Unterdrückern artikuliert sich die *josephinische Annäherung* in der Darstellung Ägyptens als Lebensort Israels, zwar nicht als Heimat, aber doch als Ort der Versorgtheit und der materiellen Sicherung."

assimilation. However, I will say that solidarity with people across gender, ethnic, and class lines leads to better futures, although any individual's survival strategies reflect their own experiences. Jacob saves Joseph's household from total assimilation by adopting Ephraim and Manasseh.

Ephraim and Manasseh

Joseph's two sons are born and named in Genesis 41:50-52, and the description of their birth mixes multiple elements. Genesis 41:50 says, "And to Joseph were born [יֻלַּד, Pual-Perf-3MS] two sons, before the years of the famine came, whom Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera, priest of On, bore [יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS] to him." The first ילד, in pual, also appears in Genesis 4:26, which appears just before ילד-style genealogy of Genesis 5.[46] It also occurs in Ruth 4:17, when the women of the town assert that the child was born to Naomi.[47] With the addition of the second ילד, in Qal, when Asenath gives birth, the inclusion of "to him" creates an *inclusio* with the famine at its center. The centering of the famine marks the drastic situation that Joseph and his family are in, signifying that his actions are borne from necessity, and that the famine will reconnect Joseph with Jacob's house.[48] The language of "to him" and the earlier use of the passive voice is reminiscent of Sarah's conception and birth, which repeatedly assures the reader that the child was born to Abraham (Gen 21:2-3). The narrator is clear to assure the audience that the child belongs to Joseph, not to Asenath, and further cements this connection through the act of

[46] For the different kinds of genealogies and their impact on the narrative, see Kenton L. Sparks, "Genre Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Methods in Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81.

[47] It also appears in Isaiah 9:5 (9:6 in NRSVue), but there is no name associated with that birth.

[48] Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 355 (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 93.

naming, thus legitimating his children, and the children of mixed unions.[49] However, Jacob's adoption of these two children also mark Joseph's failure to legitimate them.[50]

Of the two children, Manasseh's name, מְנַשֶּׁה, is the most scandalous because Joseph says that he has forgotten, נַשַּׁנִי, his father's household, which creates nuance to the relatively positive portrayal of Joseph's life in Egypt: "And Joseph called [וַיִּקְרָא] the name of his firstborn [הַבְּכוֹר] Manasseh, for 'God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household [כָּל־בֵּית אָבִי]" (Gen 41:51).[51] Egypt, then, is a place where one can "forget one's true roots and…assimilate" and "Pharaoh usurps the role of God in granting authority and land."[52] Ron Pirson argues that this forgetfulness is not literal, but an acknowledgment that Joseph does not reach out to his father's house, and that "Joseph expresses the opinion that he has forgotten his labour in his father's house as soon as the land of his affliction has become a land of good fortune."[53] However, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I would argue that something else is happening in this narrative. Pharaoh has replaced Jacob as Joseph's father, and so Joseph is marking his shift from Hebrew to Egyptian.[54] Yet, by naming both Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph also marks himself as separate from Egypt, or at least from Asenath, which maintains his

[49] Kellenberger, "Asenat," 1–11.

[50] This statement draws from Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 72, who says, "Asenath's children count as Israelites in the text because their father is an Israelite," although I am claiming that Joseph's identity is ultimately too liminal and Jacob must adopt Ephraim and Manasseh.

[51] *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:5 and 86:5 draw attention Joseph forgetting his toil, but do not reference him forgetting his father's house.

[52] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 37.

[53] Pirson, *Dreams*, 93. Pirson also adds, "Joseph has indeed retained genuine love for his family, but during his Egyptian years he has suppressed his feelings for his family—as has become manifest in the naming of his firstborn" (111).

[54] Moses, later, will again provide the opposite perspective when he names Gershom (גֵּרְשֹׁם, literally "foreigner there") in Exod 2:22, saying "I have been an alien [גֵּר] in a foreign land." Unlike Joseph, Moses will return to his people to bring them out, rather than calling them to himself. However, Joseph provides land for his people, whereas Moses is replaced by Joshua (Deut 34:9), who completes this task. See Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 67.

position as a liminal figure.[55] That is, "Joseph has now founded his own nuclear family."[56] For my sister, as well as for many multiracial and queer people, this ability to find and establish one's own family is key to one's survival. Yet, MOses never completely establishes himself as a part of, or separate from, either group, as Safwat Marzouk argues,

> As a migrant, Joseph chose to be only an Egyptian. But because of the famine, Joseph's family appeared before him and he has witnessed their transformation. So now Joseph needs to respond the new developments in a way that embraces his hybrid identity as a Hebrew migrant and as an Egyptian official. His ability to reconcile both facets of his identity enables him to embrace his kin as well as his own story as a foreigner.[57]

He is not entirely beholden to Egypt and will benefit his biological family as he can, but he cannot be one of them. I will discuss this separation shortly, when I discuss Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48.

The explanation of Ephraim's name further ties Joseph into Egypt while acknowledging his past: "And the name of the second he called [קָרָא, Qal-Perf-3MS] Ephraim, 'For God has caused me to bear fruit in a land of my oppression" (Gen 41:52). This name moves Joseph into the future and marks his assimilation into Egypt, moving from oppression to fruitfulness, assuaging the ethnic tension that appears in Manasseh's name.[58] Even so, he uses Hebrew roots to name his children, invokes the deity of his forefathers in his explanation of their names, and is never again referred to by his Egyptian name, all of which continue his liminality.[59]

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[55] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 67, argues, "Joseph's adoption of Egyptian cultural norms allows him to operate fluidly within the foreign setting. On the other hand, these features in no way subvert his Hebrew identity. Never does Joseph fully assimilate in a manner that betrays his bicultural qualities."

[56] Sarna, *Genesis*, 289.

[57] Marzouk, "Migration," 95.

[58] Levenson, *Joseph*, 100.

[59] Levenson, *Joseph*, 101; Michael Gabizon, "Mixed Offspring in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Period" (Thesis, McMaster University, 2022), 84.

Jacob's counterclaim over both children takes the entirety of Genesis 48, in that he states his final will and testament for these two children, finishing with the rest of his children in Gen 49. The actual adoption takes place in 48:5, with the proscription of Joseph's other children in 48:6. Jacob says, "And now, your two sons, the ones born [הַנּוֹלָדִים, Niph-Part-MP, note the passive] to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you, to Egypt, they are for me. Ephraim and Menasseh will be like Reuben and Simeon for me" (48:5). This statement is generally accepted to be one of adoption, circumventing both Joseph and Asenath, but especially Asenath, as an unquestionable Egyptian.[60] The language here is similar to that of Code of Hammurabi paragraph 170, in which a father legitimates children born to a slave-concubine, and paragraph 185, with the adoption of a free-born child, as well as other adoption stories from the Old Babylonian period.[61]

Nancy Jay explains the reason for the necessity of this adoption, saying, "Joseph married exogamously but his sons were adopted by Jacob, correcting this, and other, irregularities of their descent. Agnatic endogamy does seem to solve the dilemma of how to maintain unilineal descent from fathers while recognizing descent from mothers," [62] but notes that the conflict over the "real parent" is never reconciled. In addition, the narrator had to explain how Joseph was among the twelve sons of Jacob, but the two tribes from his line are Ephraim and Manasseh.[63]

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[60] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 43; Amit, "Joseph," 77; Diebner, "Le Roman," 65-67; Levenson, *Joseph*, 106, 171-182; Pirson, *Dreams*, 121; Sarna, *Genesis*, 324-27; Speiser, *Genesis*, 359; Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 115; Harris, "Sexual Orientation," 82.

[61] I. Mendelsohn, "A Ugaritic Parallel to the Adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 9.3 (1959): 180–83. Sarna, *Genesis*, 325, also adds that this language is similar to Akkadian documents and says that the adoption involved a declaration of intent, "comprising the careful, unambiguous designation of the persons involved and those excluded (vv. 5-6); the true identity of the boys present is established through interrogation of the father (vv. 8f.); certain physical acts reinforce the oral declaration (vv. 10-12)."

[62] Nancy B. Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 98-99. See also Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 215.

[63] Speiser, *Genesis*, 359. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 72, also adds that Levi doesn't get an inheritance in the form of land as the other tribes do, so the addition of Ephraim and Manasseh among the tribes keeps an even

Jacob also establishes his two new children as firstborn children when he says that they will be "like Reuben and Simeon for me" (48:5). That is, these two sons are brought into the broader conflict between Joseph, Reuben, and Judah concerning who takes on the role of the firstborn.[64] As I discussed in fns. 48 and 49 in the previous chapter, 1 Chronicles 5:1 states that Reuben originally had the rights of the בְּכוֹר, but that he lost them, so the primogeniture [בְּכֹרָתוֹב] was given to the sons of Joseph, son of Israel," and in 5:2, "Judah became great among his brothers, and there came from him a ruler, but the primogeniture [הַבְּכֹרָה] belonged to Joseph." Joseph, here and in Gen 49, represents Ephraim and Manasseh and, therefore, the northern monarchy.[65] However, it is clear that Joseph himself is removed from the line of descent through Genesis 48:6, when Jacob says, "And for your offspring who were born to you after these, they will be for you. They will be, with the name of their brothers, called by their inheritance." That is, Joseph's other sons will be the inheritors of Joseph's newly established household, a liminal household between the Egyptians and the Hebrews.[66] The adoption itself ends with the blessing of Joseph's two sons in 48:14-20, in which Jacob replicates the outcome of his trickery in Genesis 27 and establishes Ephraim as the firstborn.[67]

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twelve. The textual explanation is found in Gen 48:22, "And I give you one portion [or, Shechem] over your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and my bow." According to Diebner, "Le Roman," 66, this language is also a reference to Josephite territory and Shechem in particular.

[64] Amit, "Joseph," 71-72; Levenson, *Joseph*, 175; Sarna, *Genesis*, 326, 332, 335, 343-4; and Mendelsohn, "Ugaritic," 180.

[65] Harris, "Sexual Orientation, 98-99; Amit, "Joseph," 80; and Diebner, "Le Roman," 65-66. Repeated from fn 48 of the previous chapter, "References to the northern monarchy as Joseph include 1 Kgs 11:28; Ps 77:15, 78:67 (rejects Joseph, chooses Judah), 80:1; Ezek 37:16, 19; Amos 5:6, 15, 6:6; Obad 18; Zech 10:16 (paralleled with Judah)."

[66] Lauren Monroe, "Stripping off the Robe. New Light on 'Joseph the Hebrew' and the *bet-yosef*," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 60, argues that "house of Joseph" is never associated with Ephraim and Manasseh, but that the text instead connects them to "*b'nai yosef*." Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 113, agrees that Joseph has established his own household and that the other children Asenath bears will fall into that house.

[67] 1 Chr 7:14-29 provides an explanation for this decision, in that Manasseh is born in the Transjordan and Ephraim is born in Israel, see Levenson, *Joseph*, 175-7. Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, 213-237; von Rad, *Genesis*,

Reading this text in the context of the Second Temple period, Gen 37-45 "presupposes a historical situation in which large sections of the people of Israel, in particular those from the North, are living in Egypt."[68] The Joseph story and these adoptions, then, function as an ideological commentary on the status of the remainee-returnee conflict, particularly for those in the north, in Samaria, who claimed genealogical connections to the returnees, but who were not considered a legitimate part of Israel.[69] This conflict also includes those who fled to Egypt, both from Samaria and Judah, particularly from an anti-Samarian perspective. According to Amit, the nature of Assyrian assimilationist practices led the people who lived in the North to become more strongly integrated, which then allowed them to integrate into Egypt as well, rather than consolidating into separate communities like the Judahite *golah* community.[70] Unlike Joseph, who lives among the Egyptians, Jacob and his children live in Goshen, "a secluded part within Egypt" where "the Jacob family has the possibility to maintain an identity away from their homeland."[71] In this way, Joseph signifies those who assimilated in exile, especially in Egypt, and Jacob saves Joseph's sons from that fate, bringing them into his household and separate from the Egyptians.

This conflict continues into the different forms of Exodus, particularly in its genealogy in 1:1-5. The Masoretic Text says that there are 70 people who went to Egypt with Jacob because Joseph was already there (1:5). However, the Septuagint and 4QExod^{b} say that there were 75,

413; and Sarna, *Genesis*, 329, argue that Ephraim is named as firstborn to explain why Ephraim is the dominant tribe in Israel, especially as synonymous with Israel in Isaiah 7:1-9, 17 and Hosea 5:12-14.

[68] Reinhard Kratz, "The Joseph Story: Diaspora Novella - Patriarchal Story - Exodus Narrative. Part II: Historical Reflections," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 28.

[69] Kratz, "Diaspora," 29.

[70] Amit, "Joseph," 78.

[71] Arnet, "Aspects," 84.

thereby including five Egyptian offspring of Joseph, not just Ephraim and Manasseh, although their existence is not attested elsewhere. Thus, the LXX seems to reject Genesis 48:6, as Greifenhagen argues,

> In the very beginning of Exodus, the MT seems to question his membership in Israel, while the LXX seems to insist on it. Provisionally, it can be proposed that the MT version upholds a Palestinian or Jerusalem based ideology of excluding Egypt from any significant status in the origin traditions of Israel (thus the subtle exclusion of Joseph while still including his story). In contrast, the LXX, aimed at Egyptian Jews, includes Joseph, who is an Egyptian Jewish hero. [72]

In the MT, Jacob cuts Joseph out of the legal genealogy, circumventing both Asenath as an Egyptian and Joseph as a person of hybrid identity.[73] Yet, in the LXX, which is influenced by the diaspora, Joseph's other children are considered part of the family and, therefore, so is he. Joseph still gets no land, no inheritance, because his inheritance is in Egypt due to the full economic and social restructuring he performs that establishes the pharaoh's power over all the land. The provision of separate land for Jacob and his family (Gen 47:1-6), Joseph's separation from both his brothers and the Egyptians (43:42), and the enslavement of everyone except the Hebrews points to the same aporia: "Is Israel part of Egypt or not? The narrative seems to answer both 'yes' and 'no.'"[74] This is the same question my sister must ask regarding her status in the racial hierarchy of the United States and where she wants to fall within it. "With whom do I identify?" The answer is that, like Joseph and Israel, there is no real answer.

In addition, Jacob is embalmed after his death (50:2) and all of Egypt weeps (50:3), marking him as Egyptian, but then Jacob is buried in Canaan (50:13), separating him from the nation. Joseph, too, is ultimately buried in Shechem (Josh 24:32), although nothing is said of his

[72] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 48.

[73] Speiser, *Genesis*, 359, argues for Asenath as the explanation, but does not engage with Joseph's hybridity.

[74] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 42.

brothers.[75] Thus, at the end of their lives, they are laid to rest beyond Egypt, marking a final separation from the land and people. These deaths lead into Exodus, particularly through Exodus 1:5-8, which continue the Joseph narrative and mark the fears associated with integration, especially in the form of slavery.

The Women of Exodus and Moses

Moses and Zipporah's story is tied to Joseph and Asenath as a reversal, leading the people out of Egypt to establish their own system of governance and rule, rather than establishing themselves in a foreign land. Both Joseph and Moses leave their families and become Egyptian (Gen 41:39-45; Exod 2:1-10), neither by their own choice, and rise to the heights of Egyptian power, but when Moses tries to help his people, as Joseph did (Gen 41-46), he is rejected and must flee (Exod 2:11-15). It is in Midian that Moses finds a woman and has children (2:16-22), marking his separation from his people and his land. Gershom's name acts as the opposite of Manasseh's because Moses explicitly remembers that he is in a land that is not his own and does not forget his family. And again, unlike Joseph, Moses returns to his people in order to bring them out, rather than calling them to him. Furthermore, whereas women play a minor role in Joseph's story, as child-bearers, they are crucial to Moses' birth and survival, and therefore the survival of the Hebrews and their flight from Egypt. There are twelve women in Exodus 1-2 who function as a mirror of the twelve sons of Jacob.[76] Many of these women are not Hebrews, but Egyptian or Midianite. As such, women function as the bridges that determine ethnicity and survival.

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[75] Pirson, *Dreams*, 122, argues that Shechem is the only land that Joseph himself receives.

[76] Jopie Siebert-Hommes, "The Female Saviors of Israel's Liberator: Twelve 'Daughters' in Exodus 1 and 2," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., vol. 1 of *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 295–312; Jopie Siebert-Hommes, "But Is She Be a Daughter...She May Live!: 'Daughters' and 'Sons' in Exodus 1-2," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible 6 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield

Despite these consistent acts to unmake the Joseph narrative, I will argue that Moses is ultimately considered Egyptian and removed from the lineage of Israel, as was Joseph. First, although he is born and raised by his biological mother, a Hebrew and Levite (Exod 2:1), he is named by the pharaoh's daughter and lives at the height of Egyptian power structures (2:10-11). When he flees, it is partially because his own people have already rejected him, so he must live amongst yet another group of people, the Midianites. Although these hybridities signify Moses' future heroism, I argue that they also create a multiplicity of conflicts within him and his ethnic/cultural identity. I will argue that the circumcision of Gershom in Exodus 4:24-26, which is among the more difficult texts to interpret, separates the child from the Hebrews and marks him as Midianite. Because Zipporah performed this rite, rather than Moses, it supersedes Moses' act of naming the child in Exodus 2:22. The outcome of these actions is that Moses essentially has no descendants and no claim in the land, even dying and being buried in Moab. Instead, he is replaced by the priests, by Aaron and his descendants, represented by Phinehas killing Cozbi and in Numbers 25, symbolically killing Moses and Zipporah.[77] Through the lens of the returnees, this act also establishes the priests and the temple as the rightful heirs to Moses, through Aaron.

First Horizon (The Literal Phase)

This first horizon of analysis is the political and literal phase, wherein I will read the text through the base of the *golah* community resettling in Yehud. Exodus begins with the people already living in Egypt, in diaspora, and under the thumb of a foreign ruler. Because the Persian period is

Academic Press, 1994), 62–74; Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, "Divine Puppeteer: Yahweh of Exodus," in *Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 5 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75–102.

[77] Ron M. Serino, "A Sign in the Dark: Moses's Cushite Wife and Boundary Setting in the Book of Numbers," *Biblical Interpretation* 24.2 (2016): 168.

the most likely time in which the Torah took its present form, albeit with differences amongst traditions, Persia and Egypt were likely correlated as major powers, with the story of slavery in and escape from Egypt derived from older stories put to new uses to comment on the Persian Empire and its abuses of power, as well as ethnic conflict reflected in the construction of the narrative.[78]

Exodus 1:1-6 begins the story with a "segmented genealogy" that connects it to the preceding blessings in Genesis 49.[79] The Hebrews also grow strong in Egypt and fill the land (Exod 1:7), marked by the repetition of "the sons of Israel" in Exodus 1:1 and 1:7, shifting from the sons to the tribes. Here, the text already counters the Joseph narrative, which placed the people in Goshen. Greifenhagen argues that this statement may "hint at an ideology, partially submerged by the text, which presented the Israelites as emerging throughout Egypt and thus more closely connected with the Egyptians than the Goshen tradition would allow."[80] Exodus, then, begins with an intermixing of Egyptian and Hebrew, seemingly implying that they live alongside each other, much as those who fled into Egypt did in 722 BCE and 597 BCE (Jeremiah 44:1),[81] and as Jeremiah 29:5-6 tells them to do under Babylonian rule.[82] Even in Exodus 12:38, those who come out of Egypt are a mixed group that leaves.[83] It is only when a new ruler arises that living amongst the people of Egypt becomes a problem (Exod 1:8-11), which only leads the

[78] Jeremiah Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative: A Postcolonial Subversion of Genesis* (New York: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2024), 152; Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 224.

[79] Sparks, "Genre," 81-3.

[80] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 50.

[81] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 234-5.

[82] See Amit, "Joseph," 77.

[83] Pixley, "Liberation," 152.

Israelites to increase in numbers (1:12). The people of Israel are then forced into slavery, building the great cities of Egypt and working the fields (1:12-14).

The ruler then turns to the midwives for the Hebrews, Shiphrah and Puah, and tells them to kill every son and let every daughter live (1:15-16).[84] However, if Pharaoh truly wanted to kill all the Hebrews, he would have needed to kill all the daughters, as one man can impregnate many women in a short time, but women are more limited. Although Yee argues that this act is meant to demonstrate the ruler's stupidity,[85] it would also be a means of assimilating Israel into Egypt, with the Hebrew daughters entering Egyptian households, following the theme of Joseph losing his roots in Egypt.[86] This act also plays on the theme of twelve sons and twelve daughters found in Exodus 1-2, with the twelve sons of Jacob alongside Shiphrah and Puah, "the daughter of Levi" (2:1), the unnamed sister (2:4), the daughter of Pharaoh (2:5), and the seven daughters of the priest of Midian (2:16), with Moses as the thirteenth son whom the narrator will follow the rest of the story.[87] The attack on the twelve sons is an attack on the Israelites' "inheritance of property, name, and social status," and an effort to "redefine the midwives' profession is to strip them of a central, life-giving and society-forming role…to enact unparalleled psycho-social

[84] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 89, reads these two women as the heads of the midwifery guild. In addition, Josephus (*Ant. 2.206)*, the LXX, and the Vulgate mark these women as Egyptian, which, according to Ursula Westwood, "Prophecies and Princesses: Moses in Egypt and Ethiopia According to Josephus," *Akroterion* 67 (2022): 70, means, "They are transformed from protectors, standing between the king and the Hebrew babies, into a threatening arm of the surveillance state—one which focuses its attention not simply on the babies, but on their mothers during pregnancy." Siebert-Hommes, "Female Saviors," 301, links them to Isis and Nephtys, who are also midwives. Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 57-58, argues that this lack of differentiation points to the failure to properly differentiate between Hebrews and Egyptians, questioning the very distinction between Hebrew and Egyptian women.

[85] Gale A. Yee, "Postcolonial Biblical Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Methods in Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 217.

[86] Gorospe, *Narrative*, 192; see also Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 56, and for commentary on Joseph losing his roots (37).

