

Is God a Misogynist?

Women in the Pentateuch

Part 1

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Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- Israel:
 - *Cohen v. State of Israel* (1981): Mr. Cohen had violently attacked his wife and forced her to have sex with him against her will.
 - Subsequently, they were divorced. He was accused of rape retroactively.
 - He appealed his conviction on the principle that a man cannot be guilty of raping his wife.
- Judge David Belchor noted the position of English law at the time, since English law influenced the State of Israel before 1948

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- England:
 - In the 1980's and 90's, three cases dealt with the crime of indecent assault within marriage. A wife was deemed to have consented to sexual intercourse with her husband at marriage, even if he had later contracted a venereal disease; additionally:
 - *R v. Caswell* (1984): A married woman's consent to sexual intercourse covered all acts preliminary to that intercourse
 - *R v. H* (1990): The marital rape exemption applied even to an estranged couple

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- United States:
 - ‘Despite vast differences between the fifty states..., until the late 1970’s they all shared this in common: a man was legally entitled to rape his wife.’
 - ‘A husband cannot be guilty of raping his wife unless he forces her to have sexual intercourse with a third person. Immunity shields the husband even though all the other elements of the offense are present – force, penetration, and lack of consent. He is immune from a rape charge in most states, however violent the force he uses and however long he and his wife have been living apart...For instance, a wife whose husband comes home drunk every night and violently forces sex on her...is not protected by the rape laws of forty-six states.’ (*New York University Law Review* 52 (1977): 306 – 323)

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- Israel:
 - *Cohen v. State of Israel* (1981): ‘Judge Belchor stated that he was ‘delighted’ not to have to follow English law on this issue because that would involve endorsing the marital rape exemption.’
 - Judge Belchor concluded: ‘The people of Israel can take pride in the progressive and liberal approach of **their blessed heritage and the position of Jewish law on this matter from time immemorial.**’

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 - Judge Belchor concluded: ‘The people of Israel can take pride in the progressive and liberal approach of **their blessed heritage and the position of Jewish law on this matter from time immemorial.**’
 - Really? Why has Jewish law always held this?

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - The Bible
 - Considered divine revelation
 - Final organization ~450 BCE and 70 CE
 - The Talmud
 - The 'oral law' of the Torah (*Mishnah*, compiled 200 CE)
 - Further commentary (*Gemara*, compiled 500 CE)
 - Commentaries and codifications

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - The Bible
 - ‘He may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights’ (Ex.21:10)
 - ‘When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.’ (Dt.24:5)

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - The Talmud
 - ‘A man is forbidden to compel his wife to have intercourse with him.’ (Talmud Eirubin 100b)
 - ‘This Talmudic ruling appears in all the major codifications of Jewish law’ (Goldstein, *Defending the Human Spirit*, 2006, p.170; cf. Rambam, *Hilchot Ishut* 15:17; Tur and Code of Jewish Law, *Orach Chaim* 240:3; *Even HaEzer* 25:2)

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - Commentaries and codifications
 - ‘He may not rape her by having intercourse with her against her will, but rather, he must do it with her consent and in an atmosphere of open communication and joy.’ (Rambam, 1135 – 1204, *Hilchot Ishut* 15:17)
 - ‘If she finds her husband repulsive, she is freed from her conjugal duties.’ (Rambam, *Hilchot Ishut* 14:8, quoted by Warren Goldstein, 2006, p.172)
 - ‘Certainly she is not subject to him incessantly when she does not wish it...’ (*Responsa Maharit* 1:5)
 - ‘Even those who would permit [unconventional sexual intercourse] do so only when the woman is willing, but if a husband forces it upon the woman he is called a sinner’ (*Responsa Yaskil Avdi* 6:25)

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - Commentaries and codifications
 - ‘The vulnerability principle is the most influential one when it comes to Jewish law’s outlawing of rape in marriage.’ (Goldstein 2006, p.176)
 - ‘A woman’s conjugal duty is limited to having intercourse at certain regular intervals [‘determined with reference to, on the one hand, the wife’s needs and, on the other hand, the husband’s capacity’ (p.186)]...She is not required at all to ensure that her husband is sexually satisfied. He is responsible to guarantee to the best of his ability that his wife never feels unfulfilled sexual desire, which means that according to Jewish law a man must with great sensitivity constantly attune himself to his wife’s sexual needs...The reason is that fulfilling her desires constitutes a Biblical commandment, whereas fulfilling his does not.’ (Goldstein 2006, p.184 – 9)

Intro: Does Rape Exist in Marriage?

