Explanatory Notes and Abbreviations

1. The orthography used in this dissertation is that employed in the *Earth Bible* series.[1] That is, no diacritical marks are used.

2. Throughout the dissertation, Israel's deity is referred to as YHWH, and the implied authors will be referred to in the singular as "the narrator." The masculine pronoun is used for the narrator because it is highly unlikely that the author or redactor of the particular texts under scrutiny would be a woman. I also use the male pronoun when referring to YHWH because the narrator almost invariably applies masculine images and metaphors to the person of the deity.[2] "YHWH" is the Tetragrammaton denoting Israel's God and used throughout the thesis.

3. There is no Literature Review chapter. Literature relevant to each of the pericopes under scrutiny is discussed and critiqued throughout the dissertation, sometimes in the text itself and at other times in the footnotes.

4. When quoting from three of the four chosen pericopes, book and chapter are omitted (e.g. vs. 6, instead of Gen. 19:6). This does not apply in Chapter 3 because the story of Zelophehad's daughters' appears in three separate texts.

5. In the appendices, I have translated each story in a semi-literal style in order to (a) facilitate the work of retrieval of narrative strands and (b) to gain more of a sense of the Hebrew *élan* albeit at the expense of the flow of the English translation.

6. When a significant word is discussed, the Hebrew is transliterated and - in the first instance only - it is followed by the word in Hebrew form but without the pointing (e.g. *yatsaq* יצק). In the case of significant Hebrew verbs, usually only the verb root appears in transliteration and Hebrew script. In transliteration, the vocal *sh*ᵉ*wa* is represented by a superscript '*e*'.

7. Where quoting from a verse in the biblical text, I have sometimes divided the verse into sections (e.g. 3a, 3d) in order to pinpoint a particular section of the verse. Each phrase in the verse is represented by one section.

8. A square bracket indicates my addition or word substitution in a quotation.

9. Quotations from reference books, articles etc., and from the biblical texts are in double inverted commas; otherwise single inverted commas are used (e.g. when questioning a commentator's interpretation of a Hebrew word).

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[1] Earth Bible Team, *Introducing the Earth Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
[2] See "Narrator and Audience" in "Methodology," pp. 21-22.

10. In the footnotes, the page numbers of cross-references have 'p.' preceding the number(s) to assist in distinguishing them from the page numbers of bibliographic references.

11. Sirach is quoted from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* - expanded edition - Revised Standard Version, 1977.

12. Abbreviations:

ANE	Ancient Near East
NRSV	*New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* (Throughout the thesis the NRSV is used for English quotations. The exceptions are where quotations are from the four chosen pericopes; for these quotations, I have used my own semi-literal translations. See Appendices 2, 4, 6 and 8.)
1cs	first person common singular
3fs	third person feminine singular
3ms	third person masculine singular
fn.	footnote
imperat.	imperative
impf.	imperfect
infinit.	infinitive
perf.	perfect
p.	page (of thesis)
pp.	pages (of thesis)
vs.	verse
vss.	verses

Introduction

We are Israel's women
time and text have veiled,
bearing silent witness
to the fathers who have failed.

The feminist scholars Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, in their 1993 publication *On Gendering Texts,* explore the possibility of finding strands of women's literary or oral material in biblical texts.[4] Necessarily they recognise the difficulties associated with such a quest, given that "the discursive 'voices' discussed are textualized as well as fictionalized."[5] While recognising that strands of women's traditions in the texts have been "contextualized into male discourse" and thus need to be viewed with caution as echoes of women's voices, nevertheless Brenner and Dijk-Hemmes persist in their search.[6] Dijk-Hemmes' study, however, only touches on three of the half-a-dozen or more narratives in which unmarried daughters appear,[7] so a primary aim of this dissertation is to extend their work of retrieval to a select group of biblical stories about daughters and their fathers.

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[3] From the poem "David's Women." Fewell and Gunn, *Gender,* 208.