[87] Exum, "Daughter," 41, says, "By means of this narrowing of focus, the text turns our attention away from the multitude with which it began ('the sons of Israel were faithful…and the land was filled with them') and directs it to the one who will play an instrumental role in attaining the freedom of Y[***]s 'first-born son' (4.22), Israel."

torment on the Hebrew midwives."[88] Using my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this story alongside the treatment of enslaved women and the Black nannies (often as the mammy stereotype) who had to take care of another person's children before their own, separating the women from their own roles that were so crucial for the community. In many cases, Black women formed the spiritual and cultural center of their communities, so by separating mothers from their families, and especially from their children, redefines their role in society. In many cases, newly freed Black women sought to stay at home with their children while the men worked, although structural forces usually pushed them back into the workforce.[89] In both cases, there is an attempt to break the spirit of the people and separate them from the land and their identities.

The two midwives refuse to obey the pharaoh because they feared God, and they let the sons live (1:17).[90] When the ruler of Egypt asks them why they disobeyed him (1:18), the women say, "Because, unlike the Egyptian women, the Hebrew women are lively, and listen, before the midwives come to them, they have given birth" (1:19). Many scholars have commented on this phrase, comparing it to an act of mimicry and drawing on modern stereotypes of minoritized people.[91] However, this mimicry turns the tables on the Egyptians, "in turning Egyptian racist

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[88] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 82.

[89] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Movements in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 98-102, 84.

[90] Although the NRSVue translates this verse as "they let the boys live," the Hebrew uses הַיְלָדִים, the children, in opposition to Pharaoh's 1:16) בֵּן), rejecting the gender differentiation, see Siebert-Hommes, "Female Saviors," 300.

[91] Yee, "Postcolonial," 218, connects this idea to mimicry and to Egyptian/Persian relations (216). Other scholars who argue that the midwives are playing on stereotypes include Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 57; Roth, *Hyphenating*, 90. Naomi s, "Feminist Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Methods in Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 181, compares this to gossip, "a strategy of behavior designed to bring pressure, based on self-interest, which intends to change people's minds." See also Roth, *Hyphenating*, 90; Roth misses the racial/ethnic dimensions of their own analysis. By failing to reckon with the language of the animality of the other, particularly the Black other, they produce an image of the Hebrew Other as Black. A better engagement, a better *postcolonial* engagement, would incorporates more information from Fanon's analysis of the sexualization and objectification of the Black body in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, Pluto Classics (London: Pluto Press, 2000); and Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*,

assumptions about their ethnic Other on their head to work on their behalf,"[92] demonstrating that it is really the Egyptians who are monstrous and barbaric. Shiphrah and Puah "smudge" the boundaries between Egyptian and Hebrew by playing on these stereotypes, which continues in the daughter of pharaoh's adoption of Moses (2:5-10).[93] Renita Weems reads Exodus 1:8-22 as representative of the ideological struggle between the owners and the laborers, following the themes of race, gender, and sexual reproduction.[94] She especially attends to the text as counter-hegemonic discourse, saying, "The refusal to obey is the refusal to adopt hegemonic assertions" which "proves to be a most effective counter to Egyptian ideology. Because the midwives feared God, and thereby disobeyed the Pharaoh, they are rewarded by the deity."[95] After this, Pharaoh turns to have "all his people" perform this genocide, rather than just the midwives (1:22).

However, this attempt at curbing the reproduction of minoritized people in Egypt also fails, as the narrator turns the reader's attention to a man and woman from the house of Levi who have a child (2:1-2). The mother, later named Jochebed (6:20), bears a son and hides him for three months (2:2). When it becomes more difficult to hide him, the mother places him in a papyrus basket and releases him into the Nile (2:3). This action plays on Pharaoh's command, as the child is still released into the river, but gestures to the river as protector and womb-mother,

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trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), which the author himself cites earlier (82). If Roth incorporated Black and other minorities' responses to their over-sexualization and dehumanization, such as an analysis of the sexual and bodily language, symbolization, and dances used in hip hop, rap, jazz, and other Black cultural points, their argument would be better. However, by not incorporating these perspectives, Roth risks reinscribing the racialized stereotypes of the Other rather than challenging them.

[92] Yee, "Postcolonial," 222.

[93] Faafetai Aiava, "Si'i Le Tuā'oi: Shifting Perceptions on Exodus 1:8-2:10 through a Samoan/Pasefika Reading," *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 58 (2020): 104-5.

[94] Renita J Weems, "The Hebrew Women Are Not Like the Egyptian Women: The Ideology of Race, Gender and Sexual Reproduction in Exodus 1," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 25–34. Pixley, "Liberation," 153, concurs, and discusses how the fear of a different god from the Egyptian deities is also represented in how god language is used to control minoritized groups, such as in Germany during World War II, President Bush in Iraq, and South Africa during Apartheid, while the minoritized groups develop their own deity and systems of belief.

[95] Weems, "Hebrew Women," 30.

rather than as destroyer. The pharaoh's own daughter acts as the child's midwife, pulling him out of the womb of the Nile.[96] In its historical context, this story likely plays on the exposure and rescue motif, especially the story of Sargon,[97] tying the child, Moses, to other heroes from Mesopotamia.[98]

The *Geburtserzählung* for Moses is among the longest, extending from Exodus 2:2, where the child is conceived and born, to 2:10, when he is named and claimed by Sheshan, Pharaoh's daughter, although the main components of this genre appear only in those two verses. Cutting out the intermediary verses, the *Geburtserzählung* is, 2:2, "And the woman conceived [וַתַּהַר, Qal-Pret-3FS] and bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS] a son, and having seen that he was good, she hid him for three months"[99] and 2:10, "And the child grew up and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he was for her a son, and she called [וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3FS] his name Moshe, and she said, 'For from the waters, I drew him out.'" This narrative crosses the borders

[96] Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, "The Making of Gershom's Story: A Cameroonian Postwar Hermeneutics Reading of Exodus 2," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134.4 (2015): 871.

[97] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 93; Childs, *Exodus*, 8; Steinberg, "Feminist," 173; Shaun W. Flynn, *Children in Ancient Israel: The Hebrew and Mesopotamia in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 86-7; Claire R. Mathews McGinnis, "Exodus as a 'Text of Terror' for Children," in *The Child in the Bible*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 31; Meyers, *Exodus*, 43-4; Van Seters, *Moses,* 29; Morton Cogan, "A Technical Term for Exposure," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27.2 (1968): 133–35; Kristine Henriksen Garroway, "Moses's Slow Speech: Hybrid Identity, Language Acquisition, and the Meaning of Exodus 4:10," *Biblical Interpretation* 28.5 (2020): 636; Obiorah and Okafor, "Mother," 89; and Cat Quine, "Pharaoh's Daughter: The Adoptive Mother's Sacrifice," *Feminist Theology* 29.2 (2021): 103. Brevard S. Childs, "The Birth of Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84.2 (1965): 109-22 disagrees.

[98] Sparks, "Genre," 84, says,

> The infant-killing motif and the resulting concealment do not cohere with the Moses story as nicely as in the Sargon Birth Legend…It has been suggested that the biblical presentations of Moses were reshaped from time to time in order to counter political and theological challenges from Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. In the case of the exposure motif, this may reflect an attempt to contrast the heroic exploits of Moses with the enslaving presence of the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II. But even if the text has no direct association with Sargon II, it was certainly designed to portray Moses using heroic tropes from the ancient Near Eastern literary tradition.

[99] Rhiannon Graybill, "Masculinity, Materiality, and the Body of Moses," *Biblical Interpretation* 23.4–5 (2015): 518–40, discusses Moses' body through a lens of disability, and notes that, "The mention of Moses as טוב tells us something about the prophet's body as body" (524).

of ethnicity and motherhood by following the typical structure of other birth narratives, but swapping one mother for the other.

Sheshan's name for Moses is an Egyptian theophoric, though she provides the explanation for his name in Hebrew.[100] Even then, the name is in the incorrect voice, active, while the explanation is passive.[101] That is, the *form* is incorrect, and so Moses is not wholly Hebrew, losing some, if not all, access to his people's culture when he enters Sheshan's household. Thus, Moses would have a limited Hebrew vocabulary, a child's vocabulary, without the nuances learned as one grows older. He knows no more Hebrew than his Egyptian mother. Perhaps this is why he tells the deity that he is "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" (4:10).[102] The description of the name itself is likely a "literary construction designed to explain the origins of Moses' name, to tie him to two communities,"[103] while also "signal[ing] the daughter of Pharaoh's status – as a mother, she named her son."[104] This all signifies that Moses' identity is confused, and his name and namer tie his identity to the royal court as a rescue, rather than through biology.[105]

I read this story through the adoption of my sister. When we adopted her and changed her name, my family also changed her middle name from one that referenced her old family, to one that referenced my grandmother. Like Moses's name and Joseph's new name, this act was

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[100] Susan Ackerman, "Miriam," 72; Garroway, "Speech," 639.

[101] Garroway, "Speech," 640. Graybill, "Masculinity," 524, says "Unlike these other [birth] narratives…the details given about Moses' birth do not serve to explain either his name or the general condition of the world at the time of his birth."

[102] Graybill, "Masculinity," 526, argues that this is a stutter or oral issue. However, I side with Garroway, "Speech," 657, that Moses would have lost much of his Hebrew when he moved into the Egyptian court.

[103] Quine, "Daughter," 105.

[104] Quine, "Daughter," 106.

[105] Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, "Ethnicity, Adoption, and Exodus: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of Exodus 2.1-10," *JSOT* 38.2 (2013): 176.

intended to help her feel like she is being brought into the family, given a new name that ties her to her new grandmother. She agreed to this change because she was close to this particular grandparent. However, in many contexts, the act of renaming can also separate a person from their past, such as the renaming of Africans when they were enslaved. I will discuss this topic more in my conclusion.

By all means other than naming and adoption, performed through the exposure and adoption motif, Moses is Hebrew. He is a uterine sibling to Aaron and Miriam, he suckled at Jochebed's breast, and he grew up, at least partially, among the Hebrews (2:9).[106] The three women in this story, Jochebed, Miriam, and Sheshan, seemingly create two contracts. The first is the exposure and adoption, which was the common form of adoption in West Asian contracts, even if only enacted symbolically between the biological parent and the adopter. The second is the wet-nursing contract, which is from the same region and was common among upper classes. [107] By making a wet-nursing contract, Sheshan is already taking responsibility for the child, although she does not fully claim him until he has grown up. All of these aspects together create difficulties with determining the ethnic status of Moses, whose very birth embodies the breach of boundaries. Randall Bailey argues that the intermediary story between birth and naming serve to assure the reader that Moses is Hebrew, "in order to resolve the problem prior to the appearance of that element in the text…the name is not given until there is an explanation of how it is understandable that this Levite child has an Egyptian name."[108] However, through adoption,

[106] For uterine siblings, see Chapman, *House*, 75-109.

[107] For these contracts, see Flynn, *Children*, 86-92; and Gale A Yee, "'Take This Child and Suckle It for Me': Wet Nurses and Resistance in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39.4 (2009): 180–89.

[108] Bailey, "Name," 30.

Moses is also thoroughly Egyptian, and even later in the story, the daughters of the priest of Midian identify Moses as Egyptian (2:19).

Moses challenges this definition when he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, which leads him to kill the Egyptian and, ultimately, flee from Egypt (2:11-15). After helping seven women, daughters of a Midianite priest, they bring him into their home and identify him as an Egyptian. Except for his brief attempt to defend a fellow Hebrew, the women around Moses define his ethnic and cultural relations. Sheshan, Miriam, and Jochebed collaborate to place him in an Egyptian household, and the Midianite women maintain that definition. Jethro invites Moses into their community by giving him Zipporah, but then the Egyptian becomes part of Jethro's household and has a child (2:16-22).[109]

Gershom's birth is short, unlike his father's: "And she [Zipporah] bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS] a son, and he called [וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS] his name Gershom, for he said, 'I have been a sojourner in a foreign land'" (2:22). As in previous *Geburtserzählungen*, when the two parents are of two different ethnicities, the father names the child. However, Moses himself has no clear ethnicity either, existing in the hybrid spaces between Egyptians, Hebrews, and even Midianites. The -גֵּר beginning marks alienness as core to Moses' self-identity, though the narrator is not clear which foreign land Moses intends – Egypt or Midian?[110] If it is Midian, then "Moses counters the ideology of differentiation between Egypt and Israel by indicating that he felt at home in Egypt and is homesick…This ambiguity can be interpreted as the trace of an ideological tension

[109] According to J. Cheryl Exum, "Second Thoughts about Secondary Characters: Women in Exodus 1.8-2.10," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible 6 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 83, Moses is rewarded for separating himself from women's power in his marriage to Zipporah.

[110] Dennis T. Olson, "Literary and Rhetorical Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Methods in Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

between pro- and anti-Egyptian interests in the narrative."[111] In this reading, Egypt can also be Persia. If שֹׁם- is Egypt/Persia, then Moses is at home among the Midianites, and not among the Hebrews or Egyptians/Persians. This act is the "first articulation of self-definition" for Moses, even if his articulation leaves questions.[112]

Unlike Joseph, Moses never forgets his roots, but those roots are unclear—is he a foreigner in Egypt, Midian, or both? Moses' alienness is core to his sense of self, or lack thereof.[113] Gershom's identity becomes more settled after his circumcision, which takes place in Exodus 4:24-26, after Moses has left Jethro's household, bringing both Zipporah and their sons (4:20) with him to Egypt. On the way, the deity attacks Moses (4:24), and in response, "Zipporah took a flint and cut the foreskin of her son and touched his feet [לְרַגְלָיו, also, genitals, or legs], and said, "Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" (4:25), and the deity leaves (4:26). Several scholars have tried to determine the antecedents of all the pronouns and the meaning of "bridegroom of blood," but I will not do so here.[114] I will follow the generally accepted decision to read "the son" as Gershom and "the feet" as belonging to Moses. My focus in this analysis is not on the meaning of these terms, but the function of circumcision as a means of claiming Gershom over and against Moses' attempt to claim him through naming.[115]

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[111] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 67.

[112] Ngwa, "Gershom's Story," 855.

[113] Dennis T. Olson, "Literary," 39.

[114] Rosanne Liebermann, "Clothing and Body Modification in the Hebrew Bible," *Religion Compass* 15.3 (2021): 4-5; William H. C. Propp, "That Bloody Bridegroom (Exodus IV 24-6)," *Vetus Testamentum* 43.4 (1993): 495–518; Margaret Murray Talbot, "Tsipporah, Her Son, and the Bridegroom of Blood: Attending to the Bodies in Ex 4:24-26," *Religions* 8.10 (2017): 205.

[115] I am not writing a dissertation on circumcision, and so will not engage in the intricacies of the topic as deeply as I wish. However, my additional resources on this topic include: Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Blumenthal, "Circumcision," 255–59; Daniel Boyarin, "'This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel': Circumcision and the Erotic Life of God and Israel," *Critical Inquiry* 18.3 (1992): 474–505; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?: Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Jason S Derouchie, "Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14.2 (2004):

Prior to the exile, circumcision did not function as a marker of ethnicity because most of the peoples around Israel and Judah also performed circumcision except for the Philistines, who, along with the peoples of Mesopotamia (e.g., Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, who also did not circumcise), are the primary Other in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[116] Circumcision, then, became ethnic behavior because of interaction with these groups due to engagement with other peoples in the post-exilic period.[117] Additionally, this rite was primarily one performed between males, even in the pre-exilic period, establishing phallocentric connections among the men within the community.[118] Targums *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti* (Exod 4:25) both claim that Moses did not circumcise Gershom on the eighth day, as was commanded to Abraham (Gen 17:12), because Jethro prevented it, seeking to make Gershom part of his own בֵּית אָב, dedicated to his own gods.[119] This interpretation presents circumcision as an act that can tie a child to one group or another through circumcision, or lack thereof. Some scholars have argued that Zipporah

175–203; Laura Mary Elizabeth Hare, "The Transformation of Moses: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 4:24-26" (M.A., University of St. Michael's College, 2013); Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Joshua Seth Houston, "Becoming Israelite: Joshua 5:2–9 as the Final Stage of Shedding Egyptian Mores.," *Religions* 15.8 (20240801): 935; Gwynn Kessler, "Let's Cross That Body When We Get to It: Gender and Ethnicity in Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73.2 (2005): 329–59; Ray Shankman, "The Cut That Unites: Word as Covenant in Exodus 4:24–26," *CrossCurrents* 41.2 (1991): 168–78; Eric K. Silverman, "Anthropology and Circumcision," *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 33.1 (2004): 419–45; Simon Skidmore, "A Mimetic Reading of Exodus 4:24-26," *The Heythrop Journal* 64.1 (2023): 87–98; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "Making Bodies: On Body Modification and Religious Materiality in the Hebrew Bible," *HeBAI* 2.4 (2013): 532–53; Nick Wyatt, "Circumcision and Circumstance: Male Genital Mutilation in Ancient Israel and Ugarit," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33.4 (2009): 405–31.

[116] Römer, "Covenant," 12-13. For Gisela Schneemann, "Die Deutung Und Bedeutung Der Beschneidung Nach Exodus 4:24-26," *Communio Viatorum* 32.1–2 (1989): 22, the Philistines are the prototypical uncircumcised people.

[117] Avraham Faust, "The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies.," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134.2 (2015): 278.

[118] Cohen, *Circumcised*, 55.

[119] Childs, *Exodus*, 96; Gorospe, *Narrative*, 253. According to Winslow, *Wives*, 232, the rabbis cared more about Jethro stopping the circumcision than that Zipporah performed it, marking it as a not unusual occurrence. Winslow (209-262) continues with additional rabbinic commentary that focuses on Jethro and Moses, rather than Zipporah. *Exodus Rabbah* says that the issue arose because Moses just didn't circumcise the child because he was in a rush, see, B. Embry, "The Endangerment of Moses: Towards a New Reading of Exodus 4:24-26," *Vetus Testamentum* 60.2 (2010): 181.

takes on the role of a priest, or the *mohel*, when she does so, but this position and the association of priests with circumcision does not appear until after the period in which I am reading this story.[120] There are also many explanations for the role of circumcision in this text, including as a sacrifice or an apotropaic act, but there is no sign in Exodus 4:24-26 of any such explanations in the text itself.[121] Instead, when Zipporah performs this rite, I argue that she takes on the role of the *paterfamilias* over and against Moses.[122]

This reading is continued in Exodus 18:3, when Jethro brings Zipporah and "her two sons [שְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ]" back to Moses. There is a singular "his sons [וּבָנָיו]" in 18:5, with Moses being the natural antecedent, but it is in reference to Jethro's perspective and they are switched back to Zipporah's care in 18:6. This passage also contains the first reference to Moses and Zipporah's other child, Eliezer (18:4). All of this is written the context of Moses having sent Zipporah away (18:2). With no references to Zipporah between Exodus 4 and 18, I read with Gafney that Moses divorced Zipporah and that Jethro is attempting to reunite the family, though Moses ignores everyone but Jethro.[123] It is bolstered by Moses' union with a Cushite woman in Numbers 12, for which Aaron and Miriam confront him. This union led Josephus to argue that Moses led

[120] For Zipporah as the *mohel* and priest, see Ackerman, "Miriam," 72-75; Ursula Rapp, "Zipporah," 313–28. For Zipporah as a priest, see Römer, "Covenant," 15. In addition, Anne-Mareike Schol-Wetter, "Pain, Gain, or Both? Circumcision, Trauma, and (R)Emasculation in Post-Exilic Israel," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott et al. (Sheffield: equinox, 2022), 32, argues that circumcision in the biblical text is priestly except in Exodus 4, Joshua 5, and 1 Samuel 18.

[121] David A. Bernat, *Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Priestly Tradition*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature Number 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 69.

[122] Gorospe, *Narrative*, 217, argues that "Through the circumcision of the son, Zipporah is separated from her Midianite community and is incorporated into the Israelite community." However, Gorospe fails to reckon with the absence of Zipporah and Jethro's attempt to reunite the two parents (Exod 18).

[123] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 133. See also Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 66. The *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (Tractate Amalek, 3:15) includes R. Joshua saying that this moment represents a divorce, but R. Eleazar disagrees. The basis for this is that שׁלח is the term used in Exod 18:2 and is the same as the language for divorce. See also Winslow, *Wives*, 59.

Egyptian soldiers against Cush when he was a prince.[124] However, I believe Numbers 12 should be read in light of Num 25:6-18.

Numbers 25:6-18 is the story of Cozbi, a Midianite woman, entering into a union with Zimri, from the tribe of Simeon (25:14-15). I agree with Gafney that this union should be read as Zimri's attempt to follow the example of Moses, who also married a Midianite.[125] Cozbi and Zimri even perform the ceremony in front of Moses and "the whole gathering of Israelites" at the tent of meeting (25:6). Moses clearly has no problem with this event, as he saw it unfold, and the reference to the tent of meeting seems to suggest that the couple were dedicating themselves to the Hebrew deity. However, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, kills the couple and pierces both, symbolically aborting their offspring by spearing Cozbi through the belly (25:8). This act ends a heretofore unmentioned plague (25:8-9), inserting a punishment from the deity out of nowhere, and establishes Eleazar's family as a permanent priesthood (25:13). The deity then commands Moses to defeat the Midianites because of their trickery (25:17-18), although in 25:1-5, it is the Moabites who are to blame.

Read through my accomplice lens, Numbers 12 and 25 act as a rejection of Zipporah and any connection she might have had to Moses, rewriting history over and against the Midianite woman and her children, and Moses' future as the father of his own בֵּית אַב as well. As Serino argues, "with one swift stroke of the spear (or was it a pen?), Phinehas replaces Moses as the zealous leader of his people."[126] For all the reader knows, Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer may have been among the Midianites slain, sticking close to the man who abandoned them. Yet, this is the moment when the priesthood establishes itself over Moses, the man of hybrid identity. It is

[124] Winslow, *Wives*, 168.

[125] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 144.

[126] Serino, "Sign," 168.

in this moment that even Moses' position cannot save him. No matter what position a person takes within leadership, the creation and maintenance of socio-spatial borders can always be turned against the person who falls outside those borders. And those borders are always up for debate where power is involved. MOses accepted the union between Zimri and Cozbi without comment, potentially taking part in the ceremony, thus standing in solidarity with them. Yet, death and displacement comes for all of them.