- What is Jewish Law? Sources?
 - Commentaries and codifications
 - ‘According to Jewish law, sexual satisfaction is primarily the husband’s duty and the wife’s right. Married women need legal protection to ensure that their husbands treat them sensitively in the potentially volatile area of sexual relations. Men do not need to be protected; they need to be restrained and educated to think of their wives and not to view them as their sex objects.’ (Goldstein 2006, p.190)

The Pentateuch: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Narratives
 - 'Patriarchs' nomenclature for Genesis
 - God cared for Ishmael but not Hagar, and sent her back to Sarai despite abuse (Gen.16), then dismissed her (Gen.18)?
- Laws: Personhood, Family, and Community
 - A woman's menstrual period makes her unclean (Lev.15)?
 - A daughter is more unclean than a son (Lev.12)?
 - A daughter did not inherit land (Num.36)?
 - Was a wife her husband's property (Ex.20)?
 - Could only husbands divorce their wives (Dt.24)?
 - Could only men be elders, judges, prophets, priests, kings (Ex.16; Dt.17 – 18)?

A Preliminary Theological Question

God's Actions and Human Actions:
Did God *Cause* People to Sin?
The Difference it Makes in Reading

How to Evaluate the Pentateuch

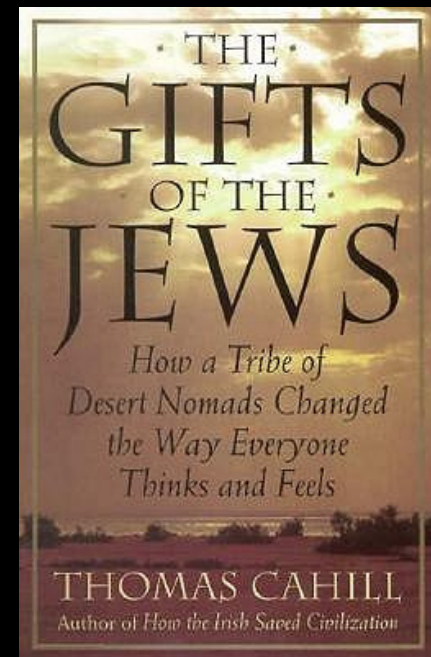
- What is the relationship between God's actions and human actions?
 - Did God *cause* the male-privileged culture of the 'patriarchal' era? Or was He undoing it, correcting people's mistakes as they went?
- Example: 'So Sarai said to Abram, 'Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.'
(Gen.16:2)

God's Spoken Word

- To Himself: 'Let there be light'; and there was light. (Gen.1:3); ten times in Genesis 1
- To Abram: 'I will redeem your descendants from bondage.' (paraphrase of Gen.15:13 – 15)
- To Abram and Sarai: 'You will have a son' (Gen.17:15 – 19)
- To Samuel: 'David will be king of Israel' (1 Sam.16:1 – 13)
- Etc. etc.

God's Spoken Word

- The pattern: God speaks to act, and acts as He speaks
 - 'Surely the LORD God will do **nothing** except that which He reveals to His servants the prophets.' (Amos 3:7)
 - 'Prophets' are those to whom God speaks first
- Pattern of Promise – Fulfillment
- The Jews contributed the world's first linear sense of history



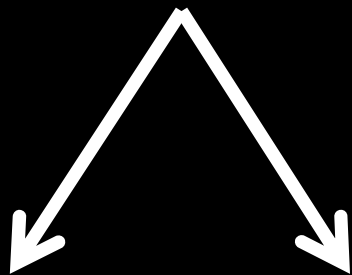
God's Actions and Human Actions

- God does not cause the behavior of all people; He only causes **what He has spoken**
 - God's speech-acts leave room for genuine human free will, and real interaction between God and us
 - Augustine's *monergism* ('one will'; God is *omnicausal*) is problematic and incorrect
 - All early theologians believed in human free will
 - Augustine himself, in his early years, believed in free will
 - John Cassian, another leading theologian (the 'Eastern Orthodox spokesman'), wrote a sensitive, critical response to Augustine
 - If you believe in *monergism*, then you must attribute all human sinfulness back to God, including the fall and subsequent sins, like patriarchy