[4] Athalya Brenner, "Introduction," in *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1996), 2-3.

[5] Brenner, "Introduction," 7.

[6] van Dijk-Hemmes analysis of Miriam's song (Exod. 15:20-21) exemplifies this approach. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, *"Traces of Women's Texts in the Hebrew Bible,"* in *On Gendering Texts*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1996), 33.

[7] van Dijk-Hemmes discusses the rituals associated with three unmarried daughters: Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11, Rebekah's betrothal in Genesis 24, and Miriam's song in Exodus 15. Van Dijk-Hemmes, "Traces," 89-90, 92, 104-105, 33.

One of the fascinations of the Hebrew Bible's 'historical'[8] books is the abundance of stories about the lives of people, many of which feature notable men and their families. In the book of Genesis, for example, engaging traditions about the patriarchal households of Israel are recounted, but "Genesis lacks daughters."[9] Indeed, the Hebrew Bible in general is far more interested in sons who in adulthood have significant roles in Israel's salvation history. Mothers in particular are depicted as directing their energies towards bearing, rearing and promoting sons who - because of their gender - ensure the continuation of the patriarchal line of descent and thereby give their mothers social status.[10]

In the handful of biblical stories where unmarried daughters do appear they are generally adjuncts to the principals, namely, fathers and/or brothers. It is apparent that the authors have little interest in - or no access to - stories of mothers caring for daughters.[11]

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[8] The Bible's historical books are also known as 'historicised' books as it is not possible at this stage to verify their historical accuracy.

[9] Ilona N. Rashkow, *Taboo or not Taboo: Sexuality and Family in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, Mn.: Fortress Press, 2000), 250.

[10] Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Kn. And London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 49. According to Rabbi Hiyya, "a woman exists only to have sons." Yael Shemesh, "A Gender Perspective on the Daughters of Zelophehad: Bible, Talmudic Midrash, and Modern Feminist Midrash," *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 100; Barbara Miller, *Tell it on the Mountain: The Daughter of Jephthah in Judges 11* (Collegeville, Mn.: The Liturgical Press, 2005), 22, 87; Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 108; Susanne Scholz, *Introducing the Women's Hebrew Bible* (London: T & T Clark International, 2007), 67; Jo Ann Hackett, "1 and 2 Samuel," in *Women's Bible Commentary,* exp. ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, Kn.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 92. Generally mothers have the exclusive care of sons until the latter reach puberty, so this may also account for mother-son closeness. David D. Gilmore, *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Washington DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 14.

[11] Alice L. Laffey, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1988), 221. It appears that the world of women is largely unknown to male

As in other patriarchal cultures, unmarried daughters may have value in the economy of a household,[12] but they are not as valuable to their fathers as are sons who contribute towards the future of the father's clan and carry on the household traditions and family name, while daughters marry out.[13] According to Sirach, a daughter is a constant source of worry to her father, for if her behaviour does not impeccably preserve privacy, reserve and purity, she will shame the family **(**Sirach 42:9-14).[14]

After living for three decades as an unmarried daughter and now another three as a mother of three daughters, I am interested in challenging the Bible's dominant discourse by bringing a selection of biblical daughters out of relative obscurity in order to examine what the implied authors reveal about them. In the process I intend to test my hypothesis that - while acknowledging that the implied authors penned these narratives to fulfill their own purposes - it is

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biblical narrators. The only instance of cooperation between a mother and daughter in the Hebrew Bible is the record of Jochebed and Miriam whose express purpose is to save the life of their son and brother (Exod. 2:2-9). Naomi and Ruth, often viewed as epitomising love and cooperation between a mother and her daughter, are actually mother-in-law and daughter-in-law whose aim is to serve patriarchal purposes by producing a male heir.

[12] Despite their lower status, however, unmarried daughters are "signifiers of family honor" so long as they remain obedient and in the background within the *beyt 'ab.* Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers, eds., *Daughters and Fathers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 62.

