

# Is God a Misogynist?

## Women in the Pentateuch

### Part 2

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# How to Read the Biblical Laws

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# How to Read Biblical Narrative

## The Laws of the Pentateuch

- What is the relationship between the narratives and the laws?
  - Do the narratives serve to 'spice up' the otherwise boring laws?
  - Or do the laws serve the narrative?

# How to Read Biblical Narrative

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# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- 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)?

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# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Personhood
  - A woman's menstrual period makes her unclean (Lev.15:19 – 30)?
  - A daughter is more unclean than a son (Lev.12)?
- What was being represented?
  - A man's 'emissions' were also unclean (Lev.15:16 – 18)
  - Death was unclean: scavengers, tombs, dead bodies
  - **Note the place in the story (see next slide)**

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

<b>The Defilement of Creation: Genesis 1 – 11</b>	<b>The Defilement of the Camp: Leviticus 11 – 17</b>
Distinctions in the created world and animal life in Gen.1 and between good and evil in Gen.2	Distinctions between clean and unclean animals in Lev.11
Pains in childbirth in Gen.3	Impurity at childbirth in Lev.12
Nakedness, attention drawn to skin in Gen.3	Graphic horror of skin diseases to depict humanity's state of uncleanness before a holy God in Lev.13
Adam and Eve banished from the garden	Unclean person must live outside the camp in Lev.13:46
Waters of the flood used in cleansing the land of 'all flesh' that had 'corrupted His way.' (Gen.6:12)	Water is the primary means of cleansing diseased flesh. Water appears 7 times in Lev.14 (v.5, 6, 8, 9, 50, 51, 52)



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

<b>The Defilement of Creation: Genesis 1 – 11</b>	<b>The Defilement of the Camp: Leviticus 11 – 17</b>
<p>The ark was plastered with pitch, inside and out in (Gen.6:14)</p>	<p>The house was plastered with clay after the soiled material was removed inside and taken out of the city (Lev.14:41-42). House was atoned for (Lev.14:53b).</p>
<p>Noah waited at the door of the ark for seven days (Gen.7:4, 10)</p>	<p>The priest was to wait at the door of the house for seven days (Lev.14:38)</p>
<p>Noah waited for the bird in the ark for two series of sevens (Gen.8:10, 12)</p>	<p>The one to be cleansed waited for two series of sevens (Lev.14:7, 8)</p>
<p>Two birds were sent out of the ark. One, the raven, flew out over the water and the other, a dove, flew over the dry land (Gen.8:7 – 12). The raven was unclean and the dove was clean.</p>	<p>Two ‘clean birds’ were taken: one was slain ‘over water’ and the other was released over the face of the field. The slain bird was a sin offering (Lev.14:52), took away the uncleanness; the other bird went free.</p>

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

<b>The Defilement of Creation: Genesis 1 – 11</b>	<b>The Defilement of the Camp: Leviticus 11 – 17</b>
A sacrifice was offered at the conclusion (Gen.8:20)	A sacrifice was offered at the conclusion (Lev.14:10, 21)
Noah offered a ‘clean animal’ and a ‘clean bird’ on the altar. (Gen.8:20)	The one to be cleansed offered a male lamb and two doves on the altar (Lev.14:21 – 22)
Noah was given dietary regulations (Gen.9:3) and warned about consuming the blood (Gen.9:4)	Dietary regulations have been given (Lev.11), along with a strict warning about consuming the blood (Lev.17, cf.7:26).
God established a covenant with Noah (Gen.9:9)	God established a covenant with Israel (Lev.26:44)

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

<b>The Defilement of Creation: Genesis 1 – 11</b>	<b>The Defilement of the Camp: Leviticus 11 – 17</b>
The sign of the covenant was the rainbow in the clouds (Gen.9:14-15)	The sign of God's presence in the covenant was the cloud over the atonement cover (Lev.16:2)
Noah drank wine and became drunk and lay in his tent (Gen.9:21)	Aaron and his sons were warned not to drink wine or fermented drink when they went into the Tent of Meeting (Lev.10:9)
Noah's two sons/descendants, Ham and Canaan, were cursed (Gen.9:24-27)	Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were cursed (Lev.10:1)
Noah's son Ham saw his father's nakedness (Gen.9:22)	'Do not uncover the nakedness of your father' (Lev.18:7) called the defilement of the Canaanites (Lev.18:24 – 30)