The Augustinian – Aristotelian Portrayal

arbitrary

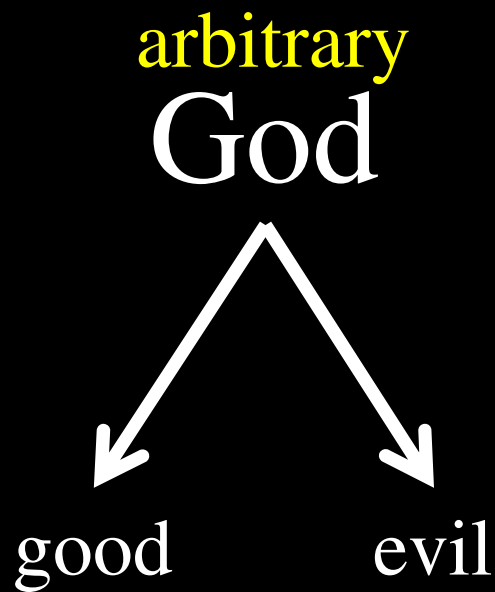
God



good

evil

The Augustinian – Aristotelian Portrayal

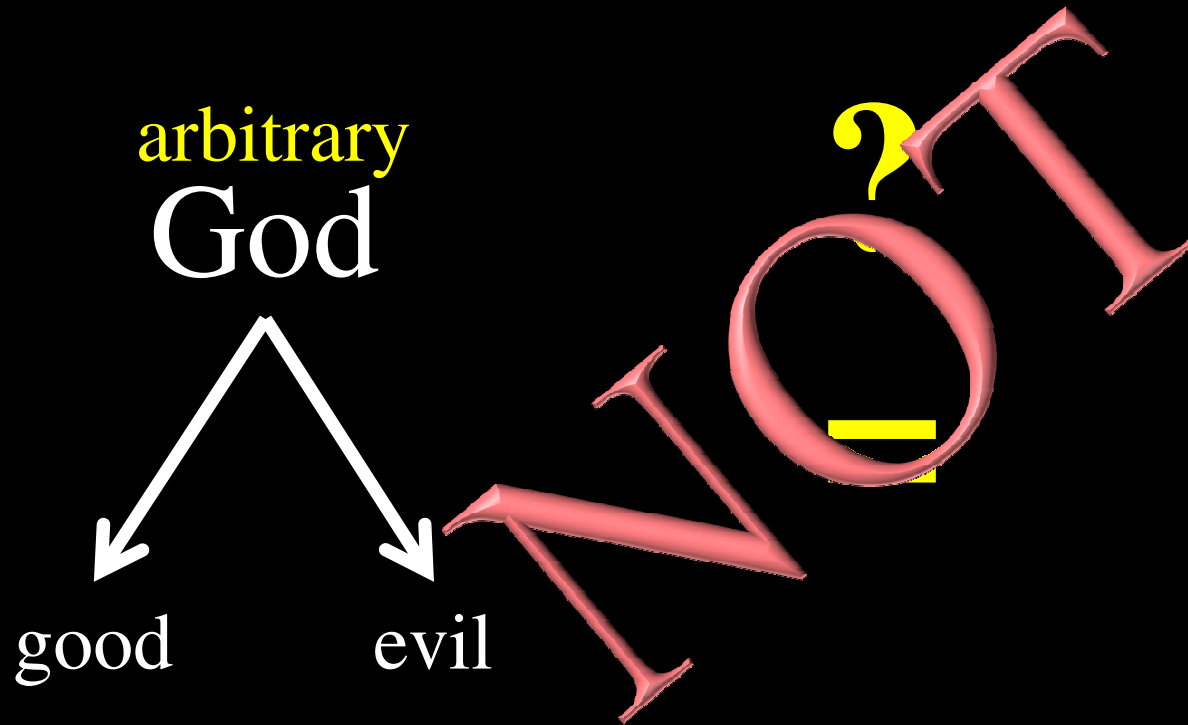


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The Augustinian – Aristotelian Portrayal



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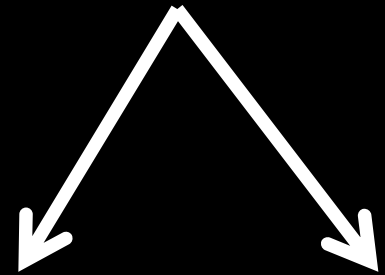
The Biblical Portrayal

God



good

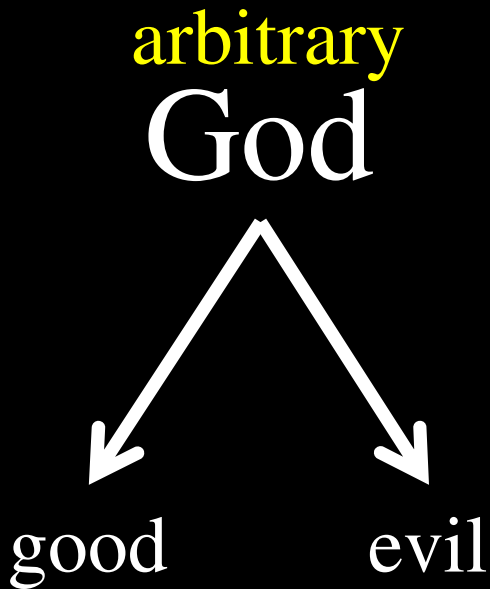
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Humanity