[13] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Jewish Publishing Society, 1989), 136; Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE* (Peabody Ms: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 7-9; Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," in the Handbook of Biblical Social Values, updated ed., ed. John Pilch and Bruce J. Malina (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 107.

[14] ANE anxiety about a daughter's potential to shame her father is evident in Sirach's proverbs: "An impudent daughter disgraces both father and husband" (Sirach 22:5a), and "Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace." (Sirach 42:14). Sirach's concern does not appear to extend to a son who may not meet his father's expectations.

possible to retrieve traces of women's traditions from four texts in which

unmarried daughters are among the protagonists.[15] The traces or remnants of

subversive prose - including women's traditions - will be referred to as "strands

of resistance narrative."[16] Having selected the appropriate narrative and feminist

tools, my aim is to discover if there are women's "subversive voices" in the four

chosen texts, how often they appear, and how they contribute to the Bible's

many "ideological ambiguities."[17]

Methodological Outline

Initially the methodology of this thesis involves using a variety of narrative

analytical tools to explore the four texts. On the basis of the insights gained

from that process and with the aid of three hermeneutical approaches -

suspicion, identification and retrieval - I will undertake a feminist analytical re-

reading of the stories before arriving at my conclusions.

Text Selection

This dissertation conducts narrative analyses and feminist re-readings of four

stories from the Hebrew Bible in which unmarried daughters are given active

roles. In three of the pericopes they are co-protagonists with their fathers; in the

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[15] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "In the Wilderness, Awaiting the Land: The Daughters of Zelophehad and Feminist Interpretation," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 9, no. 3 (1988): 194.

[16] Feminist exegetes also use the term "resistance narrative" to highlight examples of subversive discourse, rhetoric, prose or poetry which undermine the patriarchal hegemony established in almost all books of the Hebrew Bible.

[17] Eryl W. Davies, *The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003), 96.

fourth the father is deceased but his rights provide the catalyst for the story's plot.

The texts chosen to provide the basis for the testing of the thesis are the stories of Lot's daughters in Genesis 19:1-38, Zelophehad's daughters - Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah - in Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:3-6, Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11:29-40, and David's daughter, Tamar, in 2 Samuel 13:1-19. The daughters are all young women who belong to their fathers' households (*beyt 'ab* בֵּית אָב) and who have reached the stage which Victor Turner calls "liminality."[18] As *b^etuloth* (בְּתוּלֹת), they are girls of marriageable age because they have reached puberty but have not yet been given in marriage.[19] The *b^etuloth* are "'threshold people'….betwixt and between

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[18] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Eng.: Pelican, 1974), 80-81. Both Turner and Holly Joan Toensing identify the period between betrothal and marriage as the liminal stage of a girl's life. Toensing, "Women of Sodom and Gomorrah: Collateral Damage in the War against Homosexuality?" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 73. Barbara Miller concurs, stating that a pubescent young woman or *b^etulah* "is in a stage of insecurity and danger because she is between the protection of two men, her father and her husband." Miller, *Tell it on the Mountain: The Daughter of Jephthah in Judges 11* (Collegeville, Mn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 86.

[19] Controversy continues regarding the translation of the ambiguous term *b^etulah* as "virgin" versus "young woman of marriageable age." Thus *b^etuliym* (בְּתוּלִים) may mean a state of virginity, or it may mean a stage of life. In favour of the translating *b^etulah* as "virgin," Richard Davidson assumes that the *b^etulah* of Joel 1:8 who speaks of the husband (*ba'al* בַּעַל) of her youth was betrothed in childhood and the marriage not yet consummated. Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of YAHWEH: Sexuality in the Old Testament,* (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 339-41. On the basis of this and the ambiguity in other biblical texts about *b^etuloth*, Davidson refutes - unsuccessfully in my view – the arguments by Gordon Wenham and others in favour of *b^etulah* meaning 'a young woman of marriageable age.' Gordon Wenham, "B^ETǓLĀH 'A Girl of Marriageable Age'," in *Vetus Testamentum* 22(1972): 326-48; Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: the Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 46-48; Bruce K. Waltke, "betulah" in *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction,* ed. Gleason Leonard Archer Jr. (Chicago, Il.: Moody Press, 1974), 1:295; Richard E. DeMaris and Carolyn S. Leeb, "Judges-(Dis)Honor and Ritual Enactment: The Jephthah Story: Judges 10:16-12:1," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in its Social Context,* ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 2005), 187. In criticism of Davidson, his translation of *ba'al* as fiancé rather than husband is unique. Further,