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

<b>The Defilement of Creation: Genesis 1 – 11</b>	<b>The Defilement of the Camp: Leviticus 11 – 17</b>
<p>Humanity plans and brings confusion at Babel (Gen.11:1 – 9). At Babel, God’s concern was that nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them’</p>	<p>The holiness laws in Lev.18 – 20 were intended to insure that there would be no wickedness (noun root of verb ‘to plan’) or confusion (noun root similar to ‘Babel’) in the land. The nouns are used only here in the Pentateuch</p>
<p>Abram married Sarai, his half-sister (Gen.11:29, 20:12)</p>	<p>The holiness laws prohibited marriage to one’s half sister (Lev.18:11, 20:17)</p>
<p>Jacob married two sisters (Gen.25 – 35)</p>	<p>The holiness laws prohibit marrying two sisters (Lev.18:18).</p>

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- We damaged our own human nature in the fall; human reproduction is both holy and contaminated
- The Sinai Laws concerning male and female personhood reflected the damage using the motif of death as uncleanness (semen spilled on the ground and menstruation are both life passing to death)
- From Abraham's story and in Jewish rites, circumcision became a symbolic motif of 'cleansing'; it was physically borne by the men but spiritually promised to both men and women (Dt.30:6)

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - A daughter did not typically inherit land (Num.36)?



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - A daughter did not typically inherit land (Num.36)?
- True, but land was stewarded for future children
  - God gave the garden-creation to Adam and Eve as a married unit, to give the creation to their descendants
  - Israel's garden land belonged to future generations, not to the present generation, and not individualistically



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - A daughter did not typically inherit land (Num.36)?
- True, but land was stewarded for future children
  - Jubilee principle of leveling the playing field, redistributing land, freeing indentured servants (Lev.25) was possible by family land inheritance; individualistic ownership of land would have made this impossible





# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - A daughter did not typically inherit land (Num.36)?
- True, but land was stewarded for future children
  - Future children got a vote about land ownership
  - Israel commanded to care especially for those who could not own land individually: widows, orphans, aliens (e.g. Dt.10:18; 14:29; 16:11 – 14; 24:17 – 22; 26:12 – 13; 27:19)

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - A daughter did not typically inherit land (Num.36)?
- True, but human rights were separated from wealth; civil rights of women equal with men

Code of Hammurabi (18 <sup>th</sup> cent BCE)	Law of Moses (14 <sup>th</sup> cent BCE)
<p><sup>197</sup> If a man has broken another man's limb, his own shall be broken. <sup>198</sup> If a man has destroyed an eye or a limb of <i>a poor man</i>, he shall pay one maneh of silver. <sup>199</sup> If a man has destroyed an eye or a limb of <i>the servant</i> of another man, he shall pay one-half of a mina. <sup>200</sup> If a man has made the tooth of another to fall out, one of his own teeth shall be knocked out. <sup>201</sup> If the tooth be that of <i>a poor man</i>, he shall pay one-third of a maneh of silver.'</p>	<p><sup>17</sup> If a man takes the life of <i>any human being</i>, he shall surely be put to death. <sup>18</sup> The one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. <sup>19</sup> If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: <sup>20</sup> fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him. <sup>21</sup> Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. <sup>22</sup> There shall be <i>one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native</i>, for I am the LORD your God.</p>

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - Was a wife her husband's property (Ex.20:17)?
    - 'Do not covet your neighbor's house...his wife...or his ox...'
- No: Just because the list contains people *and* objects doesn't mean that people *were* objects
  - See my material on slavery

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - Was a wife her husband's property (Ex.20:17)?
    - 'Do not covet your neighbor's house...his wife...or his ox...'
- No: Wives could retain their own property separately from her husband.
  - Jesus told a parable of the woman who searches for one of ten coins (Lk.15:8 – 10), part of a set, given by her husband to her father and then to the woman; it was not conditioned on her marriage (the so-called 'bride-price' of Ex.22:16 – 17).
  - Married American women didn't have full legal control over their own financial assets until after the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Kirchberg v. Feenstra* in 1981.

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- The legislation in Exodus 21:7 – 11 refers to a preliminary form of wedding betrothal for young girls, not a sale by parents of the girl into slavery. The daughter being ‘sold’ into betrothal became a free woman within the new family, not a servant with servant duties, and not a chattel slave that could be resold (Ex.21:8). Any breach of marriage contract by the betrothed man/family earns the girl her freedom and the would-be husband receives **no compensation (Ex.21:10 – 11)**. (Nahum M. Sarna, *Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary Series: Exodus*, 1991, note on Exodus 21. See also Ken Campbell (editor), *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, InterVarsity Press: Downers’ Grove, IL, 2003, p.55 – 57.)