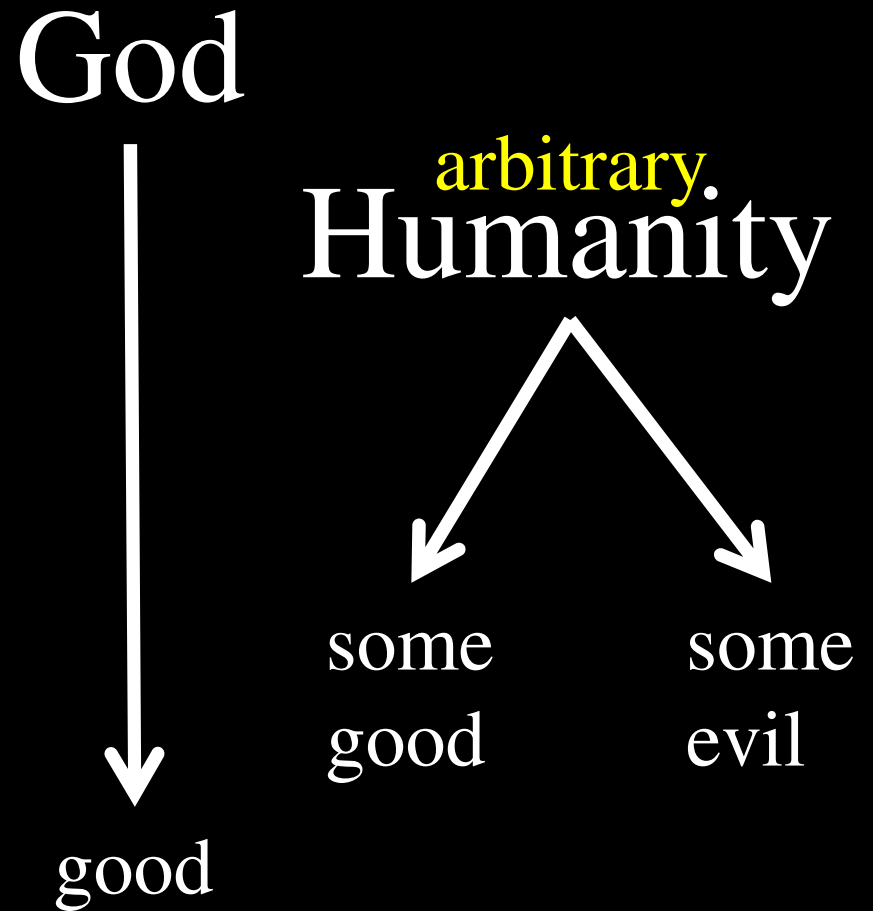
some
good

some
evil

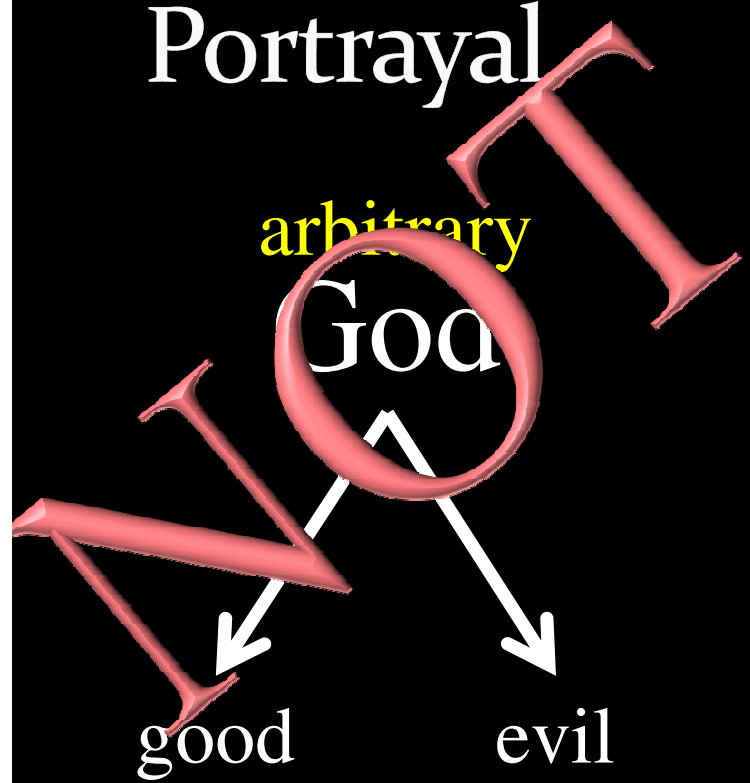
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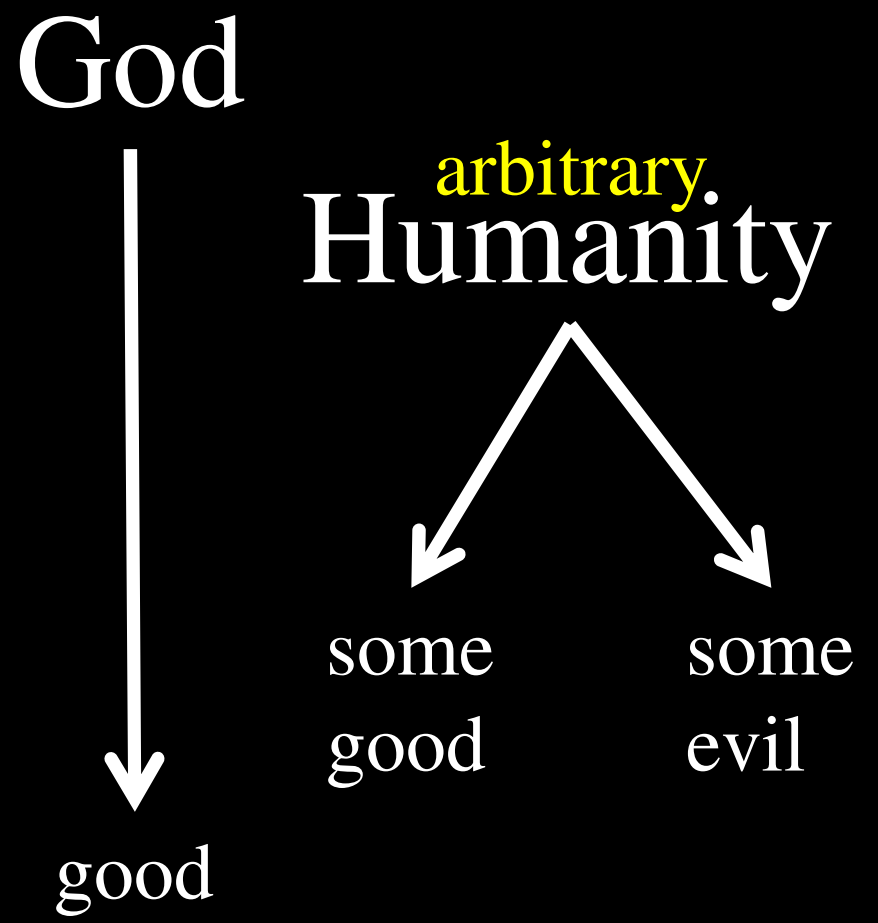
The Biblical Portrayal