Moses' act flies in the face of Ezra and Nehemiah's proscriptions against foreign women, so he and his family are cut out of the genealogy in Exodus 6:14-25. As David Bernat argues, "Though Moses and Aaron's birth to Amram and Yocheved are both registered, the genealogy only proceeds through the Aaronide line."[127] Even Korah, who rebels against Moses later (Num 16), has offspring, but Moses is cut off through the "implicit *karet* penalty that P imputes to Moses" when Zipporah circumcises their son, "extirpat[ing] the Mosaic line."[128] Aaron continues this project when he tries to take Moses' position in Exodus 32, forming a golden calf, and in Numbers 12, when he and Miriam challenge Moses' union with a Cushite woman. However, Phinehas succeeds where his grandfather failed by murdering two people. In these ways, Moses is rendered powerless and his descendants disappear from the text, which I discuss later, and no acceptable spouse to bear those children. In removing Moses' power, the priesthood rises to fulfill it, as Bernat argues, "Here the ideological program of the Priestly trident, the denigration of Moses in favor of Aaron, is 'laid bare' and seems to have triumphed over the aesthetics of sustaining credible character development."[129] Read in light of the *golah* community, the priesthood sits above all other powers, even those appointed by Persia. Ethnic identification,

[127] Bernat, *Covenant*, 88.

[128] Bernat, *Covenant*, 88.

[129] Bernat, *Covenant*, 88.

then, is used as a tool to disestablish Moses' role as the lawgiver, and establish the people in power as the people who maintain and interpret those laws.

Second Horizon (The Social Phase)

For the second phase, the superstructure is the text and ideology and the base is class. In this story, from the post-exilic context, the national allegory is that of the return, and the creation of the Yehudite identity out of the experience of exile and return.[130] My discussion of Joseph earlier in this chapter represents the advent of the exile, including the economic and ecological catastrophe of invading military forces and the Babylonian extractive regime. Moses, then, is the secular leader of the returnees, and could be Zerubbabel (Ezra 2-5, Neh 7; 12; Haggai 1-2; and Zech 4:6-9), Nehemiah, or even Cyrus. Certainly, Moses provided the outline of religious observance, but as Zerubbabel is matched with Jeshua and Nehemiah is matched with Ezra, Moses is matched with Aaron. All three secular leaders are also upper class, with Moses coming from the Egyptian royal family, Zerubbabel descended from Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim (1 Chr 3:16-19), and Nehemiah serving as Artaxerxes' cupbearer (Neh 1:11). However, unlike Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13, Moses accepts exogamous marriage, and even takes part in it twice, or at least in two different traditions. In fact, inasmuch as I argued that Moses and the Aaronide priesthood are at odds, so too do Ezra and Nehemiah claim opposing responsibility for removing

[130] This follows Yee, "Postcolonial," 193-233. The main issue with Yee's analysis of Moses' birth is that, while she acknowledges that "The elite was largely comprised of priestly and political immigrants and their scribes from Babylon" (211), she does not grapple with the fact that Moses is a Levite, a priest, and that from his brother, Aaron, come the high priests. In Persian Yehud, it is largely the priesthood who takes charge, as Aaron's family took charge through Ezra. Yet, unlike in Exodus, these escapees must still pay taxes. Egypt, then, is also a cipher for Persia. Or, perhaps, a call for those others to return out of Egypt.

intermarried families, echoing Phinehas' murder of Cozbi and Zimri and the harassment of the Midianite community (Num 25:6-18), albeit in a less lethal fashion until Numbers 31.[131]

There are two major aporias in this story. The first is shared with Joseph: access to the power and resources necessary to save one's people requires one to hybridize with the dominant forces in society, yet these texts also ideologically distance themselves from those very forces in order to create a separate identity for their own people. Through my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, I read the imaginary solution to this problem is the sacrifice of those figures who engage in such hybridity after they have saved their people. Joseph and Moses are removed from the lineages of their birth, but praised for their sacrifice. Both Moses and Joseph marry the daughters of priests from other peoples, but the act of intermarriage is not the problem, as demonstrated by my analysis in earlier chapters. In the United States, the imaginary solution to the problem of Black men and white women copulating with one another was lynching, with castration often incorporated into the punishment to symbolically cut off a person's lineage. However, the white man who copulated with a Black woman, especially through rape, was never punished, because he was establishing his dominance.

The second aporia is related: survival is dependent upon women working across class and ethnic lines, but in creating a separate identity dependent upon connection to a mythical promised land, the narrative must replace their power with the power of men, the power over the נַחֲלָה. The ideologeme of this text is survival, built of the necessity of hybridity, the crossing of class and ethnic boundaries, placed against the need to separate oneself from other nations in

[131] Ngwa, Kenneth N. Ngwa, *Let My People Live: An Africana Reading of Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022), 57, says, "Fragile systems and ideologies have a way of producing fragile minds and mindsets that rely on marginalizing others. The appropriate response to this reality is ultimately not to switch residential zip codes but to change governing ideology."

order to establish firm control over the land. [132] I also read this hybridity through the modern world, where racism and sexism, among other systems of oppression, have long been embedded in liberation-oriented movements. However, there are also moments of solidarity. It is through the crossing of these lines that change is made, and so those in power amplify divisions to ensure that people do not build solidarity with one another.

At the time of the exodus and the time of the return from exile, the structures of identity had been weakened from such a long period of being forced to live in places where one had little power, and where one's community had little access to power. Joseph and Moses overthrow the dominant hierarchy through economic exploitation (Joseph) or through liberation from economic exploitation (Moses). Along these lines, Kenneth Ngwa's *Let My People Live* is an Africana reading of Exodus that focuses on the "triple consciousness" which "animates Exodus' three prominent material location—Egypt, the wilderness, and the mountain area—but is also concurrently present in the ideological character of those spaces."[133] For Ngwa, Exodus ideologically liberates the people from "the material and ideological structures of oppression in Egypt," to develop "creative freedom, wholeness, and community that enshrine the full flourishing of the material and interpretive soul/life."[134] Exodus accomplishes these tasks by pushing the audience toward "intergenerational re-learning and re-membering, for communal bonding, liberation, and healing" through "communal imagination as much as memory."[135]

Through my womanist-accomplice approach, I read Pharaoh as acting in an ethno-nationalist fashion, particularly when he enslaves the Hebrews as a natural outcome of his fear of

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[132] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Judaism, The First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 35.

[133] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 3.

[134] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 3.

[135] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 12.

their power.[136] In doing so, the story acts as a rebuke of Ezra and Nehemiah's separation of the returnees and the remainees, as well as modern white nationalist politics, as such divisions inevitably lead to oppression. This is because slavery, or the oppression of one people so that one might survive off of their labor, is a utopian dream for those in power, and a dystopia for everybody else. The expulsion of foreign women and their children is symbolically represented in Pharaoh's order to all the Egyptians to kill the Hebrew sons (Exod 1:22). The emphasis on the women's role in saving Moses, and therefore the Hebrew people, derives out of Exodus's "material and embodied value as a product of exodus work depends on recognizing its ability to generate creative herstories (flows) before the arrival of erasure, alienation, and singularity"[137] that "underlies communal narratives about 'ethnic crossings' and anxieties about 'mixed identities' in exilic and postexilic biblical texts (cf. the books of Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther)."[138] Or, for Randall Bailey, "the liberation narratives of Exodus originally spoke to class struggle along with national struggles" and that "coalition among people across class and national lines within such struggles are a model for consideration for our current liberation efforts."[139]

As for the women in the text, they are removed as soon as possible, all but disappearing from positions of importance, with the exception of Miriam, who is punished for confronting Moses in Numbers 12. Thus, reading with Kirk-Duggan's womanist reading, "women's power is contained through diffusion, suppression, and in Miriam's case, punishment."[140] This is because

[136] Yee, "Postcolonial," 221.

[137] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 18.

[138] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 26.

[139] Bailey, "Name," 36.

[140] Kirk-Duggan, "Puppeteer," 83.

the difference among women in the text "does not inhibit their womanish support and nurture of Moses, even when, apparently, God is missing in action from intervening in their lives.[141] Pharaoh even tries to divide the people up into gendered hierarchies when he commands the midwives to kill the newborn boys, but not the girls, potentially as a means of forcing the women to integrate more into Egyptian culture.[142] Is this not an echo of Nehemiah 13:24, "And half their children spoke Ashdodite, and they did not recognize Yehudite speech, but spoke the language of other peoples"?[143] For Nehemiah 13:25, this inability to speak Yehudite leads to Nehemiah beating men and telling them not to give their daughters, or take daughters from, such people (13:25). That is, the people were not properly assimilating their speech to the preferred speech of the governor, Nehemiah, so they had to be separated. Both Pharaoh and Nehemiah were willing to impose violence to instill assimilation, although Pharaoh's violence was outrageously larger. For Ngwa,

> Without a narrative protest return—redesign of oppressive temporalities, spaces and structures—by the Hebrew women and the midwives, there is no departure from singularizing confinement, only cosmic dispersal; no communal liberation from structured death, only select survival stories; and no transformative hospitality, only accommodation of the marginalized.[144]

Moses comes out of both of these aporias as an adopted Egyptian, born to Hebrew parents, even Levite parents, saved by a coalition of women from different backgrounds, who is willing to turn against his adopted people to fight against oppression.[145] He also crosses the barrier through his

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[141] Kirk-Duggan, "Puppeteer," 84.

[142] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 56.

[143] For Ackerman, "Miriam," 56, this is also connected to trouble with Samaria, Ammon, and Edom, and the fear of militarization. Thus, the fear of militarization also connects the two.

[144] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 51.

[145] Meyers, *Exodus*, 42, says, "By mentioning that both parents are from the priestly tribe of Levi, the sacerdotal pedigree of Moses is provided. His role as the one who will establish the desert sanctuary and its personnel is anticipated and legitimized."

marriage to Zipporah, creating an affinity through marriage.[146] Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read these women as the people who live at the intersection of these ethnic conflicts, people who embody the antithesis of those in power, the opposite of those who create sharp boundaries around identity to ensure class, ethnic/racial, and gender separation. These women use their connections to power and their very being-ness to overturn the systems of control. My goal with this womanist-accomplice approach is to take part in this same work, to cross the borders and encourage others to do the same so we can make a better world together, with the voices of the oppressed functioning as a primary force to guide these changes. This hermeneutic requires one to embrace the ambiguity and sense of dislocation.

As Roth argues, "These stories form a dialectic of identity which claims that the uncertainty of dislocation and ambiguity of hybridity should be considered strengths to be cultivated, not weaknesses to be rejected."[147] This reading is best summarized through the lens of Exodus 12:38 and 49: "And also a mixed multitude went up with them, flocks and cattle, and numerous other livestock" (12:38) and "One law will be for the native-born and for the sojourner, the ones traveling in your midst" (12:49). That is, even at the outset of Hebrew identity as separated from Egypt, non-Hebrews joined the people. The Hebrews included others who wanted to go with them, to escape from the other hierarchies. It is this moment that the utopic vision of the common people is most perceptible, with people from many groups coming together to escape from Egyptian (i.e. imperial) control to establish a new world where all people are under one law. However, from this point forward, the exclusivists in the line of Ezra and Nehemiah take control of the narrative.

[146] Gorospe, *Narrative*, 183.

[147] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 61.

The contingent of exclusivists draws on the model of priesthood to do so, the priests being among the elite in the post-exilic period, alongside scribes and other political immigrants "who had probably served in the Babylonian cult or royal court and now enjoyed Persian support."[148] This group, as I have argued previously, collected taxes and acted as Persia's agents, particularly seen in their economic abuses in Nehemiah 5.[149] Allowing images of hybridized families would allow the people to deconstruct the nationalistic and ethnocentric language and ideologies that keep the people under the control of hegemonic, imperial powers, Persia in this instance. Egypt was the center of much Persian consternation as a powerful people in their own right, only barely under Persian control. [150]

Siding with Persia involved a rejection of Egypt, especially among the elite.[151] According to Yee, "The pharaoh's command to set taskmasters over the Israelites and put them to forced labor will resonate with Persia's own desires to keep Egypt under their imperial thumb."[152] However, this desire also extends to the people in Yehud, which is why Persia allows the *golah* community to return and establish their own systems of control that will benefit the Persia. Drawing on the tradition of African American interpretation, Moses, an Egyptian-Hebrew who leads his people out of oppression, can easily be transformed into a revolutionary, anti-imperial

[148] Yee, "Postcolonial," 211.

[149] Yee, "Postcolonial," 212.

[150] Cataldo, *Disembodying Narrative*, 152.

[151] Inchol Yang, "Mixed Marriage in Ezra 9-10: The Disappearance of Ezra as a Mimic Man for the Persian Empire," *The Expository Times* 134.2 (2022): 60.

[152] Yee, "Postcolonial," 217.

figure. This anti-imperial, anti-slavery, revolutionary Moses continues to have ongoing influence, particularly among African Americans, and especially under slavery.[153]

Through my womanist-accomplice approach, acknowledging the perspective of a whiteness that seeks power through suppression, the solution presented in the text is the removal of Moses' family from the people of Israel through Zipporah's circumcision of her son in Exodus 4:24-26, the divorce in Exodus 18, her replacement by a Cushite wife in Numbers 12, and the murder of Cozbi and Zimri as a symbolic murder of Moses and Zipporah's family in Numbers 25, ending with the deity's decision to punish Moses by keeping him out of the land of his fathers, forever. Moses is not buried with his fathers or with his people. Neither Joseph nor Moses truly has a people, they had to give that up in order to save those very people. For white nationalist movements, there are two major fears. First, that non-white people will attain positions of power. Second, that there will be so much intermixing of races that all people are hybridized. Notably, many Black people in the United States already have some European ancestry due to rape of enslaved women. So, the problem is that whiteness will be diluted and darkened, so white nationalists create structures meant to keep people separated.

In much the same way, the returnees are given a choice in Ezra 10 and Neh 13: "Give up your foreign wives, your hybrid children, your life between two worlds, or you will end the same way – cut off from your people."[154] These actions undercut Moses' ability to act as a liberator. In addition, his form of liberation leads, through the actions of Joshua, to genocide against the

[153] See, Harold C. Washington, "Signifying on Exodus: Reading Race and Culture in Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain*," in *Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 5 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 41–58.

[154] These are my words, to be clear.

inhabitants of Canaan.[155] Thus, Moses' memory, his legacy, becomes the death of many people in order to take control of the land. Moses and Joshua's genocide is performed for the same reason Ezra and Nehemiah force their community to expel the foreign women: separation from the peoples of the land in order to establish their own, unique community.

Third Horizon (The Historical Phase)

In this final phase, the focus is on the genre, returning to the text as the superstructure, but with the mode of production (MP) now as the base, including both the ancient MP and the modern MP. In this section, I will incorporate both Joseph and Moses' stories, while focusing primarily on Moses, because they are so closely related. As the opposite of Joseph, the internal MP of Moses' story gestures as a move away from the (E)state back to subsistence-survival. However, in both stories, read through the lens of Persian Yehud, the actual MP is that of tribute-exchange. Both Joseph and Moses also have their own *Geburtserzählung*, as well as one for their child(ren). In this reading, I draw a connection between the command to expel women in Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 12, and the command to kill all the male children in Exodus 1. The fear in Egypt was that the Hebrews would join up with an invading army and take over, but after the Exile, the returnees colluded with the Persian Empire to dominate the land and overthrow the power of the remainees.

In many ways, the returnees *were* the invasion force, and their claim to power was the mythical homeland. The narrator fears the power of women and therefore denies it, leaving only the trace of their indirect power over the life and death of children.[156] The women, as the

[155] See Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 235–41.

[156] Exum, "Second Thoughts," 82.

purveyors of life and culture, who crossed boundaries and offered different futures, get in the way of Pharaoh's plans and, therefore, of Ezra and Nehemiah's plans. Exum states, "In the refusal of women to cooperate with oppression, the liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage has its beginnings."[157] Reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, the power of women to cooperate with each other over and against the atomizing power of empire forms the root of the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt, and of the liberation of modern people as well.[158] This power is brought to the fore in Gershom's birth (2:22) and Zipporah's separation from Moses after she circumcises her child (18:2-6).

Thus, the Joseph and Moses stories function as oppositional forces in their attempts to grapple with diasporic experiences. From the Joseph narrative comes the perspective of assimilation: take part in the activities of the people around you, work hard, and gain positions of power to help your fellows. As Manasseh's name suggests, one might forget their father's household (Gen 41:51), but there is also great wealth and land potentially in store.[159] The antinomy in the Joseph story between the birth narratives of Manasseh and Ephraim and the mode of production is that Manasseh and Ephraim are among the upper-class who do not need to work, and are then passed to another group of people that are later subjugated. Joseph enslaved all of the Egyptians and took away all of their land, except for the priests, as a means of establishing his and the pharaoh's power and creating stability. However, Pharaoh and Joseph

[157] Exum, "Second Thoughts" 59.

[158] Per Ericka Shawndricka Dunbar, "Freedom Fighters: An Ecowomanist Reading of the Female Figures in Moses's Life," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 40.1 (2024): 84: "The females in the narrative are primarily introduced as daughters and occupy social roles that typically preserve/enhance the quality of life: midwives, attendants, maid, and wet nurse. These females embody a multiplicity of family/social/cultural roles across class, age, and ethnicity. Yet instead of allowing their differences to separate them, they join forces and establish a community of resistance to ethnic and gender-based genocide, and they collaborate to ensure protection of the most vulnerable among them: the children."

[159] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 37.

ensure that the Hebrews get a special parcel of land specifically set aside for them, a place where the Hebrews do not have to live within the (E) state MP, instead continuing in their subsistence-survival MP.

Under the (E)state MP, the majority of the land was under the control of the minority: priests, bureaucrats, monarchs, etc.[160] The Egyptians in this case had no access to the means of production, although they had control over the means of implementation, through the council of elders in a subsystem under the ruling class.[161] Unlike the other exilic and diaspora narratives, particularly Esther, Daniel, and Exodus, Joseph is responsible for dismantling the subsistence-survival MP and the development of Egypt into what Boer and Petterson call a "hyperstate system—a central feature of the palatine regime" as part of the new estate MP,[162] in which the ruling class, here the royals and the priesthood, controlled the land, and "the estate laborers [everyone in and around Egypt]…had no access to the means of production [food, esp. grain]. Their role was to provide the nonproducers with the goods the latter felt they needed."[163]

Thus, Wildavsky argues, "Joseph is not being initiated into just any political system but rather a steep hierarchical order that justifies vast inequalities based on birth and position."[164] However, Joseph is not *just* being initiated into such a system, but reinforcing it. The fact that Joseph concocts a plan for survival that lasts seven years provides ideological cover for extractive modes of production because, under estate and tribute-exchange MPs, "one bad year could topple the system."[165] As I have argued in previous chapters, Ezra-Nehemiah ideologically

[160] Boer, *Sacred Economy*, 123.

[161] Boer, *Sacred Economy*, 123.

[162] Boer and Petterson, "Economic Relationships," 77.

[163] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 123.

[164] Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 120.

[165] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 153.

undermines the subsistence-survival MP and reinforces a tribute-exchange MP, with the priesthood and governmental apparatus enforcing Persian law. Yet, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read Ezra, Nehemiah, and their fellow elites are merely functionaries of a larger system, inserting themselves into the existing status quo. They are not directly responsible for this shift, as Joseph is, but they add religious language to add cover to the same regimes the Joseph story supports. In the same way, the middle class, i.e. the managerial class, acts as cover for the upper-class to deflect blame to the people who fail to even enter that class. It is in this class that whiteness finds its shelter, as the white man receives privileges that even white women do not, much less for people who are not white. Thus, white people find refuge in their status as the people who create borders meant to protect their own status, and the status of those who have the real power.

In the development of this new MP, Joseph uses the language of the local community,[166] transferring the duty of preserving food from the local council of elders and clan heads to the pharaoh (and therefore himself), which illustrates the "manifestation between allocative [subsistence] and extractive [estate] tendencies,"[167] and "reveals an effort to appropriate and obliterate the village communes…by taking over the titles of the elders, council members, and fully active males."[168] Boer and Petterson point to the clan of Jacob as "the textual presence of the village community" because "their apparent semi-nomadism was very much part of village existence, as was the tendency for nomadic groups to settle periodically."[169] Furthermore, Joseph separated the Egyptians from their own land, and "By moving the Egyptians off the land, Joseph

[166] Here I point to Joseph's proposal in 41:25-36, alongside the claim to special knowledge, as dream interpretation and predictions of the future, which served to justify Joseph's rule.

[167] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 123.

[168] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 124.

[169] Boer and Petterson, "Economic Relationships," 78.

created a parallel between them and the Israelites as a nation: if they were strangers in a strange land, so too did Joseph make Egyptians strangers in their own land."[170]

This shift in MP and the accompanying fear of losing oneself in another land appears implicitly in the deity's words in Gen 46:3-4, "I am God, the god of your father, do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt and bring you up again, and Joseph's hand will close your eyes." This language demonstrates Jacob's fears, and therefore the *golah* community's fears, that they will lose themselves and become separated from their deity and their land during exile. This fear is the same that leads Ezra and Nehemiah to exclude foreign women, and the same fear is behind racial purity movements. It is a fear of lost culture and heritage, of mixing and, rather than becoming something new, being absorbed. In this instance, as in other exilic texts, the deity assures the people that they will survive intact during their diaspora/exile. The culmination of this fear appears in Exodus 1:8-11, in which a new king enslaves the Israelites out of fear that they will turn against Egypt. However, it is foreshadowed in Gen 46:6, in which Pharaoh assigns Jacob's family to take care of his own livestock.[171] The Joseph story also incorporates a counter-narrative of anti-assimilation that rejects Egyptian influence through the birth story and adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh. Franziska Ede argues, "The issue at stake is Joseph's exile that separates him from his family and raises the question of his affiliation with the people of Israel. Can he be part of Israel even though he lives and strives in Egypt? Gen 37-45 answer in the affirmative";[172] however, I disagree with Ede's conclusion.

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[170] Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 144.

[171] Boer and Petterson, "Economic Relationships," 78-9.

[172] Franziska Ede, "The Joseph Story: Diaspora Novella - Patriarchal Story - Exodus Narrative. Part I," in *The Joseph Story between Egypt and Israel*, ed. Konrad Schmid, Thomas Römer, and Axel Bühler, Archaeology and Bible 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 21.