the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and

ceremonial."[20] This ambiguous place in society places them in a vulnerable

position, and each of the *b^etuloth* texts tells a story which exposes the

vulnerability of unmarried daughters.[21]

Apart from the Miriam legends (Exod. 2:4-9, 15:20-21; Num. 12), the four

chosen texts about dutiful daughters and the fathers who fail them are the only

narratives in the Hebrew Bible in which unmarried daughters have substantial

roles.[22] The story of Lot and his daughters is the only one of the four texts

which mentions a mother, but almost nothing is known about her: she has no

name and dies in the holocaust (Gen. 19:26).

Obviously the Hebrew Bible does not entirely ignore young women of

marriageable age, but they have roles in the chosen texts chiefly because of the

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only three of the Hebrew Bible's fifty-one occurrences of *b^etulah* unequivocally mean 'virgin.'
Victor H. Matthew and Don C, Benjamin write that in Ancient Israel the notion of virginity was
not so much a sexual word as political and that "Only when the word 'virgin' is modified by the
phrase 'who has never known a man'…is the Bible talking primarily about a woman who has
never had sexual intercourse." Matthew and Benjamin, *The Social World of Ancient Israel
1250-587 BC* (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 176-77. M. Tsevat discusses
b^etulah in some detail and concludes, "It is best to conjecture that there was an original common
Semitic word *batul(t)*, and that it meant a young girl at the age of puberty and the age just after
puberty and that it denoted "youthful vigour and potential motherhood." According to Tsevat,
this word "very gradually assumed the meaning of 'virgo intacta' in Hebrew and Aramaic, a
development that ended in Middle Hebrew." Given Tsevat's information, I have chosen to
retain Wenham's translation of *b^etulah* as a "young woman of marriageable age" throughout this
thesis. M. Tsevat, "בתולה b^ethūlāh," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,* ed.
Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgen, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B.
Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 2:338-43, Wenham, "B^ETŬLĀH," 326-48.
  [20] Turner, *Ritual Process,* 81.
  [21] Nicole Wilkinson Duran, "Jephthah's Daughter," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of
the Bible* (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon Press, 2008), 3:218.
  [22] Other unmarried daughters in the Hebrew Bible have minor roles. For example, Rebekah
and Rachel meet strangers at the well (Gen. 24:15-62; Gen. 29:1-12), Dinah is raped and
abducted when she steps out of the *beyt 'ab* (Gen. 34), the seven daughters of Reuel/Jethro meet
Moses at a well (Exod. 1:16-21), and a slave-girl gives brief advice to Naaman (2 Kings 5:2-4).

prominence of their fathers in the wider narratives. Each of the stories tells of a

different relationship between father and daughter(s), and from all of them the

audience learns that this relationship can be fraught with danger for daughters.[23]

Reasons for Selecting the Four Texts

The rationale for the choice of four *b*^{e}*tuloth* narratives for the dissertation has a

three-point basis. The first reason for the choice of these texts to analyse is that,

apart from Rebekah and Rachel, unmarried daughters who feature in various

Hebrew biblical narratives receive little attention in biblical studies. This is

despite the fact that their stories provide material for themes such as violence

against women,[24] women as land-holders and women's songs.[25] In contrast,

there are many published articles, papers, and books on Hebrew and Jewish

women in general and mothers in particular. It is time for the young women

who have been hidden behind the eminence - or notoriety - of their fathers to

have their moment in the sun.