The Augustinian – Aristotelian Portrayal



The Biblical Portrayal



How to Read Biblical Narrative



How to Read Biblical Narrative

- Grasp the story, and its literary conventions
- Understand the interactions



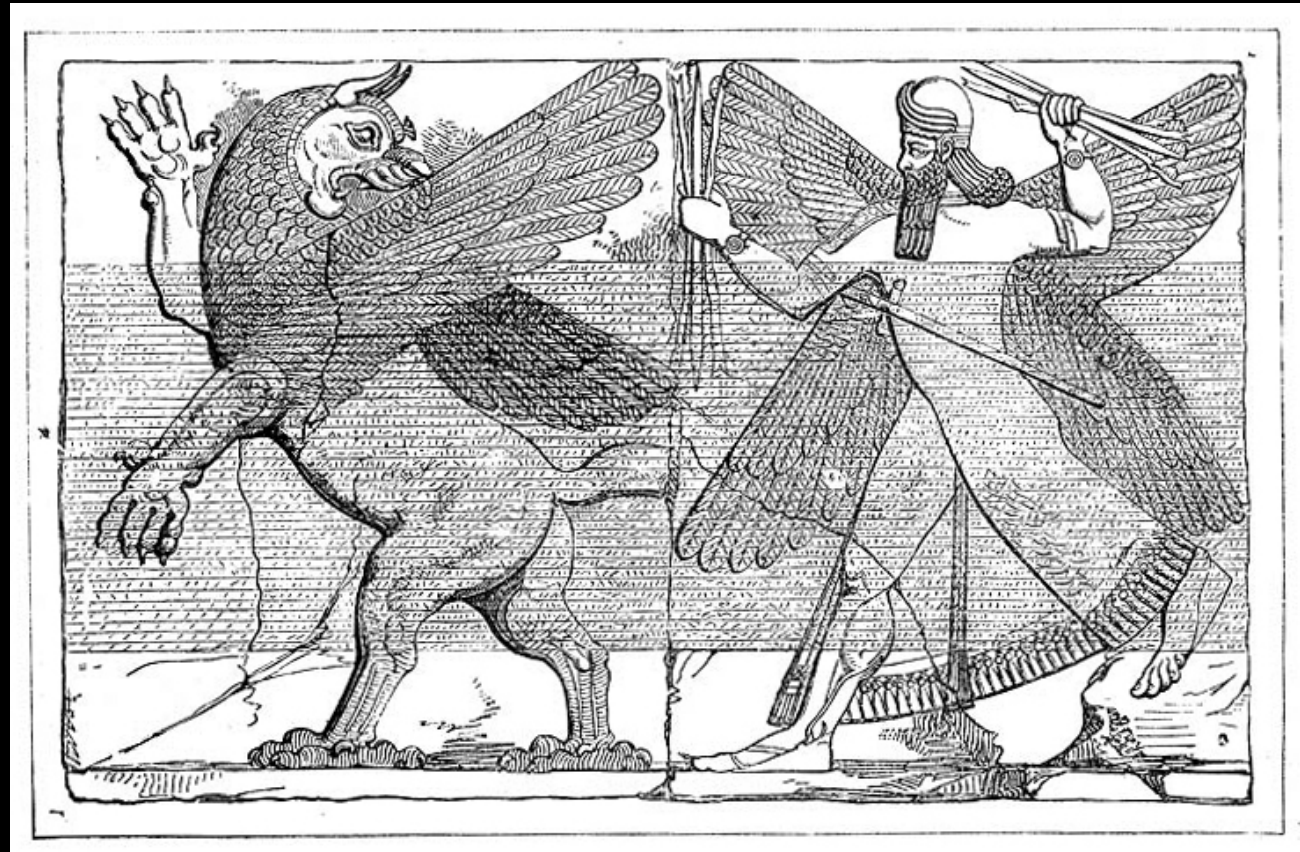
How to Read Biblical Narrative In Creation: Male and Female