Joseph does not get to be part of Israel; he does not live in Goshen. Presumably, when Jacob adopts Ephraim and Manasseh, they go to live with him in that mythical land of plenty, much as the *golah* community gets to live in their land, previously and currently inhabited by the remainees and other groups. The deal that Joseph makes—as a copy of Ezra and Nehemiah—is that they get special land, provided by the ruler, where they can live safely and separately from everyone else. This deal requires the expulsion of the older inhabitants in both cases, as the land no longer belongs to the people, but to the monarch and the monarch's servants. In return, Jacob's family takes care of Pharaoh's flocks—Ezra and Nehemiah ensure that Persia receives its taxes. Joseph must also lose his ethnicity and his family, but that is a small price to pay for the survival of his people, or so he seems to believe.[173] Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, this is also the same deal that the British colonists made with the Crown. They get to kick out the indigenous people and take the land and use others as a workforce. Certainly, most people had to work the land themselves, often as indentured servants, and only the wealthiest benefitted directly, but the taxes all went to Crown in the end.

Boer and Petterson argue that Exodus 1-15 "may be read as a massive story of breaking with the estates and their indentured labor. The story attempts to shift the blame not only onto a cruel pharaoh…but also onto the increasingly oppressive labor conditions (Exod 1:8-22; 2:23-25; 5:10-21)."[174] In this way, Exodus rejects the economic system set up by Joseph and rejects the consequent assimilation, thereby, in the setting of Persian Yehud, also rejecting Persian influence and modes of production. [175] These oppressive conditions include forced labor (Exod 1:11-14)

[173] Here I am following similar arguments to those of Amit, "Joseph," 69-92, in which Amit argues that Joseph signifies Jehoiachin/Jehoiakim, who was taken captive by Pharaoh Necho. However, I am interpreting this story through the perspective of a later period.

[174] Boer and Petterson, "Economic Relationships," 79.

[175] Pixley, "Liberation," 152, reads Exodus as a rebellion of all the peasants enslaved under Joseph.

and attempts to kill all the sons to limit their population growth (1:15-22). That is, this text rejects subservience to Persia, and therefore Ezra and Nehemiah's project of expulsion and separation. By sending the children of mixed families away, they remove those children from the systems of inheritance in a social death, symbolized by Pharaoh telling the Egyptians to kill all the male Hebrew children.

Read through my womanist-accomplice lens, in my present moment, I see here similar actions being taken by the United States government. However, rather than killing children (although sending children to their deaths is part of the project),[176] the government is expelling people at a rapid rate, sending many to their deaths in war-torn countries or making plans to have people work out their citizenship rights through hard labor, all while committing human rights abuses against non-citizens legally in the country.[177] All this while developing plans to further curtail the rights of citizens, with Black women among the victims the forefront of this attack.[178] The non-citizen, as defined in its original form as anyone who is not a white male (i.e., a Black woman, an undocumented migrant, a criminal, etc., especially those who fit in multiple categories), becomes a symbol for hegemonic powers to use in their push toward the oppression of everyone they consider beneath them. For the victims of that oppression, cross-cultural solidarity, often among women, is a means of survival, and so Moses' birth incorporates that solidarity.[179]

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[176] Dakin Andone, "3 Children Who Are US Citizens — Including One with Cancer — Deported with Their Mothers to Honduras, Lawyers and Advocacy Groups Say," *CNN*, 30 April 2025.

[177] Richard Luscombe, "'Alligator Alcatraz' Detainees Face Abuse and Are Denied Due Process, Say Lawyers," *The Guardian*, 18 August 2025, § US news; José Olivares, "Democrat Urges Hearing into 'Human Rights Abuses' at El Salvador Megaprison," *The Guardian*, 28 July 2025, § US news; and more.

[178] Janice Gassam Asare, "Why 300,000 Black Women Left the Workforce in 3 Months," *Forbes*, 4 August 2025, § Careers.

[179] Here I am thinking especially of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, Cindy Barbosa, "How Women Ended Liberia's Civil War: Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace," *The Nonviolence Project*, 4 February 2024; the Women's Councils in Rojava/DAANES, see Robert Evans, "The Women's War: A Utopia in

The many women who ensure Moses' survival have a direct impact on his sociocultural and economic positionality. Moses' birth narrative occurs in Exodus 2:2-10, and as I did previously in this chapter, I will only translate Exodus 2:2 and 10 here: "And the woman [Jochebed] conceived [וַתַּהַר, Qal-Pret-3FS; ἐν γαστρι ἔλαβεν] and bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS; ἔτεκεν] a son, and having seen that he was good [or ἀστεῖον, handsome], she hid him for three months…And the child grew up and she [Miriam or Jochebed] brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he was [or ἐγενήθη, he became] for her a son, and she called [וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3FS, ἐπωνόμασεν] his name Moshe, and she said, 'For from the waters, I drew him out.'"[180] This birth narrative begins the process of Moses' dual cultural identities, as a person who grows up in both worlds. Thus, Moses is one of the few people in the story who understands both sides of the MP, however limited his experience with one or the other might be, but only through the power of women.

Weems describes the ideological argument here, saying,

> The wisdom of the unnamed Pharaoh is called into question when even women are smart and bold enough to defy him: first the women in his employ…outwit him, and then his own Egyptian daughter colludes with Hebrew slave women and raises a Hebrew male child…Because even women are superior to him in wisdom, the Pharaoh's presumption to rule over the Hebrews is absurd.[181]

Women, even across ethnicities and classes, protect each other and one another's children, while men create the divisions and enforce them through violence. They threaten coercive modes of production. When read in light of Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms instituted to protect the "holy

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Syria?," The Women's War, 24 March 2020; "A Town for Women," The Women's War, 14 April 2020; and "The Women Warriors," The Women's War, 5 May 2020. There is also the example of Black and white women in the fight for women's rights in the United States, alongside countless other examples.

[180] The Greek ἐπωνόμασεν distinguishes this birth narrative from the others, where ἐκάλεσεν usually appears. However, this word is another way of saying, "named," so the break with other forms is not altogether unexpected in translation.

[181] Weems, "Hebrew Women," 31.

seed" (Ezra 9:2), these women form a counter-narrative to the male-dominated, נַחֲלָה-focused conception of identity. The women come together to protect each other from the male violence that would destroy the futures of their peoples. Yet, by the end of Exodus 2, Moses overthrows the women, with only Miriam appearing after Exodus 18, when Zipporah briefly reappears and is then forgotten.[182] Miriam herself begins a long tradition that continues after the text as a prophet and a notable woman, with a significant number of women named after her, including the modern Mary.[183] The role of men, on the other hand, is violence: Pharaoh twice commands that all the sons of the Hebrews die, Moses kills an Egyptian, and later fights off a group of shepherds so seven women can water their flock (2:17).

Before Zipporah is taken from the narrative, she presents another challenge to Moses' power. He names Gershom, which creates further issues for his identity due to the unknown "there" that שָׁם means in the name: "And she [Zipporah] bore [וַתֵּלֶד, Qal-Pret-3FS] a son, and he called [וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS] his name Gershom, for he said, 'I have been a sojourner in a foreign land'" (2:22). As I discussed in the First Horizon, the שָׁם- of Gershom's name is ambiguous, which then symbolizes the ambiguity of where Moses is or is not a גֵּר. In Egypt and Midian, Moses, as Israel, is under the control of Pharaoh and then Jethro. If Boer and Petterson are correct that Exodus 1-15 overturns Joseph's story, [184] then this act of naming symbolizes that the Israelites can never be free or settled while they remain under the economic control and power of other systems. Moses, then, symbolically moves from the "hyperstate" of Egypt (or Persia) to service in Jethro's household in a patronage system, but even Jethro's household is not freedom.

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[182] Exum, "Second Thoughts, 75.

[183] See Wilda Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam: Women Prophets in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2008), 131-149.

[184] Boer and Petterson, "Economic Relationships," 79.

The utopic dream of the lower class resides in the freedom to separate oneself from those in power and return to the subsistence-survival of the past, and Moses is their hero. This hero is rejected by the upper class, who use him as a conqueror and ultimately reject his ability to lead the people long-term.

Zipporah circumcises Gershom before Moses' family has a chance to adopt the children, moving the child out of the Levite household, and out of power. There was no issue when Moses lived within her household because they all functioned within Jethro's household in a matrilocal arrangement. However, when Moses returned to his family, he strained this arrangement, torn between the two loci. Ultimately, Moses chooses the patrilocal system, which, I argue, is why he takes a Cushite wife in Numbers 12 and why he sent Zipporah and their children to Midian in Exodus 18. Thus, for Roth,

> The story of Exodus, as a hybrid text, advanced the dual interests of Persia and that of a re-settling Israel…In one direction Israel took up this invitation to cement its national identity. In another, Israel was forced to sculpt its textual testimony under the watchful eye of the authorizing imperium, now self-installed as colonial pedagogue.[185]

Zipporah ends the ethnic conflict of patrilocal and matrilocal by circumcising Gershom, separating Moses from his family. As in Ezra and Nehemiah, the women are sent away. Gershom's circumcision, which I argue moves him from the tribe of Levi to Midian, takes place just before Moses meets Aaron, and therefore just before the priesthood is introduced.

Outside of Exodus, Gershom only appears in 1 Chronicles 23:15, 16 and 26:24. As I noted in Horizon 1, Bernat argues that the exclusion of a Mosaic genealogy served to bolster the priestly claims to power, particularly in that Moses' family does not exist in the genealogy of

[185] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 57.

Exodus 6:14-25, and the priesthood continues through Aaron.[186] Gershom's birth is a non-P text, whereas Genesis 6 derives from the P-source, which is more inclined toward endogamous unions.[187] As I argued in the previous chapter, 1 Chronicles acts as a counter-narrative to Ezra-Nehemiah in that, for the Chroniclers, mixed marriages were "generally viewed as [a sign] of divine blessing."[188] Counter to the Aaronide takeover, 1 Chronicles 23:15 presents Gershom and Eliezer's children as chiefs – in 26:24-26, Eliezer's descendants are in charge of the gifts King David collected to build the temple. Gershom's son, Shebuel, is in charge of storehouses. These actions, then, tie the Mosaic priesthood to David and to the building of the temple itself, signifying an alternative priestly tradition that potentially countered Aaron's high priesthood, and therefore Joshua's status as high priest (Zech 3:8) and Ezra's status as a leading scholar (Ezra 7:6). Or, if not a direct threat to the priesthood, I read this text as representative of a tradition in which some priests derived from mixed unions. Thus, Gershom—representing the children of exogamous unions—and Moses—representing the hybrid peoples from Egypt and Persia returning from the exile—must be excluded from the genealogies of the post-exilic world.

These actions culminate in the murder of Zimri and Cozbi in Numbers 25, and the subsequent genocide of Midianites in Numbers 31, with Phinehas carrying the implements of worship to ensure the deity's help. As Pharaoh commands in Exodus 1, the Israelites "killed every male" in Numbers 31:7, and "take the women of Midian and their children captive" (31:9), likely through rape-marriage as the spoils of war.[189] This story ends in Moses commanding the

[186] Bernat, *Covenant*, 88.

[187] Bernat, *Covenant*, 88.

[188] Gary N. Knoppers, "'Married into Moab': The Exogamy Practiced by Judah and His Descendants in the Judahite Lineages," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 189.

[189] Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 150-1.

people to kill every boy and every girl who is not a virgin (31:17). The text does not specify which group of Midian is slaughtered, but does say they killed the Midianite kings (31:8). Thus, in killing every boy, girl, and woman who has slept with a man (31:17-18), the reader is left with the understanding that Moses has ordered the murder of Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer, who are in Jethro's household. There is no remnant of his family left, and Moses takes on the genocidal violence of Pharaoh, just as Joseph had. His ability to act as a symbol of collaboration and hybridity are rendered meaningless. I read this story as one in which Moses sides with ethnocentrism, and so does his god (31:1-4). Both Joseph and Moses' hybridities are kept from influencing the people of Israel because they do not have any other children or claim in Israel's inheritance. Ephraim and Manasseh are adopted; Gershom and Eliezer are Midianites.

In reading with a womanist-accomplice lens, I expand my perspective to larger Africana traditions and philosophies around the world. Drawing on Glissant's philosophy in *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*, I understand this text as the rejection of Moses' "rhizomatic identity" in favor of a "root-identity" that excludes others.[190] Root identities are not inherently evil, but are founded on creation myths, "sanctified by the hidden violence of filiation that…follows from this founding," which "is ratified by a claim to legitimacy that allows a community to proclaim its entitlement to the possession of a land," and "preserved by being projected onto other territories, making their conquest legitimate."[191] Altogether, this filiation and connection of a land to the founding myth "authorizes the community in question to consider this land…as absolutely its own," and provides sacred acquittal for any and all actions taken to protect that claim.[192] White

[190] Édouard Glissant, *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*, trans. Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 11.

[191] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 143-4.

[192] Glissant, *Introduction*, 39.

supremacy is a root identity, in that it seeks to establish itself and crowd out the other roots around it. The white male identity into which I was raised required one way of life and one image of manhood, although no men I knew fit it. My family sought to enforce a root identity, Christian and white-adjacent, onto my sister as well, but it continually failed because she was not white and her communities refused to accept her as white. She continually faces racialized sexualization, among other forms of racism. It is through seeing her life that I came to move towards rhizomatic thinking and reject the foundational narratives of my former root identity. In the text, the patriarchal narratives signal the initial founding myth, but the enacting of the claim upon the land begins in Exodus, when the people finally separate themselves as a separate community.

In this way, inter-ethnic identities and intercultural influences are rejected as dangerous to the identity of the people. Yes, Moses certainly had early periods where he had children with a Midianite woman, but by the time he creates the governmental apparatus proposed by Jethro (Exodus 18:14-23), he has separated himself from his Midianite family. As Ezra and Nehemiah receive assistance from other nations, chiefly Persia, so too does Moses receive guidance from Jethro, but once the law is established, he has no part in Midian via marriage. After these events, when Moses no longer has connections to the people in Midian or Canaan, he can lead the battles against the people of the land to establish the mythical homeland of the Israelites, though the battles continue long past his death into the monarchical period. It is this ideology of the mythical homeland, of Goshen and Canaan-become-Israel, that develops most into useful tools for the post-exilic MP and those who service it.

Seeking Utopia

Within the Marxist hermeneutic, each texts contains utopic dreams, often counter to one another, representing the upper- and lower-class perspectives on the world and how to make it better. The upper-class utopia in Joseph's story is the total control of a region, albeit under the real ruling class, Egypt or Persia, to settle down and grow. In Moses' story, it is an escape from that ruling class to set up one's one system of rule and domination. Both stories involve the separation of one's people from outsiders and the establishment of unique identity markers.[193] Through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read this utopia as currently being attempted by the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and many other white-dominant countries, in the form of anti-immigration laws.[194] These actions are taken to protect the "homeland" and one's own people, construed in a variety of ways depending on the culture. For everyone who is not white, for those who stand with the oppressed, and for the poor, however, this utopia is dystopic. Whiteness has always been a malleable concept, stretching to fit the needs of whoever is in power.

These anti-immigration, anti-Black, white supremacist tools are now being turned against white citizens in the same ways they were used against minoritized citizens and residents. In my current context, the US government is using Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the larger apparatus of the Department of Homeland Security, alongside the invasion of cities using the National Guard, and the many successful attempts to bring universities and news media

[193] From 1 and 2 Chronicles, one also reads the idea of a future separation, like that of Moses, but also shifts the power of the monarch away from the Davidic monarchy to the Persians as the ones authorized to control the temple. See Steven J. Schweitzer, "Exile, Empire, and Prophecy: Reframing Utopian Concerns in Chronicles," in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 620 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 93.

[194] Nicholas Vinocur, "If You Think Trump's Migration Policies Are Extreme, Look at the EU's," *POLITICO*, 17 October 2024, § Politics.

under the control of the government. Aimé Césaire calls this the "boomerang" of colonialism.[195] This "boomerang" action occurs when the tools that colonizers use to oppress the colonized are turned against the citizen – fascism. By dehumanizing the Other, via slavery, colonialism, or any other oppressive apparatus, one also dehumanizes oneself in order to maintain that system and treat the other as an animal.[196] As Césaire states,

> It is Nazism, yes, but that before they [European citizens] were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.[197]

The European colonial project began centuries ago, and the technologies of war and control have expanded greatly since then. Now, with practiced tools and methods, the technologies of social control developed through military interventions around the world are being turned back on citizens. Similarly, Joseph's system of control that created power for the Egyptian monarchy is eventually turned on his own people. He created the means of establishing and maintaining power for Egypt and dominating the surrounding countries. Joseph and the returnee community took Egypt and Persia as models for the use of power and development of identity, focused on control and land, because the other models were often lost to them. Glissant calls this the "trap of citizenship," which, for many enslaved Africans, was "The only source of light…the transcendental presence of the Other, of his Visibility—colonizer or administrator."[198] Exodus

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[195] Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on Colonialism," in *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 29–79.

[196] Cesaire, "Discourse on Colonialism," 41.

[197] Césaire, "Discourse on Colonialism," 36.

[198] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 161.

acts as a warning about where that power leads, with the Hebrews enslaved as Joseph had enslaved the Egyptians. That is, now both Egyptians and Hebrews must service the whims of the pharaoh.

However, through my womanist-accomplice lens, I read the women of Exodus as the counter to these actions, and solidarity among minoritized women in the modern world, because they collude and cooperate across all lines of division, embracing the Poetics of Relation, "in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other."[199] By humanizing each other, women and other marginalized people can counteract the dehumanizing effects of the "boomerang" that empires initiate. The androcentric texts focus on Moses, the man who comes out of women's work in solidarity, but women's power remains present in his name and his survival. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Ezra and Nehemiah must forcibly exclude the non-*golah* women from their communities. In order to ensure the domination of the returnee class over the remainees and other "people of the land," the imaginative power to cross the boundaries had to be subdued. The women had to be subsumed under the power of men, and then those men who embodied the nature of their power had to be removed and kicked out of the land and genealogies, much as Moses was buried in Moab (Deut 34:5-6), a member of a *golah* community who could not return, alongside his sons, Gershom and Eliezer, who are disappeared from the Torah.

According to Kenneth Ngwa, this tension is key to understanding the utopic vision of the exodus story as a whole, in the formation of what he calls a "Gershomite identity,"

> *Gershomite* subjectivity cannot and does not claim self-defining transformation by simply 'returning' to or reclaiming ancestral space and memory, but by also

[199] Glissant, *Poetics*, 11.

> grappling with the enduring power of globalized—and/or imperialized—cultural and territorial otherness attached to the identity of the migrant community.[200]

Gershomite identity functions "to protect the endangered, to remember the discarded, and to liberate the multiple that are confined in the singularizing body of the nation, colony, or empire," and, in this text, "is about reengaging Egypt as a fragmented and fragmenting space, as a displaced and alienated space, but also as a place where liberation is already ongoing in the narrative presence and activities," of the women.[201] For Ngwa, the bearer of the sojourner identity is not Moses, but Gershom, "who embodies this uttered identity in the meaning of his very name."[202] Gershom's narratival existence depends on "Zipporah's material and epistemological body,"[203] as Moses' identity also depended on the other women who kept him alive. Both Moses and Gershom sit at the intersection of multiple groups of women who define their relationship to the world and their communities. Thus, "Gershom is a symbol of Moses's kinship identity, both for Exodus as a whole and for the Yahwistic texts specifically,"[204] and "is a reminder of Moses's foreign status in Midian until he is circumcised, through which he is transformed from a symbol of exclusion and foreign-ness to one of inclusion."[205]

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[200] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 107.

[201] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 86.

[202] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 84. For Adriane B Leveen, "Inside out: Jethro, the Midianites and a Biblical Construction of the Outsider," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34.4 (2010): 401, "this brief speech suggests not only that Moses the Egyptian first appeared as an outsider to Jethro, but that he has long been an outsider to himself. Self and other are momentarily fused." Susanne Scholz, "The Complexities of 'His' Liberation Talk: A Literary Feminist Reading of the Book of Exodus," in *Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series) 5 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 27, disagrees with Ngwa, arguing that Gershom's name is in reference to Moses.

[203] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 84.

[204] Daniel Wang, "Circumcision as a Kinship Ritual in Ancient Israel" (Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2018), 168.

[205] Wang, "Circumcision," 171.

Glissant calls this Gershomite identity "Creolization," which is a "counterpoetics"[206] that he defines as:

> change through exchange with each other, by way of inexorable clashes, pitiless wars, but also of advances in consciousness and hope, which enable us to claim – without being utopian, or rather, by embracing utopianism – that today's human communities are engaging in the difficult process of giving up something to which they have obstinately clung for a long time: that is, the conviction that the identity of a being is valid and recognizable only if it excludes the identity of all other possible beings.[207]

This Gershomite identity, the creolization of Egypt, Midian, and Israel, is the utopian view that appears in Exodus 1-4. As Roth says, "[Exodus 1:1-3:15] form[s] a dialectic of identity which claims that the uncertainty of dislocation and ambiguity of hybridity should be considered strengths to be cultivated, not weaknesses to be rejected."[208] The women around Moses reject the atomizing perspectives of those in power, although their efforts lead to Moses ultimately working against their efforts. As Ericka Dunbar says, "By uplifting cultural values of interconnectedness, mutualism, and care for the vulnerable, the intergenerational collective of females help each other adapt to their changing social realities."[209] From the beginning, these women are already building a utopian dream in which they share one another's children, like the women in subsistence-survival MPs take care of each other's children. The hybridized characters signify the rejection colonial discourse, "placing his/her identity in the hybridic locale between the powerful master the larger community of the powerless,"[210] and therefore a rejection of Ezra and Nehemiah's attempts to separate women and ethnicity.

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[206] Glissant, *Caribbean*, 163-4.

[207] Glissant, *Introduction*, 6.

[208] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 61.

[209] Dunbar, "Freedom Fighters," 92.

[210] Roth, *Hyphenating*, 92.