The second reason stems from historical bias. Through thousands of years the

pervading androcentric hermeneutical preconceptions in the extant studies of

these texts were largely unchallenged. Only following the huge social and

intellectual changes in the Western world over the last few centuries did

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[23] Zelophehad's daughters are in a different situation from the other three groups of daughters. However, their determination to speak up on behalf of their deceased father exposes them to another kind of danger. See Chapter 3, "Motifs and Repetition." p. 206.

[24] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (London: SCM Press, 2002), and Alice A. Keefe, "Rapes of Women/Wars of Men," *Semeia 61* (1993): 79-97.

[25] Brenner, "Introduction," 4.

scholars begin to seriously critique the contradictory elements within the biblical texts themselves. The result has been a new awareness which now "recognizes that the Bible is composed of many voices…the Bible shows us not merely patriarchy, elitism, and nationalism; it shows us the fragility of these ideologies through irony and counter-voices."[26]

Thus a close analysis of the chosen texts may also reveal a partially obscured tradition, a story behind the story. Danna Nolan Fewell describes resistance strands as "value systems…that have, for the most part, gone unrecognized" in biblical texts which have traditionally received a patriarchal interpretation from translators and scholars of the Bible.[27] Ilana Pardes admits her "fascination with the unexpected ways in which antipatriarchal perspectives have been partially preserved, against all odds, in the canon."[28] It is the contention of this thesis that the application of a feminist hermeneutic to the texts may disclose narrative strands of alternative voices and traditions. These are traditions which, over the centuries, have survived redaction by story-tellers, writers and/or editors who possibly viewed them as peripheral to their purpose yet allowed them to remain as testaments to the interests of other lost storytellers from other lost times. The

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[26] Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible,* 196; Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*. 2-7; Danna Nolan Fewell, "Feminist Reading of the Hebrew Bible: Affirmation, Resistance and Transformation." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39, (1987): 84. On the other hand, feminist scholars like Naomi R. Goldenberg and Mary Daly regard most, if not all, of the Hebrew Bible as an irredeemably patriarchal book. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 10-29, Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, Ma.: Beacon Press, 1973), 153, 4.
[27] Fewell, "Feminist Reading," 79.
[28] Ilona Pardes, *Counter Traditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach.* Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1992, 2.

result is the retention, often tenuous, of points of view, motifs, tensions, paradoxes and particular words and phrases which provide examples of resistance narrative which, until recently, scholars have overlooked or dismissed as peripheral.

The third, more personal, reason for this choice of texts is that - in the process of identification with the female protagonists - I hope to connect the fruit of this research with the knowledge I have gained from many women among whom I have lived and worked throughout my adult life and whose stories also beg to be told and heard by others whose hearts and minds are open to diversity - the same diversity which distinguishes the narratives of the Hebrew Bible.

Questions to be Addressed

The thesis aims to address a variety of questions including: what do the portrayals of the daughters and their fathers reveal when a narrative feminist analysis is applied to the texts? What deductions regarding the relationship between nine daughters and their fathers can be made from analysis of these four ancient stories? What can be learned from comparing the various $b^e tulah$ narratives? What attitudes have been expressed regarding these stories over time and how do they affect current perceptions about women of ancient Israel? What new perceptions does feminist criticism bring to these stories? Given that characters are products of authorial decisions, is it possible to make any meaningful conclusions about the social situation, behaviour and attitudes of

unmarried daughters in ancient Israel? Is there evidence of women's wisdom

(*chokmah* חכמה) in texts which feature young unmarried women, or is wisdom

the preserve of the elderly? Is it possible to find traces of women's traditions in

the texts; and if there are traces, what is their significance for audiences then

and now?

It is clear that there is a variety of other questions which could guide a feminist

narrative analysis of the four texts, but I believe that these are the most pertinent

to the primary purpose of this dissertation.