- In Greek myth, Pandora was created by the gods to plague men with mischief and trouble, to punish them for receiving fire from Prometheus



How to Read Biblical Narrative In Creation: Male and Female

- In Babylonian myth, Tiamat was the first female being, a dragon goddess slain by the male god Marduk



How to Read Biblical Narrative In Creation: Male and Female

- By contrast, God made humanity both male and female (not just human kings) in the image of God
- God's plan for us being image-bearers involves marriage and childbearing



How to Read Biblical Narrative In Redemption: Male and Female

- God is seeking to restore His image in all people
- God's plan of redemption includes His original intent
 - to bear more life through the union of loving marriages
 - 'the seed of the *woman*' (Gen.3:14 – 15)



How to Read Biblical Narrative In Redemption: Male and Female

- Literary motifs:
- Creation (Gen.1)
 - Water, then land
 - Humanity: Adam and Eve
 - Be fruitful and multiply
- Creation (Gen.6:9 – 9:29)
 - Water, then land
 - Humanity: Noah's family
 - Be fruitful and multiply
- Fall (Gen.2 – 4)
 - From garden to city
 - Humanity in rebellion
- Fall (Gen.10 – 11)
 - From garden to city
 - Humanity in rebellion

How to Read Biblical Narrative In Redemption: Male and Female

- Literary motifs:
- Creation (Gen.12:1 – 9)
 - Water, then land
 - Humanity: Abram & Sarai
 - Be fruitful and multiply
- Fall (Gen.12:10 – 20)
 - From garden to Egypt
 - Abram lies about Sarai
 - God protects
- Creation (Ex.1 – 15)
 - Water, then land
 - Humanity: Israel
 - Be fruitful and multiply

How to Read Biblical Narrative In Redemption: Male and Female

- God was undoing Adam and Eve's sin through Abraham and Sarah's partnership
- They were God's 'new humanity,' for that time

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar

- A. God calls Abram to trust His word, leave his homeland, gives promise of seed (11:27 – 12:3)
 - B. Abram builds an altar, calls on the name of the Lord (12:4 – 9)**
 - C. Abram and Sarai sojourn in Egypt, Abram lies about Sarai but God protects Sarai (12:10 – 20); separation of Lot (13:1 – 13); God's blessing of land and many descendants (13:14 – 18)
 - D. Abram wars on Sodom and Gomorrah, rescues Lot (14:1 – 24)**
 - E. God prevents Abram from naming Eliezer as his heir, again promises Abram seed despite Abram's old age (15:1 – 6); God promises birth of Israel from a hopeless situation: bondage (15:7 – 21)
 - F. Sarai and Hagar: Sarai relies on herself and fails (16:1 – 6); God hears Hagar and promises blessing on Ishmael (16:7 – 16)**
 - G. God reiterates the covenant, gives sign of circumcision, changes names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah (17:1 – 16)
 - F'. Isaac and Ishmael: Sarah believes, God promises Isaac (17:15 – 17); God blesses Ishmael; Abraham circumcises Ishmael (17:18 – 27)**
 - E'. God again promises Abraham seed despite Sarah's old age (18:1 – 15); God promises birth of a son from a hopeless situation: Sarah's womb
 - D'. God wars on Sodom and Gomorrah, rescues Lot (18:16 – 19:38)**
 - C'. Abraham and Sarah sojourn in Gerar, Abraham lies about Sarah but God protects Sarah (20:1 – 18); Isaac's birth (21:1 – 7), separation of Ishmael; God's blessing on Ishmael of land and many descendants (21:8 – 21)
 - B'. Abraham plants a tree and calls on the name of the Lord (21:22 – 34)** - A'. God calls Abraham to trust His word, sacrifice his son, gives blessing on the seed (22:1 – 19)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