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EXCURSUS: NOTABLE DAUGHTERS

There are three additional stories that focus on women, two of those stories concern women who are named, and the third are daughters whose father died without a male heir. For this dissertation, the first story that is most relevant is Dinah, who is born in Genesis 30:21 and later raped by Shechem, leading Simeon and Levi to convince Shechem to have all the men in his city circumcise themselves, leaving them vulnerable to attack by the two brothers and plundered by all the men in the family (Gen 34). This woman is the only member of Leah's uterine family that has no etiology, although she does have a birth narrative: "And after, she bore [יָלְדָה, Qal-Perf-3FS] a daughter and she called [וַתִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3FS] her name Dinah" (30:21). Although this formula is normal, except that Dinah is feminine, the only other naming formula for women occurs in Job 42:13-14: "And there were to him seven sons and three daughters. And he called [וַיִּקְרָא, Qal-Pret-3MS] the name of the first Yemimah, and the name of the second Qetsiah, and the name of the third Qeren-Happuch." These three daughters have a naming formula, but no true birth narrative, so I will not dwell too much on them. The focus in their story is Job and the children are just compensation.

Robert Harris makes an interesting point that in many Jewish texts, Dinah and Joseph switched genders in the womb, although his reading centers Joseph.[1] Unlike the other named children of Jacob, Dinah is not conceived [הרה], and so many Jewish texts argue Dinah was originally intended to be male, such as *Babylonian Talmud* Berakhot 60a and Y. Berakhot 9:3

[1] Robert A Harris, "Sexual Orientation in the Presentation of Joseph's Character in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature," *AJS Review* 43.1 (2019): 83-88.

(14a), among others.[2] In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Genesis 30:21b-c, Leah says, "'This is from THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES, that half of the tribes should be from me, but from Rachel, my sister, two tribes come just as what came out of the female slaves.' And THE-ONE-WHO-PROVIDES heard the prayer from Leah, and the fetus from her belly that was to be Joseph was in the belly of Rachel, and Dinah was in the belly of Leah." Thus, it seems Dinah was originally supposed to be male, but Leah's kindness toward her sister led the deity to finally give Rachel a son.

Like Tamar, Dinah has a chapter about her story, although she is denied children and life after her story is over, with the exception of the tradition that Asenath is her secret daughter.[3] Dinah stands in for women who are put in danger by foreign men. Most of the time, the biblical text is worried about men being corrupted or seduced by foreign women, so her story, although negative, is a turn towards fear for women. Shechem "takes [וַיִּקַּח] her, sleeps with her, and humiliates her [וַיְעַנֶּהָ]" (Gen 34:2).[4] This language of rape is also use for the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, linking the two together.[5] Only after this event does the man ask his father to get her as a wife (Gen 34:4). Notably, Jacob keeps silent and remains diplomatic, waiting for Simeon and Levi to avenge Dinah (34:5). They tell all the men in the town to circumcise themselves and then kill them all (34:13-26). Dinah is not referenced again, except in Genesis 46:15, and seems to have no part in the inheritance. However, as Gafney notes, Dinah and her sisters are

[2] Harris, "Sexual," 85.

[3] Helena Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 48. For Asenath, which I discussed in chapter 4, see Alan T. Levenson, *Joseph: Portraits through the Ages* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 89; and Edgar Kellenberger, "Asenat: Why Have the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh an Egyptian Ancestress?," *Studia Biblica Slovaca* 10.1 (2018): 7. It appears in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 41:45.

[4] Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37-50*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 355 (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002),23-24, argues that there is no rape language here, but that the problem with Dinah is that she goes out on her own and crosses boundaries. However, it seems to me that the text functions as a warning to blame women for their rapes when crossing such boundaries.

[5] A. Graeme Auld, "Tamar between David, Judah and Joseph," *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 65 (2000): 95.

referenced in Gen 37:35 and 46:7.[6] The narrator focuses the long-term effects of this rape on the brothers who led the attack and tricked the people of Shechem—Levi and Simeon—who are punished with a loss of land, and Levi being given temple service rather than land (Gen 49:5-7).[7] In addition, Joseph receives Shechem's land and is buried there (Gen 48:22; Joshua 24:32).

Dinah is the lowest member of the familial hierarchy, not even worth a mention when the family meets Esau in Genesis 32.[8] She is not listed among the members of the household that bows to Joseph in his dream, though Leah also does not appear (37:5-11).[9] Furthermore, she is defined only in relation to Leah, not to Jacob, and Shechem never refers to her by name (34:4).[10] She is the perpetual victim, the woman who must be protected. For Römer, she is "a late construction from the Persian period that aims at presenting a complicated relation with the Shechemites, who are presented here as uncircumcised."[11] Thus, in the same moment when foreign women are being expelled from the returnee community, so too are people telling the story of a woman who is raped by an outsider, one of the people of the land who does not have the proper identity markings. This story reaffirms the act of separating the *golah* community and the people of the land.

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[6] Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 48.

[7] Irmtraud Fischer, "On the Significance of the 'Women Texts' in the Ancestral Narratives," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., vol. 1 of *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 287.

[8] Kristine Garroway, *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*, Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 167-8.

[9] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 64.

[10] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 64.

[11] Thomas Römer, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17) as an Identity Marker of Nascent Judaism," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott et al. (Sheffield: equinox, 2022), 13.

The other women I mentioned are Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, frequently referred to as the "daughters of Zelophehad," but whom I will refer to as the five sisters. Their father had no sons before he died, and are first referenced in the census of Manasseh in Numbers 26:33. In Numbers 27, they go before Moses and Eleazar (27:2), who were enrolling Israelites (26:6) and state their plight. Moses asks the deity, who then affirms that the women will take on their father's inheritance, and their example is passed as a new law among the people (27:5-9). This decision becomes a problem in Num 36, when the head of Manasseh complains to Moses that the tribe's land rights could pass to another tribe if the women marry a man from another tribe. Moses then instates a law that the sisters, and any other women in such a situation, must marry within their father's tribe (36:6-9). These five sisters obey and marry within their family (36:11-12). However, even after entering the land, these women do not receive their portion and have to ask Joshua to intervene (Joshua 17:3-6). Ultimately, their position is lost and they are only referenced in 1 Chronicles 7:15b, "And there were daughters for Zelophehad."

Zlotnick deepens this reading by connecting Dinah, the five sisters, and Cozbi.[12] By asserting control over who the sisters can marry, Moses undermines women's ability to inherit property. The focus is shifted onto the fears of the men and control over the land. Here, the tribe of Manasseh is not afraid of exogamy, of the women going astray after another man's gods, or anything religious. They are afraid that another *tribe*, members of the same larger group, will have access to their land. For Zlotnick, this fear explains the real reason behind the murder of Cozbi and Zimri, "Zimri did not marry within his clan to secure paternal inheritance as the heirs of Zelophehad had been bidden."[13] Instead, both Dinah and Cozbi are "a reminder of women's

[12] Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 49-52.

[13] Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 51.

sole power, the ability to generate more patriarchs and…perpetuate or disrupt existing patters of succession."[14] In Genesis 34, Shechem does not die because he raped Dinah, but because "his potential incorporation into Jacob's family presents insoluble problems" and Cozbi is murdered "because she cannot be integrated into existing patriarchal order."[15] The children of both women would be difficult to place into the unilineal inheritance system.

Moses' solution to this problem is to force women into marriages that they might not consent to, in order to maintain control over the land. This solution to the problem of women's inheritance is an echo of Dinah's removal from the story, in that all of the focus is on the men and what their actions accomplish in controlling the land. In both cases, "Institutional law is a powerful ally of permanence. It defends the status quo through precedent, custom, and statute. The law's love of the status quo is only underlined by its occasional suspension when those who stand to gain from change are able to achieve reform."[16] By allowing Dinah to have children, or to marry Shechem, and by allowing Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah to marry across tribes, the people in power lose access to some of that power.

[14] Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 51.

[15] Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 52.

[16] Calum Carmichael, "Inheritance in Biblical Sources," *Law and Literature* 20.2 (2008): 233.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have read the naming stories in the Hebrew Bible through the lens of post-exilic economies and politics through intersectional and Marxist lenses. Building on Kessler and Bridge's analysis of these stories, I have found that women primarily named their children, and in the stories wherein women did not name their children, the father names the child.[1] These moments most commonly appear when the mother and father are of two separate ethnic groups, and, because the texts I analyzed were written by a certain people, support the ideologies of those people. Read through the lens of Persian Yehud, in which the corpus of texts began coming together,[2] those ideologies support the upper class and their position in relation to the upper class and Persia.[3] In order to understand how those ideologies function to defend the mode of production instituted by the Persian bureaucracy and managed by those who returned to

[1] Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 64.3 (2014): 389–400; Rainer Kessler, "Benennung Des Kindes Durch Die Israelitische Mutter," *Wort Und Dienst* 19 (1987): 25–35.

[2] Bob Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt: The Fate of the Yehudite Community of Elephantine* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020); Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995); Jon L. Berquist, "Construction of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 53–66; John J. Collins, "The Transformation of the Torah in Second Temple Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism: In the Persian Hellenistic & Roman Period* 43.4/5 (2012): 455–74,

[3] Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, "The Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 509–30; Raik Heckl, "Remembering Jacob in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Era," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38–80; John Kessler, "Persia's Loyal Yahwists: Power Identity and Ethnicity in Achaemenid Yehud," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 91–122; Oded Lipschits, "Achaemenid Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 19–52; Othniel Margalith, "The Political Role of Ezra as Persian Governor," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98.1 (1986): 110–12.

the land from State-imposed exile, I used my womanist-accomplice approach and Fredric Jameson's model of Marxist literary analysis to analyze Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21, Ruth in *Ruth*, and Moses in Exodus-Deuteronomy, but especially Exod 1-4.[4] In order to provide additional context and support my argument, I also analyzed the stories of Bilhah and Zilpah (Gen 30), Rebekah (Gen 25), Bath-Sheba (2 Sam 11-12; 1 Kings 1-2), Tamar (Gen 38), and Joseph (Gen 37, 39-50).

In the case of Bilhah and Zilpah, Rachel and Leah name their children, claiming the enslaved women's children as their own, having given them to Jacob for procreative purposes. Unlike the story of these four women, which sets the standard for the women-centric birthing and naming genre, Abraham names Ishmael, rather than Sarai or Hagar. This act supplants the matrilineal line and establishes Ishmael as Abram's rightful heir, following ancient Mesopotamian laws and cultural practices.[5] However, this act is likely a later edit to the text, in which Hagar named the child.[6] This birth inserts Egyptian heritage into the family, which is a problem for the post-exilic returnees who seek to promote their Persian benefactors and the Jerusalem temple over Egyptian influence and the temple at Elephantine. Therefore, I argued that the deity's decision to rename Abraham and Sarah, reform the covenant, give them a second child (whom Abraham also names), and Sarah's request to expel Hagar and Ishmael from their household, is a symbolic attempt to expel the influence of Egyptian and the Yehudi at the temple at Elephantine. These actions were necessary to ensure that Persia's extractive regime, performed

[4] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[5] Zafrira Ben-Barak, *Inheritance by Daughters in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Social, Legal and Ideological Revolution*, trans. Betty Sigler Rozen (Jaffa, Israel: Archaeological Center Publications, 2006).

[6] Kessler, "Benennung," 31.

through the Jerusalem temple as "covert violence,"[7] remained the dominant economic power and supporter of the returnee upper class. However, within this story, there remains a promise of a break with the status quo, as seen through the survival of Hagar and Ishmael and migratory systems that continued outside the power of the State.

I then discussed the Judahite lineage, particularly the Davidic line, as a genealogy that includes exogamous unions that enhance, rather than detract from, the descendants of that line.[8] I first discussed Bath-Sheba, then Tamar, then Ruth, as the stories become more complicated in that order. Bath-Sheba is ethnically ambiguous in the text, and who became part of David's household through his decision to rape her (2 Sam 11-12).[9] Their first child dies, but both David and Nathan name Solomon/Yedidyah, marking him as the future heir in an act of dramatic irony. Bath-Sheba and Nathan use Solomon to ensure their own survival. Next, I discussed Tamar, almost certainly a Canaanite woman.[10] Judah, the patriarch of the clan, has three children with Bath-Shua, a Canaanite woman, though two of them die. Before Er, the eldest, died, Judah had given him Tamar as a wife; after Er's death, Onan, the second son, refuses to fulfill his duty to provide Er with an heir, and so the deity kills him as well (Gen 38:9-10). Rather than fulfilling his duty as the father-in-law, which required Judah to give Tamar to his youngest son, Judah

[7] Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 151.

[8] Jennifer L. Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 34.

[9] Sara Koenig, "Bathsheba between the Lines and beneath the Surface," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Kings*, ed. Keith Bodner and J.M. Johnson, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 670 (T&T Clark, 2020), 37.

[10] Yairah Amit, "Tamar, from Victim to Mother of a Dynasty," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 294–305; Philip F. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 91; Edward Allen Jones, III, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 604 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 65-7.

sends her away (38:11). Tamar, in turn, tricks Judah into impregnating her as an act of survival, and births twins (38:12-30). Judah names both of these twins in a formula similar to the births of Esau and Jacob (25:25-26), and Tamar's twins replace Er and Onan as the heads of their clans.

Finally, I discussed Ruth, a Moabite woman who became part of Elimelech and Naomi's family through marriage (Ruth 1:4). When the men of the family die, Ruth and Naomi travel to Beth-Lehem, where Ruth survives through gleaning until the harvest season is over. At that point, Naomi suggests that Ruth and Elimelech's kinsperson, Boaz, have sex (3:1-5), though Ruth pushes her own agenda (3:9-13). Boaz supersedes them all and gets Elimelech's land through Boaz and Ruth's son, Obed (4:1-13). The women of the town name Naomi as the mother of this child, and they also name the child (4:17), supplanting Ruth's position as anything other than a surrogate.[11] In this way, the women ensure that the land remains within Judah.

I read the Ruth narrative through the conflict over assimilation and as those people who do not appear in the official genealogies of the *golah* community. With no male line to go through, the women of the town "correct" the genealogy of Obed by connecting him to a more certain mother, Naomi, who is a returning migrant. As a womanist-accomplice, I further read this story through the lens of small town, poor people, especially Black people and migrants, who do not have access to the legal documentation of inheritance. I turned this reference to a discussion of the function of documentation as a means of State power, particularly against minoritized peoples in the United States. The utopian dreams in this story are of mutual aid and solidarity, of hospitality towards people from different origins by a community that comes together despite the legal parameters in which people are forced to work.

[11] Vanessa L. Ochs, "Reading Ruth: Where Are the Women?," in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994), 296.

Finally, I discussed the stories of Joseph and Moses as opposites of each other. Joseph is taken as a slave into Egypt (Gen 37:28), where he is later imprisoned (39:20), then freed and made the second-in-command under Pharaoh (41:41). When he takes on this new role, Joseph is re-named by Pharaoh, pushing the man into a liminal space between Hebrew and Egyptian (41:45).[12] Pharaoh also gives Asenath to Joseph, and the pair have two children whom Joseph names, Ephraim and Manasseh (41:45, 50-52). In this position, Joseph enslaves all of Egypt and the surrounding peoples, and brings his own family into Egypt and ensures that they receive a special land apart from the other Egyptians where they can raise their flock (Gen 46-47). Because of Joseph's questionable identity, his act of naming the children does not solidify them as Hebrews, as inheritors to the covenant, so Jacob adopts the two children following the laws of Mesopotamian cities (Gen 48).[13]

Moses, on the other hand, is born to slaves under threat of genocide, but given to the pharaoh's daughter and brought out of slavery (Exod 2). This woman names him, claiming him as an Egyptian.[14] After killing an Egyptian to protect an Israelite, Moses flees to Midian, where he finds a group of women who bring them into their father's household, and marries one of them. Again, Moses and Zipporah have a child, whom Moses names (2:22), but because Moses is Egyptian and Zipporah is Midianite, the child is outside the covenant. This ambiguity is concretized when Zipporah circumcises Gershom in Exodus 4:24-26, which I argue marks him

[12] Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation Versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 119.

[13] I. Mendelsohn, "A Ugaritic Parallel to the Adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 9.3 (1959): 180–83. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 325.

[14] Shaun W. Flynn, *Children in Ancient Israel: The Hebrew and Mesopotamia in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).-92; and Gale A Yee, "'Take This Child and Suckle It for Me': Wet Nurses and Resistance in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39.4 (2009): 180–89.

as Midianite, rather than Israelite. After Moses frees the Israelites, and other unnamed people, from Egyptian control, the reader discovers that Moses had sent Zipporah and their two children away (Exod 18:2-6). Thus, I read with Gafney that Moses divorced Zipporah and replaced her.[15] However, over the course of events, Moses is replaced by the Aaronide priesthood and has no heirs outside of a tradition found only in 1 Chronicles 23:15, 16 and 26:24. I read this story as an attempt to support the power of the priesthood and the temple, again, as the hand of the Persian bureaucratic apparatus in Persian Yehud. However, reading with my womanist-accomplice approach, I find that residing within the stories of Joseph and Moses, as in Ruth, is the idea that hybridity is sometimes necessary to save a people. The divisions among various groups support the status quo to the detriment of the lower classes. The utopian dreams within Moses' story are found in the women who work across class and ethnic lines to ensure the survival of each other's children, which leads to the liberation of the Hebrews.

In each of these stories, there are many impulses, and I have focused on two: the attempts by the middle-management of the imperial apparatus to establish their position within the larger system by continuing the reproduction of that system through division, and the attempts by the lower classes to survive, which is only achieved through mutuality and working across those same divisions. The lower classes in these stories live primarily within the subsistence-survival mode of production, but are subjected to extractive regimes, which limits their capacity to store food and help each other.[16] Extractive modes of production, in which one class owns the means of production, particularly the land, and another class labors and function as a means of production to feed the owning class, are death-dealing systems.[17] Thus, in order to maintain the

[15] Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 133.

[16] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 80.

[17] Boer, *The Sacred Economy*, 81.

economic system and status quo, the State helps create and maintain ideological apparatuses that influence everyone.

These texts function as the foundations of those apparatuses, and throughout, the primary ideologeme, the smallest unit of an ideology, has been the land. The concept of a homeland, a place where one belongs, is common among many cultures around the world throughout history and is a root of the Torah and other origin stories in the biblical text.[18] However, extractive regimes, such as Persia, switch that system to a land that belongs to a people. In this way, the land becomes something to be owned, over and against the subsistence-survival concept of usufruct presented throughout the Hebrew Bible, in which the land belongs to the deity and the people only work it. European epistemology, particularly through John Locke and his contemporaries, draw on the former conception of land, something to be owned, and thus the world has become a battleground over private property, always ultimately owned by the State rather than by a deity.[19] This same system of ownership extended to people, to other humans, in the development of chattel slavery, which extended and worsened older systems of slavery and became racial capitalism.[20]

It is in this manner that Ezra and Nehemiah can order the expulsion of foreign women and children, foregoing their humanity to ensure the idea of *golah* purity against the corruption of other people.[21] Protecting the mythical Promised Land and the people to whom it belongs, disconnected from the reality of who actually lives and works the land, becomes the primary

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[18] Jonathan Trotter, "The Homeland and the Legitimation of the Diaspora: Egyptian Jewish Origin Stories in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 28.2 (2018): 91–122.

[19] Cedric J. Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 19.

[20] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 26, 38.

[21] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 16-18.

impetus for dehumanizing other peoples. For Glissant, myth is the first historical consciousness,[22] and the first myth is about who belongs on the land.[23] Drawing on my womanist-accomplice hermeneutic, this emphasis on protecting the true owners of the land also takes the form of Christian nationalism and white supremacy. I find that this same impulse has appeared time and again in the rhetoric of the US political system among Democrats and Republicans, most recently in the form of fears that immigrants are entering the United States, ginned up primarily by conservatives, but echoed by supposed leaders of progressive movements.[24] These are the same fears that led to the under-education of Black people, among other forms of oppression. At the root of these anti-immigration talking points is a fear of whiteness no longer being dominant in the United States, and therefore, of the world. It is a fear of dilution, of giving in to the masses of the world and giving up the notion that one group is superior to another.

Connections to Now

As a womanist-accomplice, I see my position as fighting not just for the rights of one or two groups, but as Alice Walker says, womanists are "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people."[25] Thus, I broaden the scope of my analysis to the world here, because racism oppresses all people over the world, and fight for one person's freedom is the fight for everyone's freedom.

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[22] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 71.

[23] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 13-52.

[24] J. Baxter Oliphant and Andy Cerda, "Republicans and Democrats Have Different Top Priorities for U.S. Immigration Policy," *Pew Research Center*, 8 September 2022, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/09/08/republicans-and-democrats-have-different-top-priorities-for-u-s-immigration-policy/.

[25] Alice Walker, "Definitions of Womanist," in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), xi.

I first turn to Palestine, not just due to the ongoing genocide, although that is certainly reason enough, but because the Palestinians and African and African-diasporic people around the world have a long history of solidarity with each other.[26]

Not one month after my prospectus for this dissertation was approved, Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023; I write this conclusion mere weeks before the two-year anniversary of that attack. On October 9, two days later, Israel announced a siege of Gaza and began a policy of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank.[27] In the last several months, this policy has taken the form of an enforced famine, cutting off aid and murdering humans waiting for food without provocation, although the obliteration of 98.5% of arable farmland in Gaza has ensured that such a famine will continue for decades even with humanitarian aid.[28] These events are important because, up until January 20, 2025, when Donald Trump began his second presidency and began using the governmental apparatus to institute a totalitarian, white-supremacist regime, the Israeli genocide against Palestinians was a particularly prescient example of dehumanization for the purposes of controlling land and government. In addition, it takes place in the same land and under the same auspices as the post-exilic return to the land in the biblical texts.

Thus, I compare the Balfour Declaration to Ezra 1:2-4, when Cyrus orders the return of the return of the *golah* people to Yehud, and particularly to Jerusalem. Following this

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[26] Khury Petersen-Smith, "Cops Here, Bombs There: Black-Palestinian Solidarity," in *Palestine: A Socialist Introduction*, ed. Sumaya Awad and brian bean (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020), 169–84.

[27] Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, *Legal Analysis of the Conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, Conference Room Paper (Human Rights Council, 16 September 2025), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/commission-of-inquiry-report-genocide-in-gaza-a-hrc-60-crp-3/.

