

Dutiful Daughters and the Fathers Who Fail Them:

**The application of feminist insights and the retrieval of
resistance strands of women's traditions via a narrative
analysis of four unmarried daughter texts
in the Hebrew Bible.**

Margaret C. Hunt, B.Th., Grad Dip. in Parent Education & Counselling

PhD Thesis

Flinders University Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology

Adelaide, South Australia

30th April, 2010

Word Count: 100,191 words (excluding footnotes)

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Abstract

Through the application of a feminist narrative methodology, this dissertation examines narratives about unmarried daughters and their fathers in the Hebrew Bible. A primary aim is to gain feminist insight into the texts and thereby retrieve strands of resistance narrative which may be present in one or more of the stories. In the process, commonalities between the texts, particularly in regard to the protagonists, have been noted. Four pericopes have been chosen to study daughters who are of marriageable age and are the responsibility of their fathers because they have not yet been given in marriage.

The nine daughters – the two daughters of Lot (Genesis 19), Mahlah, Hoglah, Milcah, Noah and Tirzah, the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36 and Joshua 17), the daughter of Jephthah (Judges 11) and Tamar, the daughter of David (2 Samuel 13) - share the narrators' androcentric interest in the preservation of family lines of descent. The first two stories record the success of this endeavour due to the efforts of the daughters, while the second two document the failure of the daughters to halt family disintegration brought about by their fathers' negligence.

Although suppositions and opinions about the origins of narrative strands in ancient texts are necessarily presented with caution, this dissertation's narrative and feminist analysis has led me to construe that valuable traces of women's

traditions - which the narrators presumably retained for theological, political or other reasons - are nevertheless discernible in the texts. In Genesis 19, for example, Lot's daughter's speech reveals a salvific proposal; Judges 11 retains references to three women's rituals; the description of Tamar's food preparation in 2 Samuel 13 almost certainly has cultic significance; and the *chutzpah* of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27 and Joshua 17 is one of the Hebrew Bible's best kept secrets.

My analysis and feminist re-readings of the chosen stories identify a rarely acknowledged world of women's wisdom in what could be remnants of traditional material which have been preserved and handed down by the women of early Israel.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Name: Margaret Carlyn Hunt

Signature:

Date: 27 April 2010

Acknowledgements

The process of producing this dissertation has been long and at times, floundering at first and apparently endless, and I owe my deepest gratitude to the people who have so graciously endured the marathon and for giving me the encouragement to keep going. My supervisors, Professor Norman Habel and Rev. Dr. Anna Grant-Henderson, deserve every accolade for patiently bearing with me through the years as they taught me about writing a thesis almost from scratch. I thank and honour them for their unflagging encouragement, corrections and guidance, and especially for their insights and enthusiasm at every stage of the journey with “my girls.”

Thank you to all the librarians at Adelaide College of Divinity and the staff of the Löhe Memorial Library at Adelaide Lutheran College, as well as thanks to Rosalie Upton who edited a few of the chapters and even said that she enjoyed reading them. I also wish to acknowledge and thank three women for their letters and emails: Dr. Ora Lipschitz for those comprehensive lists of references, Rev. Dr. Patricia Kopstein for her insights regarding the Hebrew Bible, and Dr. Elaine Wainwright for her encouragement and advice about healing practices in the Ancient Near East. I also wish to express deep gratitude to Dr. Joh Wurst and Rev. Dr. Peter Lockwood for their encouragement and invaluable advice -along with their very helpful written comments on sections of the manuscript. Thanks too, to Rev. Dr. Maurice Schild and Ulrich Stauss for checking for errors in the German translations.

For sharing the joys and pain of thesis writing with me, thanks and blessings to my PhD student colleagues and especially a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Annelie Brixius who not only always showed a great interest in my work, but also has spent many voluntary hours helping me to iron out problems great and small.

To my friend Belle Cheney who never ceases to amaze me with her gracious and cheerful acceptance of all the lost hours we could have had together, as well as her unstinting encouragement. Thanks to Helen Lockwood, my friend, cousin and work colleague who not only supported me in this venture, but also showed great restraint in accepting that in the last two years I was unable to take on work assignments and challenges she had envisaged for me at Lutheran Community Care. My current work colleagues - Helene, Lisa, Helen and Steve - have always shown interest and given me their support and for this I am grateful. My extended family has also given me space and acceptance which has meant so much; I thank and honour them all. Thank you, Matthew, for being interested enough to read some of the drafts.

To my dear children - Alison, Emily, Rosie and Tom – you are all wonderful young people who have got on with your lives and accepted the responsibilities of planning weddings yourselves because of what has almost become a never-ending story. You all have been gracious and without complaint despite the many times I have neglected your interests in order to doggedly complete this work. Most importantly, thank you to my beloved John. You were the first to teach me about literature and feminism, and you have unflinchingly kept faith in me and loved me, not only through the times I was ready to give up, but also through the many more times I have poured out my fears and inadequacies to you. Without you I would not have managed this. Thank you John.

My final acknowledgement goes to the nine unmarried daughters whose brief appearances in the pages of the Hebrew Bible have given me so many insights into the ancient world and whose lives continue to teach me about those who are little, least and last in my own world. They have now been around for over seven years and are almost part of my family. I honour them and give thanks for their gifts, and I pray that many more people will come to know their stories and grow spiritually in the process.