Hagar = Abraham = Sarah



'Seed of the woman'

Ishmael

Isaac

Eliezer

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

- God affirms His original creation order:
 - God works through the rightful wife: Sarah
 - God limits male power; God cuts off:
 - Abraham's ability to hide his wife (Gen.12:10 – 20)
 - His power to name an heir outside his bloodline (Gen.15:1 – 6)
 - His ability to father a child without Sarah (Gen.16:1 – 16)
 - Part of Abraham's penis! (Gen.17:1 – 27) **Any clearer?**
 - God calls the wife (not just the husband) to trust Him
 - Sarah (Gen.18:1 – 15; Rom.4:16 – 25; Heb.11:11)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

- God drew Sarah into personal conversation; He did not allow Abraham to simply stand in front of her
- God gave her the same reason for laughter as Abraham
 - ⁹ Then they said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘There, in the tent.’ ¹⁰ He said, ‘I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.’ And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. ¹² Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ ¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.’ ¹⁵ Sarah denied it however, saying, ‘I did not laugh’; for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but **you did laugh**.’...
 - ^{21:1} Then the LORD took note of **Sarah** as He had said, and **the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised**. (Genesis 18:9 – 15; 21:1)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

Abraham

- God gives blessing (12:1 – 3)
- God redeems his sin (12:10 – 20)
- Child from your body (15:1 – 6)
- God renames him (17:5)
- Abraham laughs (17:17)
- God redeems his sin again (20:1 – 18)

Sarah

- God gives blessing (12:1 – 3)
- God redeems her sin (16:1 – 15)
- Child from your body (17:16)
- God renames her (17:15)
- Sarah laughs (18:11)
- God redeems her sin again (21:12 – 15)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

Isaac = Rebekah

'Seed of the woman'

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graph TD; A[Isaac = Rebekah] --- B[ ]; B --> C[Esau]; B --> D[Jacob];
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Esau

Jacob

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah

- A. God makes promise; struggle in childbirth; Jacob and Esau born; Jacob buys birthright (25:19 – 34)
 - B. **Rebekah endangered in a foreign palace, Isaac lies about her, pact with foreigners (26:1 – 34)**
 - C. Jacob fears Esau and flees the Promised Land (27:1 – 28:9)
 - D. **At night, God speaks to Jacob in a dream (ladder with angels), Jacob names Bethel, makes deal with God (28:10 – 22)**
 - E. Jacob meets Rachel and Laban (29:1 – 14)
 - F. **Jacob must acknowledge the rights of the firstborn (Leah) and is vulnerable to Laban, Laban deceives Rachel (29:15 – 30)**
 - G. Jacob experiences conflict between his two wives (29:31 – 30:13)
 - H. **Rachel lets go of rights to Jacob; Leah bears children (30:14 – 21)**
 - H'. **God 'remembers' Rachel; Rachel bears Joseph (30:22 – 24)**
 - G'. Jacob experiences conflict with Laban but accepts a handicap with his flocks, relinquishes his rights (30:25 – 36)
 - F'. **God prospers Jacob and protects him from Laban; Rachel deceives Laban (30:37 – 31:35)**
 - E'. Laban departs from Jacob (31:43 – 55)
 - D'. **At night, God wrestles Jacob, Jacob named Israel, asks God for blessing (32:1 – 32)**
 - C'. Jacob returns to the Promised Land and is restored to Esau (33:1 – 20)
 - B'. **Dinah endangered in foreign palace, Jacob's sons lie, pact with foreigners (34:1 – 31)**
- A'. God fulfills promise; Jacob named Israel again at Bethel; struggle in childbirth, Rachel dies; Reuben forfeits birthright; Isaac dies, Jacob and Esau bury him (35:1 – 29)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

| | Leah | Zilpah | Rachel | Bilhah |
|----|---------------------------|--------|----------|----------|
| 1 | Reuben (disqualified) | | | |
| 2 | Simeon (disqualified) | | | |
| 3 | Levi (disqualified) | | | |
| 4 | Judah 'Seed of the woman' | | | |
| 5 | | | | Dan |
| 6 | | | | Naphtali |
| 7 | | Gad | | |
| 8 | | Asher | | |
| 9 | Issachar | | | |
| 10 | Zebulun | | | |
| | Dinah | | | |
| 11 | | | Joseph | |
| 12 | | | Benjamin | |

How to Read Biblical Narrative

The Legitimate Wife and Heir

- God affirms **His original creation order**:
 - God works through the rightful wife: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah
 - God limits male power, and cuts off:
 - Abraham's ability to hide his wife (Gen.12:10 – 20)
 - His power to name an heir outside his bloodline (Gen.15:1 – 6)
 - His ability to father a child without Sarah (Gen.16:1 – 16)
 - Part of Abraham's penis! (Gen.17:1 – 27)
 - God calls the wife (not just the husband) to trust Him
 - Sarah (Gen.18:1 – 15; Rom.4:16 – 25; Heb.11:11)
 - Rebekah (Gen.25:22 – 23)
 - Leah and Rachel (Gen.29:31 – 30:24)
 - God blesses mothers to name their children:
 - Both Isaac and Rebekah name their children (Gen.25:25 – 26)
 - Rachel and Leah, not Jacob, name their children (Gen.29:31ff.)