[28] "Famine Confirmed for First Time in Gaza," *World Health Organization*, 22 August 2025, https://www.who.int/news/item/22-08-2025-famine-confirmed-for-first-time-in-gaza.

comparison, the Palestinians, or "the people of the land," the remainees, as I have discussed, who are descended from the same people as the returnees (both then and now), people who did not leave the land, fought against the colonization of their land under British-controlled "Mandatory Palestine."[29] In this period and earlier, many of the "people of the land," both Jews (of all kinds) and people of other ethnic and/or religious groups, worked together, as the inhabitants offered to help the returnees rebuild in Ezra 4:1-2. That is not to say that everything was perfect, but that the conflicts escalated under British control as that government sought to get rid of as many Jews as possible.[30] Those who served under the protection of Empire, e.g. Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Sanballat, and those who ruled or returned under and as the British imperial apparatus, created divisions between the inhabitants, both old and new.[31] The British sought to implement their own policies to increase the economic output of their new land.[32] Their emphasis on Palestine as the Jewish homeland was a useful cudgel with which to do so, and many Zionist organizations were

[29] Sami Adwan et al., eds., *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 2-107; and Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), 17-54.

[30] Khalidi, *Palestine*, 52.

[31] According to Samia Henni, "French-Israeli Nuclear Coloniality," in *Their Borders, Our World: Building New Solidarities with Palestine*, ed. Mahdi Sabbagh, Palestine Festival of Literature (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2024), 61–70, his division also occurred between Ashkenazi Jews, who were the designated as the managers of the territory, and Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, many of whom already lived in the land. Sephardic and Mizrahi communities continue to live in greater poverty than Ashkenazi Jews and thus are often forced to perform more difficult labor, such as the construction of nuclear weapons plants. The nuclear weapons facilities were built with generous funding from France, including the temporary resettlement of Algerian and other North African Jews, in an effort to maintain control of France's North African colonies. See also Laurence J. Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 182-191 for more on uses of space and power against Mizrahi Jews. In particular, "To become integrated into Israeli society, it was necessary to divest themselves [Mizrahi Jews] of exactly what they treasured, the specific cultural practices they had brought with them and through which they constructed their identity" (179). See Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israeli* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 199-202, 218-225, 257-8, for religious conflicts among these groups. For a Sephardic and Mizrahi perspective, see Ilise Benshushan Cohen, "Intersections of Antisemitism, Racism, and Nationalism: A Sephardi/Mizrahi Perspective," in *On Anti-Semitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice for Peace (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 43–58.

[32] Khalidi, *Palestine*, 52, "Unlike most other peoples who fell under colonial rule, [Palestinians] not only had to contend with the colonial power in the metropole, in this case London, but also with a singular colonial-settler movement that, while beholden to Britain, was independent of it."

willing tools.[33] This is the same project undertaken by empire generally, in which multiple marginalized peoples are set against each other and ideologies develop to support systems of oppression.[34]

I want to be clear on this point that the responsibility here lies with the British Empire, and later the United States, as well as the broader white-supremacist, antisemitic, Eurocentric apparatus, which created and protected a system wherein ethnic conflict between the remainees and returnees was nigh inevitable. Individuals and groups certainly made the situation worse and have responsibility for their own actions at this time, but extractive, capitalist regime of the British Empire, and of Persia in the ancient world, presented the returnees with little choice in the matter. These settlers had to ensure the land produced the materials necessary to sate the unceasing hunger of Empire, to maintain their own positions and lives. Failure would only lead to the leaders being replaced, rather than freedom.

Here, I also read the conflicts between marginalized people throughout the world, especially in the United States. Poor people who support anti-immigration policies, poor white people fight to end welfare for themselves just to ensure Black "welfare queens" do not receive that same welfare,[35] and Asians who sue to overturn university implementations of the Civil

[33] Not all Jews, nor all Zionists, because Zionism has changed over time, and especially since 1947. For a variety of Jewish perspectives in the last 150 years, see Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., "Zionism," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 529–633.

[34] See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). For more on the theopolitics of settler colonialism, particularly in light of Palestine and Israel, see Mitri Raheb, "Settler Colonialism, Palestine, and the Bible," in *The Critic in the World: Essays in Honor of Fernando F. Segovia*, ed. Amy Lindeman Allen, Francisco Lozada Jr., and Yak-hwee Tan, Resources for Biblical Study 108 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2024), 163–88.

[35] Shannon M. Monnat, "Toward a Critical Understanding of Gendered Color-Blind Racism Within the U.S. Welfare Institution," *Journal of Black Studies* 40.4 (2010): 637–52.

Rights Act,[36] among others, all support the white supremacist regime in an effort to get ahead themselves. However, appeasing the empire does not lead to freedom, but increased domination and death of all people under the rule of that empire in a movement toward sameness, rather than diversity.[37]

I have endeavored in this dissertation to demonstrate that, in the biblical text, the returnees and the remainees are not the primary instigators of these conflicts. As Israel is beholden to US and European interests, so too were the returnees beholden to Persian interests.[38] In both cases, I read through my womanist-accomplice lens that a necropolitics developed that defended the returnee community over and against the remainees, not due to an inherent personal or communal evil, but the need to appease the bureaucratic apparatuses and politics of the ruling State to ensure the survival of the colonizing peoples, particularly the elites among them. Thus, I must also discuss the Shoah, which is one of the worst atrocities in history. Europeans from a variety of regions around Europe, under Nazi-controlled Germany, as well as people around the world, not beholden to Germany and even at war with that country, ensured that millions of Jews were murdered for the sole reason that they were Jewish. Although Romany people and disabled people were also targeted, Europe long held a special hatred for Jews and had repeatedly killed many in numerous pogroms for centuries. The colonization of Palestine was a response to this

[36] OiYan Poon and Wong Janelle, "Asian Americans Got Played on Affirmative Action," *Inside Higher Ed*, 17 February 2025, https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/02/17/affirmative-action-asian-americans-got-played-opinion.

[37] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 99, says, "What is called almost everywhere the acceleration of history, which is a consequence of the saturation of Sameness, like a liquid overflowing its vessel, has everywhere released the pent-up force of Diversity. This acceleration, swept along by political struggles, has suddenly allowed peoples who yesterday inhabited the hidden side of the earth (just as there was for a long time a hidden side of the moon) to assert themselves in the face of a total world culture. If they do not assert themselves, they deprive the world of a part of itself."

[38] Shireen Akram-Boshar, "How Israel Became the Watchdog State: US Imperialism and the Middle East," in *Palestine: A Socialist Introduction*, ed. brian bean and Sumaya Awad (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020), 39–52.

impulse, in that before and during the Shoah and World War II, many countries refused asylum to most of those who fled.[39] Again, this conflict was forced upon both Palestinians and all Jews, both Palestinian and not, by outside powers who refused responsibility. From this point forward, there has been near constant conflict between Palestine, Israel, various Arab nations, Western European nations, and the United States, among many other actors.[40]

As Althusser has argued, ideologies are a part of the broader superstructure that support the reproduction of the means of production.[41] The idea of a mythical land that is divinely ordained to belong to a specific group of people is one such ideological structure. In the Hebrew Bible, this is the Promised Land. In the United States, it is Manifest Destiny, which has led to the genocide and removal of indigenous peoples, expansion into and against land designated as reservations to contain the many native tribes, and laws against immigration. These rights and treaties are constantly under threat by the US government, corporations, and individuals, and only rarely does the oppressed group win small victories, and almost always within the parameters set by the oppressor, such as in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.[42] However, a closer example to the ancient world would be the colonization of Liberia and Sierra-Leone, in which the United States and United Kingdom re-settled African-descended people, people extracted from their homeland as slaves, back into that land. This act functioned both as a means of global

[39] Sarah Phillips Casteel and Roni Mikel-Arieli, "Holocaust Refugees in the Colonial World: An Introduction," *Patterns of Prejudice* 57.4/5 (2023): 221–29.

[40] See Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, for a long history. In addition, see Katherine Natanel and Ilan Pappé, eds., *Palestine in a World on Fire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2024); and David Barsamian and Edward W. Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019).

[41] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso Books, 2020), 1–60.

[42] Robert J. Miller and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge, *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023).

segregation and of freedom, depending on an individual's beliefs.[43] In both cases, the Black middle class who left the US and UK established themselves in their new countries and treated the local populace poorly, as lesser people, thereby extending the US and UK racial hierarchies with Black colonists as the new heads of the State.[44] Numerous other oppressed peoples have taken to instituting their own forms of hierarchies in the wake of colonial powers leaving, forming those hierarchies around race and class, with women almost always at the bottom of such hierarchies. There is the Indian Hindu-nationalist movement,[45] Myanmar's genocidal regime,[46] Brazil and Colombia's struggle against indigenous people and maroon communities,[47] and many other such systems around the world. All of this is to say that the events I have discussed in this dissertation are not dependent on a time or place, but an outcome of systems of domination, and particularly systems that treat control over the land as more important than the lives of people. Those in power, both globally and regionally, use the structures of ethnicity, class, and gender to support their power and undercut attempts to create a better world.

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[43] Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012).

[44] Everill, *Abolition and Empire*, 128-172.

[45] Siddhartha Deb, *Twilight Prisoners: The Rise of the Hindu Right and the Fall of India* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2024).

[46] Afroza Anwary, "Interethnic Conflict and Genocide in Myanmar," *Homicide Studies* 24.1 (2020): 85–102.

[47] Aurora Vergara-Figueroa, *Afrodescendant Resistance to Deracination in Colombia: Massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Federico Ferretti, "For an Anarchist Decolonial Agenda: New Perspectives on Anarchism, Marronage, and Indigeneity from Brazil/Pindorama," *Antipode* 56.6 (2024): 2112–35; Aline Helg and Lara Vergnaud, "Marronage: A Risky but Possible Path to Freedom," in *Slave No More: Self-Liberation before Abolitionism in the Americas* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 43–63.

Naming and Re-Naming

Although I have focused on the names of individuals, the Hebrew Bible provides ample evidence that when the Hebrew people entered Canaan, they renamed several places.[48] Throughout the Hebrew Bible, קרא שׁם is used to describe people naming a city or place as they claim it for themselves and their descendants.[49] By renaming a place, by changing the very language in which it is named, they dispossess the former inhabitants. The State of Israel has repeatedly done the same in Palestine, Russia has done the same in Ukraine, the United States and other colonizing forces in both North and South America have done so. The resignifying of a place is one of the first acts of colonization, which simultaneously displaces the current (soon-to-be former) inhabitants of the land in favor of the colonizing peoples who overpower and replace them with the backing of imperial authorization.[50] Through colonization, the remembrance of naming and renaming are often the scars of the battlefield, destroyed villages, songs of war and lament, and the stories the colonizer and colonized tell their children. Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, the claim upon a place is marked with the same קרא שׁם, but always masculine (Gen 22:14, 26:22, 32:2, 32:30, 33:17, 50:11; Exod 17:7; Num 11:34; Josh 5:9, 7:26; Judg 2:5; 1 Kings 16:24),[51] and if there is a conflict, both names are preserved (Gen 28:19; Num 32:42; Deut 3:14; Judg 1:17, 18:29; 2 Kings 14:7. Luz/Bethel appears in Gen 31:47-49 and 35:6, though in Judg 1:26, it retains the name Luz) or the moment of conflict is marked (Gen 26:20, 21; Num 21:3; Judg

[48] Nadav Naʾaman, "Dating the Renaming of Cities Referred to in the Biblical Conquest and Settlement Accounts," *Vetus Testamentum* 71.4/5 (2021): 653–64.

[49] C. Jeff Foster, "The Name Ritual: A Mark of Significance," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64.4 (2021): 703–28.

[50] Beth Williamson, "Historical Geographies of Place Naming: Colonial Practices and Beyond.," *Geography Compass* 17.5 (2023): 1–12.

[51] Beer-Lahai-Roi in Gen 16:14 does not contain שׁם, but it is also not claimed by a man. I discussed this event in the second chapter. There are others that are more explanatory than acts of claiming, so I will not list them here.

15:17; 1 Chr 14:11). The former names of defeated places and peoples are held forward in celebration. The act of naming or renaming a person or place not only marks the ethnic claim, but re-marks the place as a site of violence and cultural genocide.

This action is what Francesca Stravrakopoulou calls "remembering in common," defined as "a collective activity essential to the social cohesion produced by and through the creation of cultural memory."[52] She ties this re-membering of the past to both the memorialization of ancestors through the recounting of their name as well as the move, in colonization, to disinherit the deceased from their claims upon the land. Calling upon the name of the dead continues their existence within the community, both as a monument as well as familial ties. Stavrakopoulou ties this language to Isaiah 56, wherein the foreigner and the eunuch is promised יד ושם because they do not have a claim to the land, because "the foreigner is without local ancestors to mark his place, and the eunuch is without descendants to maintain his place. They are rootless and fruitless."[53] However, the *golah* community, who returned from exile, dismembered and re-membered the history of those who had remained in the land. When these people returned, their households and land claims were uncertain because their genealogical descent was as well. To which part of the land would they return? Who would they displace? Their solution is to play on two myths, that the land was taken by Israel and that the land is theirs by ancestral and divine claim. In doing so, they place the deity and the temple at the center. They rewrite genealogical lists and rituals to establish their legitimacy.[54] They make the current and now former inhabitants illegitimate in their claims to the land.

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[52] Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 143.

[53] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 125-6.

[54] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 135.

The divine claim is mediated through the use of לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם (Deut 12:11, 14:23, 16:2, 16:6, 16:11, 26:2), which reflects the Akkadian *šuma šakānu*, 'place the name,' used to establish the deity's claim upon Jerusalem, "just as an imperial conqueror sets up a monumental inscription, exhibiting his occupation of a newly acquired territory."[55] The *golah* community uses the deity's name and the temple to establish their control over Yehud. In doing so, they disinherit the claims of the dead upon the land, and therefore the genealogies of the remainee community. As I have repeatedly demonstrated throughout this work, name and inheritance are intricately tied together, and a challenge to one is a challenge to the other. Ultimately, the Hebrew Bible and contemporary Israeli propaganda about Palestine function in the same way: "I was here first."

Later, when the *golah* community returns to Yehud, "It is Y[***] who decides – represented in this text by the centralizing role of the temple, the genealogical lists and rituals of which are employed to discern the legitimacy of (some of) these incomers."[56] However, one should note that it is precisely these incomers who re-build Jerusalem and its temple (Ezra 3:6-11; 6:13-18; Neh 3:1-4:23; 6:15), (re)-establish the rituals (Ezra 3:1-13; 6:19-22; Neh 8:1-10:39), and exclude those who never left the land (Ezra 4:1-3; 9:1-10:44; Neh 13). In my reading, the promise to Abraham and the book of Joshua are secondary claims, meant to bolster the claims of the *golah* community. This is the same method that Israel is using over Palestinians. Benjamin Netanyahu and other members of Israel's conservative parties use the biblical text to claim the land as theirs and use those claims to commit genocide against Palestinians, renaming the land

[55] Sandra L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: Lešakkēn Šemô Šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 36-40, 199-21, cited in Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 130-131.

[56] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 135.

"Israel" and replacing Arabic signs with Hebrew as a change of the name.[57] In each of these three cases, the colonized are left saying, "But we've been here the whole time – you just got here." Zionist colonizing language is performing the same function that it did in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and, mythologically, so too are the claims of Abraham and Joshua. Each claim disinherits the residents of the land and their ancestors, dehumanizing both those who already lived in the land and those who entered to claim the land as theirs.

Reading through my womanist-accomplice lens, it is this same language that the United States government uses, and has long used, to suppress indigenous and Black people, among other minoritized groups, and to support the displacement, incarceration, and abuse of migrants. Migrants, and people who aren't white in general, are considered dangerous to white, European culture, and so are non-people who must be cast out to protect the white race, lest European epistemology lose its hegemonic dominance over the world. The mere existence of minoritized people represents the danger. Yet, in the United States, as in Persian Yehud and in Joseph's Egypt, the lower classes are deeply indebted to the upper class, and their very survival relies on the so-called benevolence of that upper class as it consolidates power. The key difference here is that the ancient world functioned under a different economic system, tribute-exchange, and the modern world is a racial-capitalist program, moving toward oligarchic systems that further alienate the person from the means of production.[58] Thus, although power seems to rest in the State, it has begun a shift toward the interests of oligarchic power, in which corporations and

[57] Eran Razin and Anna Hazan, "Renaming Municipalities: Territorial Identities and Community Participation between Mayors and the Central State," *Territory, Politics, Governance* (2025): 1–20.

[58] Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Nicholas Gane, "Capitalism Is Capitalism, Not Technofeudalism," *Journal of Classical Sociology* (2024): 1-16.

their boards direct worldwide policy, especially economic policy, rather than monarchs, town councils, or individuals.

Seeking Utopia

Here at the end, I turn toward the broader utopic vision of this project, inspired by the works of Black scholars and the lives of Black people in the US, particularly womanist interpreters. According to Alice Walker's definition of womanist, it is "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people,"[59] which I argue includes the world. In this dissertation, I have attempted to find antinomies within the stories that represent the "other ways" that are submerged within the dominant narrative of the stories. Following Jameson's symptomatic reading, each text contains at least two ideologies, one borne of the upper class, the other representing the "political unconscious" which provides insight into other utopic visions.[60] European colonizers use the biblical text to support their domination of the world, dehumanizing and enslaving people they considered beneath them. However, colonized and enslaved people have long used those same texts to fight for their liberation.[61] Emilie M. Townes calls the process of uncovering these other utopias counter-memory, which is the idea "that the story *can* be told in another way."[62] Fighting the dehumanization performed through the use of biblical text is one of the main projects of womanist theology and biblical interpretation. Womanists find those antinomies in the text and

[59] Alice Walker, "Definitions of Womanist," in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), xi.

[60] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 61-69.

[61] For more on the development of biblical scholarship as a part of empire, see Gregory L. Cuéllar, *Empire, the British Museum, and the Making of the Biblical Scholar in the Nineteenth Century* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[62] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 16.

in their lives that undermine the systems of power. In doing so, they gesture toward utopic wish-fulfilment.

And so, in my womanist-accomplice approach, I offer this dissertation as a counter-memory to Netanyahu's comment: "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember."[63] Within that same "Holy Bible" there are stories in which peaceful coexistence was possible, and the people who lived together found various means by which they could subvert the power structures that placed control over the land over other people. Yes, Sarah works against Hagar and sends the woman and her child to their death, but the two sons of these women bury their father together (Gen 25:9) and Ishamel receives his own covenant promise equal to the number of Israel's tribes (17:20). Tamar's children are legitimized by Judah and from them comes the line of David (Gen 38), Joseph brings his family into another land, where he has a liminal identity and establishes his own household (Gen 46-48), Moses leads his people out of slavery after being saved by women with a variety of identities and statuses (Exod 2), and the women of Bethlehem come together to ensure that Ruth's son is accepted within the legal constraints of inheritance (Ruth 4:16-17). In each of these stories, and the others I have discussed in this dissertation, the characters cross borders that the returnee community, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, established to ensure their positions under the Persian bureaucratic apparatus.

My utopic vision in this dissertation, then, is a world without borders, without the ownership of land or people. In the same way that the returnee community sought to establish its identity markers in response to the Babylonian exile and the need to develop ideologies that

[63] Noah Lanard, "The Dangerous History behind Netanyahu's Amalek Rhetoric," *Mother Jones*, 3 November 2023, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2023/11/benjamin-netanyahu-amalek-israel-palestine-gaza-saul-samuel-old-testament/. Notably, according to that text, the Amalekites did nothing more than any other regional powers do to invading armies, try to stop them (Exod 17:8-16; Deut 25:17-19; 1 Sam 15:1-3).

established their right to the land over and against the inhabitants, so too did the borders of race, place, and gender develop as a means of establishing identity and the European right to conquer the rest of the world. Mahmood Mamdani argues that the modern nation-state derives from the ethnic cleansing of Jews and Arabs from the Iberian Peninsula and the subsequent conquering of broad swaths of the Americas by Spain and Portugal.[64] Appended to this moment is the enslavement and deaths of indigenous peoples in the Americas, as well as the increasing difficulty of buying and selling white slaves, to which the enslavement of Africans became an easy solution. [65] Thus, the very idea of a nation-state is rooted in the hierarchizing of peoples, ethnic cleansing, and division along the lines of those who can and cannot be enslaved. Blackness is the ideologeme against which whiteness and civilization become defined, and in this system, Arab, indigenous, and Asian bodies, among others, can claim different rights depending on the political and sociocultural moment.[66]

That is, the nation-state defines who gets to count as a citizen, and therefore who gets treated as *human*. The border establishes who gets rights, which displaces the Human in favor of the Citizen, and thus human rights are rejected in favor of citizenship rights as determined by the State.[67] The non-citizen can be mistreated in manners that violate the Universal Declaration of

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[64] Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2020), cited in John Washington, *The Case for Open Borders* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023), 43-44.

[65] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 37, 40-42.

[66] For example, the US signed multiple treaties with China that allowed members of each State to change their allegiance and trade, without borders; although a few years later, the US passed the Chinese Exclusion Act out of fear that Chinese people were stealing American jobs, leading to pogroms against Chinese people, and, presumably, other Asians, Washington, *Open Borders*, 55. In addition, the US government officially categorizes Arabs as white due to the 1915 Supreme Court case, *Dow v. United States*, in which an Arab fought to be classified as white in order to become a naturalized citizen.

[67] For Amber Murrey and Patricia Daley, *Learning Disobedience: Decolonizing Development Studies* (Las Vegas, NV: Pluto Press, 2023), 188, a nation-state is "devised by elites to counter the potentially destabilizing effects of the inequalities generated by capitalist social relations. Unity is maintained by promoting amongst its citizenry a homogenous national identity based on common cultural characteristics. The nation-state manages its

Human Rights because, for the State, there is no *Human*, only the Citizen and the non-Citizen. Even then, those who do not match the State episteme of citizen—chiefly Black and brown people in the United States, but including many minorities or, in some countries (such as South Africa), majorities, and women of all ethnicities and races—are denied their fundamental rights as humans and citizens in order to maintain racial, ethnic, class, and gender hierarchies, and to sate the wanton desires for violence amongst the dominant class.[68] Thus, one gets to tell the minoritized person: "Go back to your own country," even to those people whose families have been on the land for longer than the very concept of a country/State, in the modern sense, has existed.[69]

The utopia I see within these problems is one that many enslaved Black people used during slavery, that many of those in Judah who were not taken into Babylonian exile undertook, and the same action that Hagar used in response to Sarah's abuse: marronage. Through the Underground Railroad, enslaved people fled to northern states or to Canada, but many also remained in the South and developed communities with indigenous and poor white people in the backwoods.[70] In the Caribbean, Central, and South America, people who fled from slavery were more likely to establish their own communities in the mountains, swamps, and other places that are difficult to industrialize, living amongst indigenous people and poor white people who also

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national economy, regulates trade with other states and deploys its military to protect the interests of its national capitalists in competition with others."