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Family
  - Could only husbands divorce their wives (Dt.24:1 – 4)?
- No. Wives could divorce their husbands
  - Hebrew was a gendered language, so this could be the inclusive male tense that includes the female (e.g. Jn.4:14; 1 Tim.5:18)
  - Jesus affirmed women divorcing husbands in Mark 10:12
  - Elephantini from Egypt (5<sup>th</sup> cent BCE) also shows women divorcing their husbands
  - Greek cultural influence in Israel in the 5<sup>th</sup> cent BCE influenced rabbinical interpretation negatively

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Community
  - Could only men be elders, judges, prophets, priests, kings (Ex.16; Dt.17 – 18)?

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Prior to priests and kings, Israel had
  - Elders
  - Judges
  - Prophets





# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Ex.1:15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. <sup>16</sup> Go and gather the **elders** of Israel together...<sup>Ex.4:29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the **elders** of the sons of Israel...



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Ex.18:13 It came about the next day that Moses **sat to judge** the people... <sup>14</sup> ...Moses' father-in-law...said, 'What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone **sit as judge** and all the people stand about you from morning until evening? ... <sup>21</sup> select out of all the people **able men who fear God, men of truth**, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Ex.18:22 Let them **judge** the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will **judge...** <sup>25</sup> Moses chose able **men** out of all Israel... <sup>26</sup> They **judged** the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would **judge...**
- Dt.16:18 You shall appoint for yourself **judges and officers in all your towns** which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall **judge** the people with righteous judgment.

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Dt.13:1 If a **prophet**... arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup> ...saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' <sup>3</sup> you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams... <sup>5</sup> But that **prophet** or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because **he** has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt...



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- All these roles seem to be for men
- But Hebrew is a gendered language, like Spanish
  - In Spanish, 'el' and 'ella' are pronouns for 'him' and 'her.'
  - But 'el' can also mean 'person' generally, without restricting the meaning to men. This is the 'inclusive male tense.'
  - How do you tell whether 'el' refers to 'him' as specifically male or 'that person' generally? Context.
- In this case, what does the rest of Scripture say?

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Jdg.4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was **judging** Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> ...the sons of Israel came up to her for **judgment**. <sup>6</sup> Now she...summoned Barak...and said to him, ‘Behold, the LORD...has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men... <sup>7</sup> I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army...and I will give him into your hand.’”



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

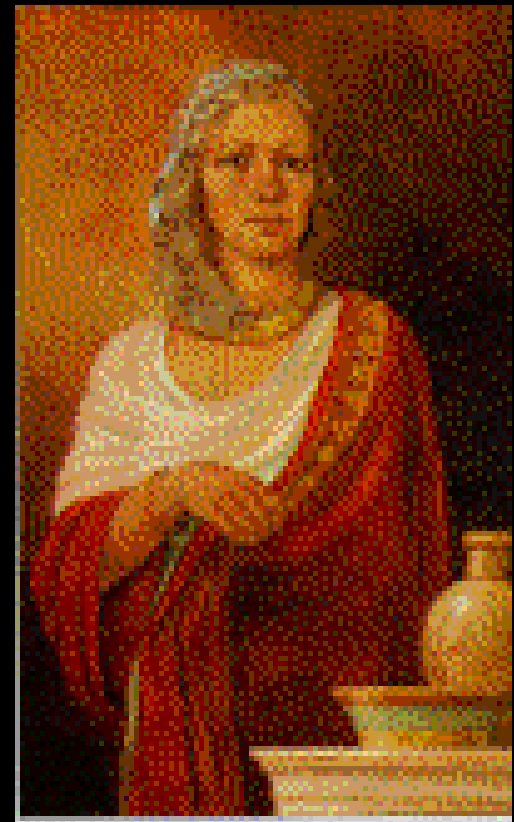
- Ex.15:20 Miriam the **prophetess**, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.



- Jdg.4:4 Now Deborah, a **prophetess**, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Isa.8:3 So I approached the **prophetess**, and she conceived and gave birth to a son.
- 2 Ki.24:14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the **prophetess**, the wife of Shallum... and they spoke to her. <sup>15</sup> She said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel...





# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- The Old Testament writers viewed Israel's roles of elder, judge, and prophet as open to women, not just to men. (Gordon Hugenberger, "Women in church office: hermeneutics or exegesis? A survey of 1 Timothy 2:8-15." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (Summer 1992), pp. 341-360.)
- Recall the divorce legislation of Deuteronomy 24:1 – 4. Phrased for husbands, but applied to wives. Jesus thought so in Mark 10:12.

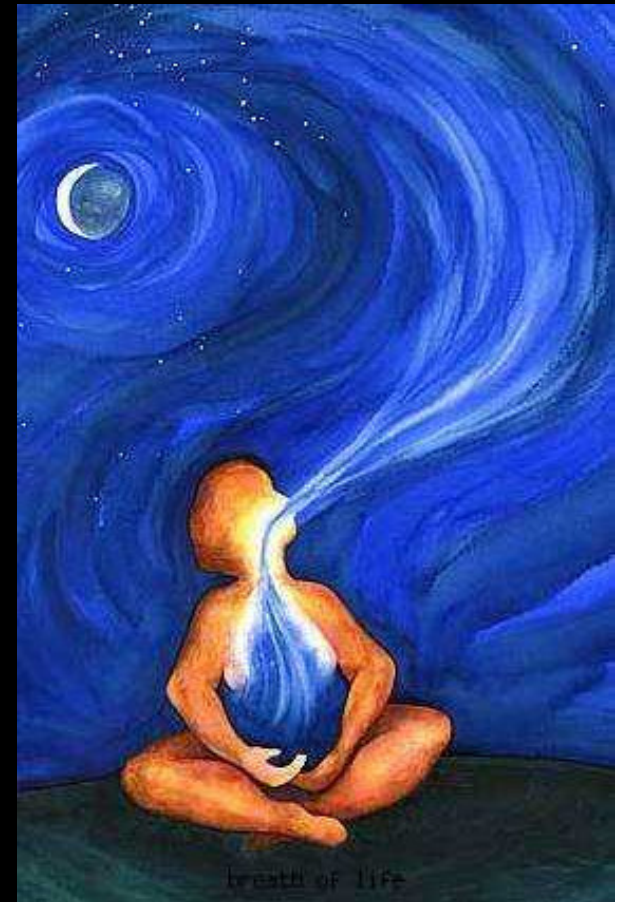
# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Gen.2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
  - Each married couple enters society equal with all the other households
  - But in traditional cultures, the wife becomes the lowest ranking member of her husband's family and has little to no standing – that is true patriarchy
  - Who wrote Genesis 2? Humans alone?
- Sociologically, for women to have leadership roles in society, the power of the extended family must be limited and checked



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Pr.1:8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake **your mother's teaching**
  - **God's wisdom is from creation:** Pr.8:22 The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. <sup>23</sup> From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth... <sup>32</sup> Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways.
  - **Both men and women were to repeat God's commission and speak God's wisdom:** Gen.1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them



# Women Speaking in Israel: As Human Authors of Scripture

- Miriam (Ex.15:20)
- Deborah (Jdg.4 – 5)
- Hannah (1 Sam.2)
- Probably Ruth (book of Ruth)
- King Lemuel's mother (Pr.31)
- Probably Esther (book of Esther)
- Mary (Luke 1)



# Women Speaking in Israel: In the Restoration of True Humanness

- <sup>28</sup> It will come about after this  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and **daughters** will prophesy,  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
Your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> Even on the male and **female** servants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28 – 29)
- This passage is quoted by Simon Peter in Acts 2, as programmatic for the church.



# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Laws: Community
  - Women could be elders, judges, prophets
  - Only men could be priests and kings (Ex.16; Dt.17 – 18), probably because of the association with death
  - Jesus fulfills the office of priest and king
  - Jesus returns God's people functionally to elders and prophets

# The Pentateuch Laws: Some Apparently Misogynistic Passages

- Jewish law is based on the creation order – in which men and women are equally in the image of God – and patterned after it in a limited way (see Jesus' comments in Mt.19:3 – 12)
- Women are equal to men in value before God, legal rights like the ability to divorce, hold non-land property, enjoy bodily protection, ability to lead as elder or judge or prophetess, etc.
- Women are more vulnerable than men and are protected in marriage from sexual exploitation