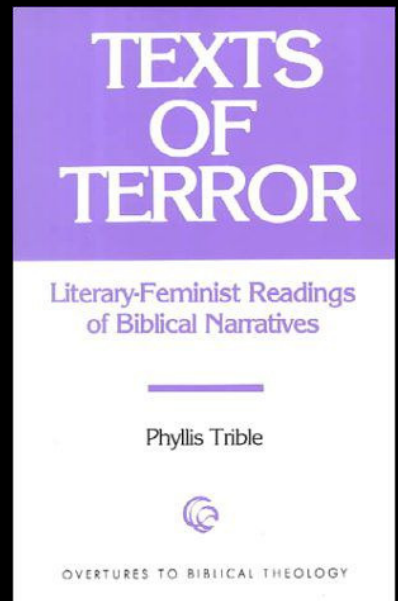
The Pentateuch: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Narratives
 - '~~Patriarchs~~' nomenclature for Genesis: 'Chosen family'
 - God cared for Ishmael but not Hagar, and sent her back to Sarai despite abuse (Gen.16), then dismissed her (Gen.18)?

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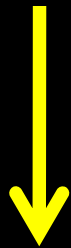
Feminist theologian Phyllis Trible called the story of Hagar one of the 'texts of terror'



How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

Hagar = Abraham = Sarah



Ishmael



Isaac

Eliezer

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

- Hagar: a servant, not a 'slave' as we understand it
- Surrogate motherhood: a culturally accepted practice at the time
 - (Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16 – 50* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1994), p.7. For an example of such a case in ANE law codes see Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1966), p.128)
- Hagar's attitude towards Sarai: spite and disdain are sinful
- God calls her by her name, 'Hagar,' whereas Abram and Sarai call her 'maid' (Gen.16:8)

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

- God promises Hagar that her son will be fruitful and multiply
 - ‘I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count’ (16:10)
 - God blesses Hagar to be a ‘matriarch’
- This is God’s creational blessing
 - Adam and Eve (Gen.1:26 – 31); Noah and family (8:17; 9:7)
 - Renewed with Abram and Sarai (12:1 – 3; 15:5; 17:2 – 7)
 - God blesses ‘the other woman and the other son’!
 - Notice her reaction: Hagar *names God* (*El Roi* – ‘the God who sees me’), the only person in the Bible to ever do this

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

- The Literary Motif of Sight
 - Sarai **'took...and gave...to her husband'** (16:3). Sound familiar? It is repeated from Eve and Adam's fall in Genesis 3:6. This is Sarai and Abram's sin, despite it being culturally acceptable.
 - Sarai was **'despised in her *sight*'** (16:4) because Hagar **'*saw* that she had conceived'** (16:5); the terms refer to the focus Hagar has: herself and Sarai. Hagar's spite comes out of seeing and focusing on a human comparison; she does not see God's blessing and patience. Sarai **'*saw*'** Hagar's spite in v.4 – 5.

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

- The Literary Motif of Sight
 - Then, Abram had said to Sarai, ‘Do what is good in your *sight*’ (16:6), surrendering to Sarai’s moral short-sightedness, relativism, and vindictiveness, which of course comes out of the fall itself.
 - After Hagar encounters the angel of the LORD, however, she knows that God *sees* her, and she has *seen* Him (16:13)! That is a stunning turnaround of the theme of sight.

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Hagar & Ishmael in Genesis 16

- God instructs her to name her son Ishmael, sharing with her the power of naming
- God instructs Hagar to return to Abram and Sarai. Why?
 - For Hagar to not express spite and disdain for Sarai but support and compassion
 - For Abram and Sarai to change the way they relate to Hagar
 - For Abram and Sarai to embrace Ishmael and care for him
 - The chosen family is a microcosm of God's future blessing of the world
 - Compare Qur'an: Hagar was 2nd wife; no reference to conflict and reconciliation

How to Read Biblical Narrative

Women in the Pentateuch

- God limited Abraham's power as a patriarch
- God brought Abraham and Sarah back to His creation order design for marriage, as equal partners
- God redeemed Hagar back to His creational blessing though she was the victim of Sarai's sin and Abraham's complicity
- God did not *cause* the male-privileged culture of the 'patriarchal' era. He was undoing it, correcting people's mistakes as they went.