[68] See Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M'Bow, "Towards African Diaspora Citizenship: Politicizing an Existing Global Geography," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 14–45.

[69] See Jenny Burman, "Deportable or Admissible?: Black Women and the Space of 'Removal,'" in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 177–92.

[70] Adam Bledsoe, "Marronage as a Past and Present Geography in the Americas," *Southeastern Geographer* 57.1 (2017), 31.

fled from the expanding empires.[71] In the destruction of Judah, the local inhabitants fled to Egypt, or they took up common cause with the others in the land and they intermingled for survival.[72] It is these communities that Ezra and Nehemiah sought to disestablish when they ended the practice of exogamous unions, and the same practice that Jochebed took for Moses when she sent him away on the Nile (Exod 2:3).

The borderlands, liminal spaces where the rules of the State are weaker, are "spaces of freedom that provided what enslaved people were denied elsewhere: autonomy, mobility, enterprise, a sense of physical security, freedom from scrutiny, control over their time and movement, and access to varied foods."[73] It is this autonomy and freedom that defines the United States's obsession with its southern border, as well as the fear of Black and brown people. Within these borderland spaces, people are allowed to intermingle freely, creating new languages, cultures, and epistemologies that have the power to challenge the epistemological structures that undergird the dominant mode of production and the status quo. This is the fear that people have of my sister, the reason they she is sexually harassed for having a slightly darker complexion, and why Black and brown people face continual racism and sexism. This is the reason that white people are willing to give up their rights to ensure that these groups remain poor and, often, out of sight.

That is not to say that all people should be open to everyone else, that all cultures and epistemologies should be open for all to use. In Alice Walker's second definition of womanist,

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[71] See Malcom Ferdinand, "Behind the Colonial Silence of Wilderness: 'In Marronage Lies the Search of a World,'" *Environmental Humanities* 14.1 (2022): 182–201, for an intentional inclusion of these groups and a critique of other scholars ignoring the role of indigenous people within these communities.

[72] Karel Van Der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

[73] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 8.

she says, "Not a separatist, except periodically, for health,"[74] which Glissant call *opacité*. That is, the goal of understanding totality is not that one should "'understand' the other, that is, to reduce him to the model of my own transparency, in order to live with this other or to build something with him,"[75] but rather to allow the growth of diversity and change. Opacity is crucial because, "Opacity maintains diversity, it rejects universalizing forces."[76] This generalizing universality is the "ultimate weapon in the process of depersonalizing a vulnerable people," and so *opacité* allows a person to re-personalize and re-Humanize themselves in their community, against Eurocentric taxonomies of existence.

As Frantz Fanon noted in *The Wretched of the Earth*, there is always a danger of reinventing European epistemologies and hierarchies as a country throws off its colonizers.[77] The totalizing nature of such epistemologies pushes a person into a singular identity and reinforces that identity.[78] And so, what I mean by marronage is not physical marronage, as such marronage merely moves a person from one place to another, although such actions are often necessary for survival. Instead, I argue for an intellectual marronage, one in which the nation in its modern form is rejected, and to too are the sociocultural and geographical borders created in order to maintain its existence.[79] Drawing on my womanist-accomplice approach, I look toward the Black

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[74] Walker, "Definitions," xi.

[75] Édouard Glissant, *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*, trans. Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 45.

[76] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 62.

[77] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 12.

[78] Glissant, *Poetics*, 20, says, "Whereas exile may erode one's sense of identity, the thought of errantry—the thought of that which relates—usually reinforces this sense of identity. It seems possible…that the persecuted errantry, the wandering of the Jews, may have reinforced their sense of identity far more than their present settling in the land of Palestine. Being exiled Jews turned into a vocation of errantry, their point of reference an ideal land whose power may, in fact, have been undermined by a concrete land (a territory), chosen and conquered."

[79] See Moses März, "Édouard Glissant's Intellectual Marronage into the World," *Francosphères* 11.1 (2022): 39–54.

radical tradition and move toward Black geographies, which are "an open socio-spatial relation, involving 'a societal transformation resulting from the struggle to institute a distinct concept of freedom' and entailing a 'total refusal of the enslaved conditions,' its legacies, and its attendant spatial assumptions and practices,"[80] and for McKittrick and Woods, "Inserting black geographies into our worldview and our understanding of spatial liberation and other emancipatory strategies" which, "can perhaps move us away from territoriality, the normative practice of staking a claim to a place."[81]

The ability to partake in intellectual marronage derives from what Delores Williams calls a "wilderness-experience," which she directly compares to marronage.[82] For Williams,

> This symbolic sense of wilderness held together what the community took to be women's positive body experience (pregnancy, motherhood, naturehood), the slave's positive religious experience in the antebellum wilderness (which involved the body) and the community's experience as an ethnic body in the free world of postbellum America.[83]

These wilderness experiences focus on poverty and social displacement, as Black women held their families together.[84] By drawing on the lived experiences and writings of Black people – and Black women in particular – I gain an understanding of other ways of being in the world that rejects the territoriality of being and the delineations of "human," to embrace what M. Shawn Copeland calls *humanum*, or "humanness."[85] By embracing the

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[80] Bledsoe, "Marronage," 34, who cites Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 7, 13.

[81] McKittrick and Woods, "Mysteries," 4.

[82] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). 112.

[83] Williams, *Sisters*, 118.

[84] Williams, *Sisters*, 119.

[85] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 92, defines *humanum* as "(1) a creature made by God; (2) person-in-community, living in flexible, resilient, just relationships with others; (3) an incarnate spirit, i.e., embodied in race, gender, sex and sexuality, culture; (4) capable of working out essential freedom through personal responsibility in time and space; (5) a social being; (6) unafraid of difference

Black radical tradition, one "repositions the center of radical thought and revolution away from Europe to the colonized, enslaved, dominated, and marginalized peoples of the colonies, white settler planation societies, and the metropolitan centers of capital."[86] Such a renegotiation of what it means to be human always also requires the rejection of geopolitical borders and the concept of land-ownership, as such concepts lead to systems of domination, in which those-who-have oppress those who do not. Yet, as in these texts, there is always an undercurrent that rejects that system, and that undercurrent is what carries the hope of the future.

and interdependence; and (7) willing daily to struggle against 'bad faith' and *ressentiment* for the survival, creation, and future of all life."

[86] Paul Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods, "What Is the *Danger* in Black Studies and Can We Look at It Again (and Again)?," in *On Marronage: Ethical Confrontations with Antiblackness*, ed. Paul Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), 6.

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APPENDIX A

Naming Stories with *qārā' šēm* (No place names)

	MT[1]	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan[2]	Greek	NRSV	Namer	Named
Gen. 3:20	וַיִּקְרָ֤א הָאָדָם֙ שֵׁ֣ם אִשְׁתּ֔וֹ חַוָּ֖ה כִּ֣י הִ֑וא הָ֤יְתָה אֵם֙ כָּל־חָֽי׃	וקרא אדם שום איתתיה חוה ארום היא הות אימא דכל בני אנשא	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Αδαμ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ Ζωή, ὅτι αὕτη μήτηρ πάντων τῶν ζώντων.	The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living	Adam/ Human	Eve
Gen 4:25	וַיֵּ֤דַע אָדָם֙[a] עוֹד֙ אֶת־אִשְׁתּ֔וֹ וַתֵּ֥לֶד בֵּ֖ן וַתִּקְרָ֣א[b] אֶת־ שְׁמ֑וֹ שֵׁ֚ת[c] כִּֽי[d] שָׁ֣ת־לִ֔י אֱלֹהִ֛ים זֶ֥רַע אַחֵ֖ר תַּ֣חַת הֶ֑בֶל כִּ֥י הָרָגֽוֹ קָֽיִן׃	וידע אדם תוב ית אנתתיה לסוף מאה ותלתין שנין דאיתקטיל חבל וילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה שׁת ארום אמרת יהב לי ייי בר אוחרן חלף הבל דקטליה קין	Εγνω δὲ Αδαμ Ευαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σηθ λέγουσα Ἐξανέστησεν γάρ μοι ὁ θεὸς σπέρμα ἕτερον ἀντὶ Αβελ, ὃν ἀπέκτεινεν Καιν.	Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him."	Eve	Seth
Gen 4:26	וּלְשֵׁ֤ת גַּם־הוּא֙ יֻלַּד־בֵּ֔ן וַיִּקְרָ֖א אֶת־שְׁמ֣וֹ אֱנ֑וֹשׁ אָ֣ז הוּחַ֔ל[a] לִקְרֹ֖א[a] בְּשֵׁ֥ם יְהוָֽה׃	ולשׁת אף הוא איתיליד בר וקרת ית שׁמיה אנוש הוא דרא דביומוהו שׁריו למטעי ועבדו להון טעוון ומכנין לטעוותהון בשׁום מימרא דיי	καὶ τῷ Σηθ ἐγένετο υἱός, ἐπωνόμασεν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ενως· οὗτος ἤλπισεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ.	To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the LORD.	Seth; Precedes genealogy	Enosh

[1] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

[2] There are multiple Targums, but I am following the Targum (Pseudo-)Jonathan in this section because it often provides more text and context than the Masoretic Text and other Targums. In addition, it this Targum provides texts beyond the Torah that are available to me.

Gen. 5:3	וַיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד [b]בִּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ[b] וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת	וחיא אדם מאה ותלתין שנין ואולד ית שת דדמי לאיקוניה ולדמותיה ארום מן־ קדמת דנא אולידת חוה ית קין דלא מיניה ולא דמי ליה והבל איתקטל על ידוי דקין וקין איטרד ולא איתייחסו זרעיתיה בספר יחוס אדם ובתר כן אוליד ית דדמי ליה וקרת ית שמיה שת	ἔζησεν δὲ Αδαμ διακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σηθ.	When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.	Adam; Genealogy	Seth
Gen 5:29	וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה [a]יְנַחֲמֵנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמֵעִצְּבוֹן יָדֵינוּ מִן־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אֵרָרָהּ יְהוָה	וקרא ית שמיה נח למימר דין ינחמיננא מפולחננא דלא מצלחא ומליעות ידנא מן ארעא דלט{א}<ה> ייי בגין חובי בני־אינשא	καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Νωε λέγων Οὗτος διαναπαύσει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν λυπῶν τῶν χειρῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, ἧς κατηράσατο κύριος ὁ θεός.	he named him Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”	Lamech; Genealogy	Noah
Gen. 16:15	וַתֵּלֶד הָגָר לְאַבְרָם בֵּן וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ אֲשֶׁר־ יָלְדָה הָגָר יִשְׁמָעֵאל	ו וילידת הגר לאברם בר וקרא אברם שום בריה דילידת הגר ישמעאל	Καὶ ἔτεκεν Αγαρ τῷ Αβραμ υἱόν, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Αβραμ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὃν ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ Αγαρ, Ισμαηλ.	Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.	Abram God chose name	Ishmael Egyptian mother
Gen. 19:37	וַתֵּלֶד הַבְּכִירָה בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב [a]הוּא אֲבִי־ מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם	וילידת רבתא בר וקרת שמיה מואב ארום מאבוהא	καὶ ἔτεκεν ἡ πρεσβυτέρα υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ	The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab; he	Eldest daughter of Lot	Moab

		איתעברת הוא אבוהום דמואבאי עד יומא דין	Μωαβ λέγουσα Ἐκ τοῦ πατρός μου· οὗτος πατὴρ Μωαβιτῶν ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας.	is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day.		
Gen 19:38	וְהַצְּעִירָה גַם־ הִוא יָלְדָה בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ[a] בֶּן־ עַמִּי הוּא אֲבִי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עַד־ הַיּוֹם	וזעירתא אוף היא ילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה בר עימיה ארום בר אבוהא הוא הוא אבוהון דעמא מואבאה עד זמן יומא דין	ἔτεκεν δὲ καὶ ἡ νεωτέρα υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Αμμαν υἱὸς τοῦ γένους μου· οὗτος πατὴρ Αμμανιτῶν ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας.	The younger also bore a son and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.	Younger daughter of Lot	Ben-Ammi
Gen. 21:3	וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלַד־לוֹ אֲשֶׁר־ יָלְדָה־לּוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק	וקרא אברהם ית שׁום בריה ד<א>יתליד לי<ה> דילידת ליה שׂרה יצחק	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Αβρααμ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου αὐτῷ, ὃν ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ Σαρρα, Ισαακ.	Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.	Abraham God chose name	Isaac Replaces Ishmael as eldest son
Gen. 25:25	וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אַדְמוֹנִי כֻּלּוֹ כְּאַדֶּרֶת שֵׂעָר וַיִּקְרְאוּ[a] שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו	ונפק קמאה סמוקריי כוליה ככלן דשׂער וקרו שׁמיה עשׂו מן־בגלל דאתיליד כוליה גמיר בשׂיער רישׂא ודיקנא ושׁינין וככין	καὶ ἐπληρώθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ τεκεῖν αὐτήν, καὶ τῇδε ἦν δίδυμα ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ αὐτῆς.	The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau.	H: Qal Pret 3MP Isaac and Rebekah	Esau
Gen. 25:26	וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וְיָדוֹ אֹחֶזֶת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא[a] שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וְיִצְחָק בֶּן־ שִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה בְּלֶדֶת אֹתָם	ובתר כדין נפק אחוי וידיה אחידא בעקיבא דעשׂו וקרא שׁמיה יעקב ויצחק בר שׂיתין שׁנין כד ילידת יתהום	καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐξῆλθεν ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἐπειλημμένη τῆς πτέρνης Ησαυ· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ιακωβ. Ισαακ δὲ ἦν ἐτῶν ἑξήκοντα, ὅτε	Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.	H-Qal Pret-3MS A-Peal-Perf 3MS G-Ao-A-Ind-3S	Jacob

			ἔτεκεν αὐτοὺς Ρεβεκκα.			
Gen. 29:32	וַתַּהַר לְאָהּ וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמְרָה כִּי־רָאָה יְהוָה בְּעָנְיִי כִּי עַתָּה יֶאֱהָבַנִי אִישִׁי	ואיתעברת לאה וילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה ראובן ארום אמרת ארום גלי קדם ייי עולבני ארום כדון ירחמנני בעלי והיכמה דאיתגלי קדם ייי עולבני היכדין יהוי גלי קדמוי עולבנהון דבניי כד יהון משׁתעבדין בארעא דמצראי	καὶ συνέλαβεν Λεια καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν τῷ Ιακωβ· ἐκάλεσεν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ρουβην λέγουσα Διότι εἶδέν μου κύριος τὴν ταπείνωσιν· νῦν με ἀγαπήσει ὁ ἀνήρ μου.	Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, “Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.”	Leah	Reuben Firstborn? Status in doubt
Gen. 29:33	וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה כִּי־שְׂנוּאָה אָנֹכִי וַיִּתֶּן־לִי גַּם־אֶת־זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן	וְ ואתעברת תוב וילידת בר ואמרת ארום שׁמיע קדם ייי ארום שׁניתא אנא ויהב לי אוף ית דין והכדין ישׁתמע קדמוי קלהון דבניי כד יהון משׁתעבדין במצרים וקרת שׁמיה שׁמעון	καὶ συνέλαβεν πάλιν Λεια καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν δεύτερον τῷ Ιακωβ καὶ εἶπεν Ὅτι ἤκουσεν κύριος ὅτι μισοῦμαι, καὶ προσέδωκέν μοι καὶ τοῦτον· ἐκάλεσεν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Συμεων.	She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also”; and she named him Simeon.	Leah	Simeon
Gen 29:34	וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר עַתָּה הַפַּעַם יִלָּוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי־יָלַדְתִּי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים [a]עַל־כֵּן קָרָא[ab]־שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי	ואתעברת תוב וילידת בר ואמרת הדא זימנא יתחבר עימי בעלי ארום ילידית ליה תלתא בנין והיכדין עתידין בנוי למיהויהון מתחברין	καὶ συνέλαβεν ἔτι καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ εἶπεν Ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ πρὸς ἐμοῦ ἔσται ὁ ἀνήρ μου, ἔτεκον γὰρ αὐτῷ τρεῖς υἱούς· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Λευι.	Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three	Leah	Levi

		לשׁמשׁא קדם ייי בגין כן קרא שׁמיה לוי		sons"; therefore he was named Levi.		
Gen. 29:35	וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת	ואיתעברת תוב וילידת בר ואמרת הדא זימנא אודי קדם ייי דמן ברי דין עתיד למיפק מלכין ומיניה יפוק דוד מלכא דעתיד לאודויי קדם ייי בגין כן קרת שׁמיה יהודה וקמת מלמילד	καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτι ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ εἶπεν Νῦν ἔτι τοῦτο ἐξομολογήσομαι κυρίῳ· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ιουδα. καὶ ἔστη τοῦ τίκτειν.	She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.	Leah	Judah
Gen. 30:6	וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל דָּנַנִי אֱלֹהִים וְגַם שָׁמַע בְּקֹלִי וַיִּתֶּן־לִי בֵּן עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ דָּן	ואמרת רחל דן יתי ייי ברחמוי טביא ולחוד שׁמע בקל צלותי ויהב לי בר והיכדין עתיד למידן על יד שׁמשׁון בר מנוח דמן זרעיתיה ולמימסר בידיה ית עמא דפלשׁתאי בגין כן קרת שׁמיה דן	καὶ εἶπεν Ραχηλ Ἔκρινέν μοι ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐπήκουσεν τῆς φωνῆς μου καὶ ἔδωκέν μοι υἱόν· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Δαν.	Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son"; therefore she named him Dan.	Rachel Mother is Bilhah	Dan
Gen. 30:8	וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל נַפְתּוּלֵי אֱלֹהִים נִפְתַּלְתִּי עִם־אֲחֹתִי גַּם־יָכֹלְתִּי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ נַפְתָּלִי	ואמרת רחל מדחקא דחיקית קדם ייי בצלו ברם קביל בעותי דיהי לי בר כאחתי אוף יהב לי תרין והכדין עתידין בנוי לאתפרקא מן	καὶ εἶπεν Ραχηλ Συνελάβετό μοι ὁ θεός, καὶ συνανεστράφην τῇ ἀδελφῇ μου καὶ ἠδυνάσθην· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Νεφθαλι.	Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed"; so she named him Naphtali.	Rachel Mother is Bilhah	Naphtali

		יד בעלי־ דביהום בדחקותהון בצלו קדם ייי וקרת שׂמיה נפתלי				
Gen. 30:11	וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בגד [בָּא] [גָּד][a] וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גָּד	ואמרת לאה אתא מזלא טבא ברם בנוי עתידין למירות אחסנתהון בקדמיתא מעברא לירדנא וקרת שׂמיה גד	καὶ εἶπεν Λεια Ἐν τύχῃ· καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Γαδ.	And Leah said, “Good fortune!” so she named him Gad.	Leah Mother is Zilpah	Gad
Gen. 30:13	וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בְּאָשְׁרָ֫י[a] כִּי אִשְּׁרוּנִי[b] בָּנוֹת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אָשֵׁר	ואמרת לאה תושבחא הות לי ארום שׂבחו לי בנת ישׂראל והכדין עתידין בנוי לשׂבחא קדם ייי על טב פירי ארעהום וקרת ית שׂמיה אשׂר	καὶ εἶπεν Λεια Μακαρία ἐγώ, ὅτι μακαρίζουσίν με αἱ γυναῖκες· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ασηρ.	And Leah said, “Happy am I! For the women will call me happy”; so she named him Asher.	Leah Mother is Zilpah	Asher
Gen. 30:18	וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה נָתַן אֱלֹהִים שְׂכָרִי אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי לְאִישִׁי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יִשָּׂשכָר	ואמרת לאה יהב ייי אגרי דיהבית אמתי לבעלי והיכדין עתידין בנוי לקבלא אגר טב על דאינון עסיקין באורייתא וקראת ית שׂמיה ישׂשכר	καὶ εἶπεν Λεια Ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν μισθόν μου ἀνθ᾽ οὗ ἔδωκα τὴν παιδίσκην μου τῷ ἀνδρί μου· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ισσαχαρ, ὅ ἐστιν Μισθός.	Leah said, “God has given me my hire[a] because I gave my maid to my husband”; so she named him Issachar.	Leah	Issachar
Gen. 30:20	וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה זְבָדַנִי אֱלֹהִים ו אֹתִי֙ זֵ֣בֶד טוֹב֔ הַפַּ֖עַם יִזְבְּלֵ֣נִי אִישִׁ֑י כִּֽי־יָלַ֥דְתִּי לוֹ֙ שִׁשָּׁ֣ה בָנִ֔ים וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ זְבֻלֻן	ואמרת לאה זבד יתי ייי זבודין טבון מבנין זימנא הדא יהי מדוריה דבעלי עימי ארום ילידת ליה	καὶ εἶπεν Λεια Δεδώρηταί μοι ὁ θεὸς δῶρον καλόν· ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ αἱρετιεῖ με ὁ ἀνήρ μου, ἔτεκον γὰρ αὐτῷ υἱοὺς ἕξ· καὶ	Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me,	Leah	Zebulun

		שׁיתא בנין והכדין עתידין בנוי לקבלא חולק טב וקרת שׁמיה זבולן	ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ζαβουλων.	because I have borne him six sons"; so she named him Zebulun.		
Gen. 30:21	וְאַחַר יָלְדָה בַּת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָהּ דִּינָה	ומן בתר כדין ילידת ברת וקרת ית שׁמה דינה ארום אמרת דין הוא מן קדם ייי דיהון מיני פלגות שׁיבטייא ברם מן רחל אחתי יפקון תרין שׁיבטין היכמה דנפקו מן חדא מן אמהתה ושׁמיע קדם ייי צלותא דלאה ואתחלפו עובדייא במעהון והוה יהיב יוסף במעהא דרחל ודינה במעהא דלאה	καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἔτεκεν θυγατέρα καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς Δινα.	Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.	Leah	Dinah First daughter named
Gen. 30:24	וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר יֹסֵף יְהוָה לִי בֵּן אַחֵר	וקרת ית שׁמיה יוסף למימר יוסף	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ιωσηφ λέγουσα Προσθέτω ὁ θεός μοι υἱὸν ἕτερον.	and she named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"	Rachel	Joseph
Gen. 35:18	וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מֵתָה[a] וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן־ אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא־ לוֹ בִנְיָמִין	ו והוה במיפק נפשׁא ארום מטת עלה מותא וקרת שׁמיה בר דווי ואבוי קרא ליה בנימין	ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἀφιέναι αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχήν _ ἀπέθνῃσκεν γάρ _ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Υἱὸς ὀδύνης μου· ὁ δὲ πατὴρ	As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.	Rachel Jacob, only child Jacob names	Ben-oni Benjamin

			ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸν Βενιαμιν.			
Gen. 38:3	וַיַּ֣רְא־שָׁ֔ם יְהוּדָ֖ה בַּת־אִ֣ישׁ כְּנַעֲנִ֑י וּשְׁמ֖וֹ[a] שׁ֥וּעַ וַיִּקָּחֶ֛הָ וַיָּבֹ֥א אֵלֶ֖יהָ	ואתעברת וילידת בר וקראת ית שׁמיה ער ארום	καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ηρ.	She conceived and bore a son; and he named him Er.	Judah	Er Mother is Canaanite
Gen. 38:4	וַתַּ֣הַר עֹ֔וד וַתֵּ֖לֶד בֵּ֑ן וַתִּקְרָ֥א אֶת־שְׁמ֖וֹ אוֹנָֽן	ואיתעברת תוב וילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה אונן ארום ברם עלוי עתיד אבוי לאתאבלא	καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτι ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Αυναν.	Again she conceived and bore a son whom she named Onan.	Shua	Onan
Gen. 38:5	וַתֹּ֣סֶף עֹ֔וד וַתֵּ֖לֶד בֵּ֑ן וַתִּקְרָ֥א אֶת־שְׁמ֖וֹ שֵׁלָ֑ה וְהָיָ֣ה[a] בְכְזִ֔יב[b] בְּלִדְתָּ֖הּ אֹתֽוֹ	ואוסיפת תוב וילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה שׁלה ארום שׁלי יתה בעלה והוה בפסקת כד ילידת יתיה	καὶ προσθεῖσα ἔτι ἔτεκεν υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σηλωμ. αὐτὴ δὲ ἦν ἐν Χασβι, ἡνίκα ἔτεκεν αὐτούς.	Yet again she bore a son, and she named him Shelah. She was in Chezib when she bore him.	Shua	Shelah
Gen. 38:29	וַיְהִ֗י ׀ כְּמֹשֵׁ֣יב[a] יָד֗וֹ וְהִנֵּ֤ה יָצָא֙ אָחִ֔יו וַתֹּ֖אמֶר מַה־פָּרַ֣צְתָּ עָלֶ֑יךָ[b] פָּ֣רֶץ וַיִּקְרָ֥א[c] שְׁמ֖וֹ פָּֽרֶץ	והוה כד אתיב וולדא ית ידיה והא נפק אחוי ואמרת מה תקוף סגי תקיפתא ועלך אית למיתקוף דאנת עתיד למחסן מלכותא וקרת שׁמיה פרץ	ὡς δὲ ἐπισυνήγαγεν τὴν χεῖρα, καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξῆλθεν ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ. ἡ δὲ εἶπεν Τί διεκόπη διὰ σὲ φραγμός; καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Φαρες.	But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” Therefore he was named Perez.	H-Qal Pret 3MS A-Peal-Perf-3MS G-Ao-A-Ind-3S	Perez
Gen 38:30	וְאַחַ֗ר יָצָא֙ אָחִ֔יו אֲשֶׁ֥ר עַל־יָדֹ֖ו הַשָּׁנִ֑י וַיִּקְרָ֥א[a] שְׁמ֖וֹ זָֽרַח	ובתר כדין נפק אחוי דעל ידי<ה> קטיר חוט זהורי וקרת שׁמיה זרח	καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐξῆλθεν ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ, ἐφ᾽ ᾧ ἦν ἐπὶ τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ κόκκινον· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ	Afterward his brother came out with the crimson thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.	H-Qal Pret-3MS A-Peal perf-3MS G-Ao-A-Ind-3S	Zerah

			ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ζαρα			
Gen 41:45	וַיִּקְרָ֨א פַרְעֹ֜ה שֵׁ֣ם יוֹסֵ֗ף [a]צָפְנַ֥ת פַּעְנֵ֛חַ[a] וַיִּתֶּן־לוֹ֩ אֶת־ אָסְנַ֨ת בַּת־פּוֹטִי־ פֶ֜רַע כֹּהֵ֧ן אֹ֛ן לְאִשָּׁ֖ה וַיֵּצֵ֥א יוֹסֵ֖ף עַל־אֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם	וקרא פרעה שׁמיה דיוסף גברא דטמירן מפרסם ויהב ליה ית אסנת דילידת דינה לשׁכם ורביתה איתת פוטיפרע רבא דטניס לאינתו ונפק יוסף שׁליט על ארעא דמצרים	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Φαραω τὸ ὄνομα Ιωσηφ Ψονθομφανηχ· καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὴν Ασεννεθ θυγατέρα Πετεφρη ἱερέως Ἡλίου πόλεως αὐτῷ γυναῖκα.	Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife. Thus Joseph gained authority over the land of Egypt.	Pharaoh	Joseph/Zaphenath-paneah
Gen 41:51	וַיִּקְרָ֣א יוֹסֵף֮ אֶת־ שֵׁם֒ הַבְּכֹ֣ר מְנַשֶּׁ֔ה כִּֽי־נַשַּׁ֥נִי[a] אֱלֹהִ֖ים אֶת־כָּל־ עֲמָלִ֑י וְאֵ֖ת כָּל־ בֵּ֥ית אָבִֽי	וקרא יוסף ית שׁום בוכרא מנשׁה ארום אמר אנשׁי יתי ייי ית כל ליאותי וית כל בית אבא	ἐκάλεσεν δὲ Ιωσηφ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πρωτοτόκου Μανασση, ὅτι Ἐπιλαθέσθαι με ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς πάντων τῶν πόνων μου καὶ πάντων τῶν τοῦ πατρός μου.	Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.”	Joseph Mother is Asenath	Manasseh
Gen 41:52	וְאֵת֙ שֵׁ֣ם הַשֵּׁנִ֔י קָרָ֖א אֶפְרַ֑יִם כִּֽי־ הִפְרַ֥נִי אֱלֹהִ֖ים בְּאֶ֥רֶץ עָנְיִֽי	וית שׁום תניין קרא אפרים ארום אמר תקיף יתי ייי בארע סיגופי והכדין עתיד למתקוף בית אבא הכא בסיגופיהום	τὸ δὲ ὄνομα τοῦ δευτέρου ἐκάλεσεν Εφραιμ, ὅτι Ηὔξησέν με ὁ θεὸς ἐν γῇ ταπεινώσεώς μου.	The second he named Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.”	Joseph Mother is Asenath	Ephraim
Ex 2:10	וַיִּגְדַּ֖ל[a] הַיֶּ֑לֶד וַתְּבִאֵ֙הוּ֙ לְבַ֣ת[b]- פַּרְעֹ֔ה וַֽיְהִי־לָ֖הּ לְבֵ֑ן וַתִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמ֖וֹ מֹשֶׁ֣ה וַתֹּ֔אמֶר כִּ֥י מִן־הַמַּ֖יִם מְשִׁיתִֽהוּ	ורבא רבייא ואייתיתיה לברת פרעה והוה לה חביב הי־כביר וקרת שׁמיה משׁה ארום אמרת מן מוי דנהרא שׁחילתיה	ἀδρυνθέντος δὲ τοῦ παιδίου εἰσήγαγεν αὐτὸ πρὸς τὴν θυγατέρα Φαραω, καὶ ἐγενήθη αὐτῇ εἰς υἱόν· ἐπωνόμασεν δὲ	When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named	Daughter of Pharaoh	Moses (Mother is Hebrew woman)

			τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Μωυσῆν λέγουσα Ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος αὐτὸν ἀνειλόμην.	him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out[b] of the water."		
Exodus 2:22	וַתֵּלֶד[a] בֵּן וַיִּקְרָא[b] אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גֵּרְשֹׁם כִּי אָמַר גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נָכְרִיָּה	וילידת ביר דכר וקרא שׁמיה גרשׁום ארום אמר דייר הויתי בארעא נוכרייא דלא דידי	ἐν γαστρὶ δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ γυνὴ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν Μωυσῆς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Γηρσαμ λέγων ὅτι Πάροικός εἰμι ἐν γῇ ἀλλοτρίᾳ.	She bore a son, and he named him Gershom; for he said, "I have been an alien residing in a foreign land."	Moses Mother is Zipporah	Gershom
Judg. 13:24	וַתֵּלֶד הָאִשָּׁה בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנַּעַר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה	וילידת אתתא בר וקרת ית שׁמיה שׁמשׁון ורבא רביא וברכיה יי	Καὶ ἔτεκεν ἡ γυνὴ υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σαμψων· καὶ ηὐλόγησεν αὐτὸν κύριος, καὶ ηὐξήθη τὸ παιδάριον.	The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him.	Unnamed mother	Samson
1 Sam 1:20	וַיְהִי[a] לִתְקֻפוֹת הַיָּמִים וַתַּהַר חַנָּה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁמוּאֵל כִּי מֵיְהוָה שְׁאִלְתִּיו	והוה לזמן משׁלם יומיא ועדיאת חנה וילידת בר וקרת ית שׁמיה שׁמואל ארי אמרת מן קדם יי שׁאלתיה	καὶ συνέλαβεν. καὶ ἐγενήθη τῷ καιρῷ τῶν ἡμερῶν καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σαμουηλ καὶ εἶπεν Ὅτι παρὰ κυρίου θεοῦ σαβαωθ ᾐτησάμην αὐτόν.	In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."	Hannah	Samuel
1 Sam 4:21	וַתִּקְרָא לַנַּעַר אִי־כָבוֹד לֵאמֹר גָּלָה כָבוֹד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הִלָּקַח אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶל[a]־חָמִיהָ וְאִישָׁהּ	וקרת לרביא אי כבוד למימר גלה יקרא מישׂראל דאשׁתבי ארונא דיי ודמית חמוהא ודאתקטיל בעלה	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ παιδάριον Οὐαὶ βαρχαβωθ ὑπὲρ τῆς κιβωτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ πενθεροῦ αὐτῆς καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς.	She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been	Wife of Phinehas	Ichabod

				captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.		
2 Sam 12:24	וַיְנַחֵם דָּוִד אֶת־בַּת־שֶׁבַע אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן ויקרא [ותקרא][a] אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיהוָה אֲהֵבוֹ	ונחים דויד ית בת שבע אתתיה ועל לותה ושכיב עמה וילידת בר וקרת ית שמיה שלמה ויי רחימיה	καὶ παρεκάλεσεν Δαυιδ Βηρσαβεε τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ ἐκοιμήθη μετ᾽ αὐτῆς, καὶ συνέλαβεν καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σαλωμων, καὶ κύριος ἠγάπησεν αὐτόν	Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The LORD loved him,	David Mother is Bathsheba, former spouse of Uriah the Hittite	Solomon
2 Sam 12:25	וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְדִידְיָהּ בַּעֲבוּר[a] יְהוָה	ושלח ביד נתן נביא וקרא ית שמיה ידידיה בדיל יי	καὶ ἀπέστειλεν ἐν χειρὶ Ναθαν τοῦ προφήτου, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ιδεδι ἕνεκεν κυρίου.	and sent a message by the prophet Nathan; so he named him Jedidiah, because of the LORD.	H-Qal Pret-3MS A-Peal Perf-3MS G-Ao-A-Ind-3S (Usually translated “He was called” in NRSV, first time it is “he named him”)	Jedidiah
Is. 7:14	לָכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אֹות הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה[a] הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת[b] שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ־אֵל	בכן יתן יי הוא לכון אתא הא עולמתא מעדיא ותליד בר ותקרי שמיה עמנואל	διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ	Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a	Young woman, no longer pregnant	Imannu-El

			ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ·	son, and shall name him Immanuel.		
Is. 9:5	כִּי־יֶלֶד יֻלַּד־לָנוּ בֵּן נִתַּן־לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל־ שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא[b] שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִיעַד שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם	אמר נביא לבית דוד ארי רבי איתיליד לנא בר אתיהב לנא וקבל אוריתא עלוהי למטרה ואתקרי שׁמיה מן קדם מפליא עצה אלהא גברא קים לעלמיא משׁיחא דשׁלמא יסגי עלנא ביומוהי	ὅτι παιδίον ἐγεννήθη ἡμῖν, υἱὸς καὶ ἐδόθη ἡμῖν, οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐγενήθη ἐπὶ τοῦ ὤμου αὐτοῦ, καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄξω εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας, εἰρήνην καὶ ὑγίειαν αὐτῷ.	For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.	H-Qal-Pret-3MS A-Ithpeel Perf 3MS G-Pr-P-Ind-3S	Child
Job 42:14	וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־ הָאַחַת יְמִימָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית קְצִיעָה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׁלִישִׁית קֶרֶן־ הַפּוּךְ	וקרא שׁמא דחדא ימימה ושׁום תנייתא קציעה ושׁום תליתאה קרן־ הפוך [Not in Targum Ps-J, but Targum Job]	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὴν μὲν πρώτην Ἡμέραν, τὴν δὲ δευτέραν Κασίαν, τὴν δὲ τρίτην Ἀμαλθείας κέρας	He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch	Job	Jemimah, Keziah, Keren-Happuch
Ruth 4:17	וַתִּקְרֶאנָהּ לוֹ הַשְּׁכֵנוֹת שֵׁם לֵאמֹר יֶלֶד־בֵּן לְנָעֳמִי וַתִּקְרֶאנָה שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד הוּא אֲבִי־יִשַׁי אֲבִי דָוִד	וקרן ליה שׁיבבתהא שׁום למימר איתיליד בר לנעמי והוון קרן ית שׁמיה עובד הוא אבוי דישׁי אבויי דדויד [Not in Targum Ps-J, but Targum Ruth]	καὶ ἐκάλεσαν αὐτοῦ αἱ γείτονες ὄνομα λέγουσαι Ἐτέχθη υἱὸς τῇ Νωεμιν· καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ωβηδ· οὗτος πατὴρ Ιεσσαι πατρὸς Δαυιδ.	The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.	Women of the town Ruth is mother, but they say born to Naomi	Obed
Dan 10:1	בִּשְׁנַת שָׁלוֹשׁ[a] לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ		Ἐν τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ τῷ πρώτῳ	In the third year of King	H-Niphal Perf-3MS	Daniel/

	פָּרַ֣ס דָּבָר֮ נִגְלָה֒ לְדָנִיֵּ֗אל אֲשֶׁר־ נִקְרָ֤א שְׁמוֹ֙ בֵּלְטְשַׁאצַּ֔ר וֶאֱמֶ֥ת הַדָּבָ֖ר וְצָבָ֣א גָּד֑וֹל וּבִ֥ין[b] אֶת־הַדָּבָ֖ר וּבִינָ֥ה לֽוֹ בַּמַּרְאֶֽה		Κύρου τοῦ βασιλέως Περσῶν πρόσταγμα ἐδείχθη τῷ Δανιηλ, ὃς ἐπεκλήθη τὸ ὄνομα Βαλτασαρ, καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ ὅραμα καὶ τὸ πρόσταγμα, καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τὸ ἰσχυρὸν διανοηθήσεται τὸ πρόσταγμα, καὶ διενοήθην αὐτὸ ἐν ὁράματι.	Cyrus of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The word was true, and it concerned a great conflict. He understood the word, having received understanding in the vision.	G-Ao-P-Ind-3S	Beltashazzar
1 Chr. 4:9	וַיְהִ֤י יַעְבֵּץ֙ נִכְבָּ֣ד מֵאֶחָ֔יו וְאִמּ֥וֹ קָרְאָ֖ה שְׁמ֣וֹ יַעְבֵּ֑ץ לֵאמֹ֕ר כִּ֥י יָלַ֖דְתִּי בְּעֹֽצֶב	והוה יעבץ הוא עתניאל יקיר וחכים באוריתא יתיר מן אחוהי ואמיה קרת שׁמיה יעבץ למימר ארום בצערא ילדתיה [Not in Targum Ps-J, but Targum 1 Chronicles]	καὶ ἦν Ιγαβης ἔνδοξος ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἡ μήτηρ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ιγαβης λέγουσα Ἔτεκον ὡς γαβης.	Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.”	Mother	Jabez
1 Chr. 7:16	וַתֵּ֤לֶד מַעֲכָה֙ אֵ֣שֶׁת־מָכִ֔יר[a] בֵּ֖ן וַתִּקְרָ֣א שְׁמ֑וֹ פֶּ֚רֶשׁ וְשֵׁ֣ם אָחָ֔יו שֶׁ֖רֶשׁ וּבָנָ֥יו אוּלָֽם וָרֶֽקֶם	וילידת מעכה אתת מכיר בר וקרת שׁמיה פרשׁ ושׁום אחוהי שׁרשׁ ובנוי אולם ורקם [Not in Targum Ps-J, but Targum 1 Chronicles]	καὶ ἔτεκεν Μοωχα γυνὴ Μαχιρ υἱὸν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Φαρες, καὶ ὄνομα ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ Σορος· υἱὸς αὐτοῦ Ουλαμ.	Maacah the wife of Machir bore a son, and she named him Peresh; the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam and Rekem.	Maacah	Peresh The others in this story do not use qr’

1 Chr. 7:23	וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַיִּקְרָא[a] אֶת־שְׁמוֹ בְּרִיעָה כִּי בְרָעָה הָיְתָה[b] בְּבֵיתוֹ	ועל לות אתתיה ועדיאת ויולידת בר וקרא ית שמיה בריעה ארום בבישתא דהות בביתיה [Not in Targum Ps-J, but Targum 1 Chronicles]	καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔλαβεν ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Βαραγα, ὅτι Ἐν κακοῖς ἐγένετο ἐν οἴκῳ μου.	Ephraim went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son; and he named him Beriah, because disaster had befallen his house.	Ephraim	Beriah People of Gath killed older siblings

APPENDIX B

Naming Stories without קרא שׁם

Verse	MT[1]	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan[2]	Greek	NRSV	Namer	Named
Gen 4:1	וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה	ואדם ידע ית חוה איתתיה דהיא מתעברא מן מלאכא דיי׳: {ת״א} המידת למלאכ׳ ואעדיאת וילידת ית קין ואמרת קניתי לגברא ית מלאכא דיי׳	Αδαμ δὲ ἔγνω Ευαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν τὸν Καιν καὶ εἶπεν Ἐκτησάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.	Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with the help of the LORD.”	Eve	Cain
Gen. 32:29	וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׂרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל	ואמר לא יעקב איתאמר עוד שׁמך אילהין ישׂראל ארום איתרברבת עם מלאכייא דיי׳ ואם גובריא ויכילת להום	εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ Οὐ κληθήσεται ἔτι τὸ ὄνομά σου Ιακωβ, ἀλλὰ Ισραηλ ἔσται τὸ ὄνομά σου, ὅτι ἐνίσχυσας μετὰ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ ἀνθρώπων δυνατός.	Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.”		Jacob/ Israel
Num. 13:16	אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לָתוּר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ[a] בִּן־נוּן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	אילין שׁמהת גובריא דשׁדר משׁה לאללא ית ארעא וקדי חמא משׁה עינוותנותיה קרא להושׁע בר נון יהושׁע	ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἀπέστειλεν Μωυσῆς κατασκέψασθαι τὴν γῆν. καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν Μωυσῆς τὸν Αυση υἱὸν Ναυη Ἰησοῦν.	These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua.	Moses	Hoshea to Joshua

[1] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

[2] There are multiple Targums, but I am following the Targum (Pseudo-)Jonathan in this section because it often provides more text and context than the Masoretic Text and other Targums. In addition, it this Targum provides texts beyond the Torah that are available to me.

Judg. 6:32	וַיִּקָּרֵא־לוֹ בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא יְרֻבַּעַל לֵאמֹר יָרֶב בּוֹ הַבַּעַל כִּי נָתַץ אֶת־ מִזְבְּחוֹ	וקרָא לֵיה בְיוֹמָא הַהוּא יְרֻבַעַל לְמֵימַר יִתְפְּרַע לֵיה בַעְלָא אְרֵי תָּרַע יָת אֵיגוֹרֵיה	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ Δικαστήριον τοῦ Βααλ, ὅτι κατέσκαψεν τὸ θυσιαστήριον αὐτοῦ.	Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he pulled down his altar.	H-Qal Pret 3MS A-Peal Perf-3MS G-Ao-A-Ind-3S Uses qr’, not shem	Jerubbaal or Gideon
Judg. 8:31	וּפִילַגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁכֶם יָלְדָה־לּוֹ גַם־הִיא בֵּן וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ	וּלְחֵינְתֵיה דְבִשְׁכֶם יְלִידַת לֵיה אַף הִיא בַר וְשַׁוִי יָת שְׁמֵיה אֲבִימֶלֶךְ	καὶ ἡ παλλακὴ αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐν Σικιμοις ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ καί γε αὐτὴ υἱόν, καὶ ἐπέθηκεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Αβιμελεχ.	His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.	Gideon Verb is H7760, not qr’, unique translation	Abimelech

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