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Theological Anthropology and Gender in the Jewish Tradition: A Critical Reading of the Creation Narrative and Its Implications

Dr. Abdul Basit Qureshi
Lecturer, Department of Aqīdah & Philosophy
Faculty of Usūluddīn, International Islamic University Islamabad
E-mail: basit.qureshi@iiu.edu.pk

Abstract

This article critically examines the narrative of the **primary creation of women** within the **Jewish tradition**, particularly as it appears in **classical texts such as Genesis,** *Talmūdic* **literature, and post-exilic wisdom writings**. By analyzing the portrayal of **Eve** and broader conceptions of femininity, the study explores how theological and exegetical traditions contributed to the **construction of gender hierarchies** in Judaism. Special attention is given to the **Yahwist creation account**, Louis Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, and wisdom literature including **Ecclesiastes, *Ecclesiasticus* (*Ben Sīra*),** and the **Wisdom of Solomon**, which collectively present a **dichotomy of reverence and revulsion** toward women. While early rabbinic sources occasionally affirm the dignity of women, a prevailing pattern of **spiritual, social, and intellectual inferiority** emerges, rooted in both canonical and interpretative layers of Jewish thought. The article argues that these patriarchal narratives, although historically conditioned, have significantly shaped **the theological and cultural perceptions of women** across Abrahamic traditions, and continue to influence contemporary religious discourses on gender.

Keywords: Judaism, Creation, Eve, Gender, *Talmūd*, Torah, Rabbinic Literature, Patriarchy, Feminist Theology, Abrahamic Religions

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Introduction

The question of **woman's origin and her theological status** has been a persistent theme in the religious imagination of the **Abrahamic faiths**, particularly in **Judaism, Christianity**, and **Islam**. Rooted in the earliest biblical texts and expanded through centuries of **rabbinic commentary, philosophical exegesis**, and **popular lore**, the figure of **Eve**—the first woman—has often functioned not merely as a theological symbol, but as a **cultural archetype** shaping societal views on gender, morality, and authority.

This article focuses on the **Jewish narrative of creation**, particularly the **Yahwist account in Genesis 2**, which describes woman as being created from the rib of man. This passage has been central to Jewish anthropological and theological thought, yet it has also been a primary site for the **justification of gender hierarchy**. The *Talmūd*, Midrashim, and medieval rabbinical writings often oscillate between affirming women's spiritual capacity and reinforcing their **moral and intellectual subordination**. Later Jewish wisdom literature—such as **Ecclesiastes, *Ben Sīra***, and the **Wisdom of Solomon**—exemplifies a more deeply entrenched misogyny, reflecting the anxieties and patriarchal norms of post-exilic Jewish society.

While early Jewish tradition did allow women some **legal protections**—such as consent in marriage, financial rights upon divorce, and partial religious participation—these were often couched within a broader theological framework that cast women as **morally fragile, emotionally unstable**, and **inherently culpable** in the drama of human downfall. The portrayal of Eve as the initiator of sin, and the subsequent metaphysical implications of her disobedience, not only

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marginalize women in the sacred narrative but also reflect the **male-dominated hermeneutical culture** in which these texts were preserved and interpreted.

This study explores how such narratives have **developed and solidified** over time, tracing their **textual roots** and examining their **social consequences**. Drawing on classical Jewish sources, modern scholarship, and theological critique, it investigates how the creation story—far from being a neutral myth—has been **instrumental in defining gender roles,** both within religious law and communal life. Ultimately, this article seeks to demonstrate that the **Jewish doctrine of woman's origin**, while complex and multi-vocal, has historically served to **legitimize patriarchal structures**, often at the expense of the spiritual and moral agency of women.

This study adopts a **qualitative, interdisciplinary, and hermeneutical approach** to examine the portrayal of women—particularly Eve—in Jewish theological and exegetical traditions. Drawing upon classical texts, rabbinic commentaries, and modern scholarly critiques, the research methodology integrates textual analysis, historical-contextual evaluation, and theological reflection to explore how gender hierarchies have been constructed, reinforced, and occasionally challenged within the Jewish intellectual tradition.

Theological Foundations of Gender in Jewish Scripture

The belief that woman was created from Adam's rib is a foundational concept in classical Jewish theology and anthropology. This idea originates from the Yahwist (J) creation narrative [1] in *Genesis 2:18–24*, which diverges significantly from the earlier Priestly account in *Genesis 1:27*, where man and

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woman are created simultaneously. According to the Yahwistic version:

"So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man."[2]

This account has often been read as suggesting that woman is not a distinct and autonomous being, but rather a derivative part of man—formed from his body and thus ontologically secondary. Classical interpretations based on this passage frequently imply that woman is intellectually, morally, and spiritually less complete than man. The notion that Eve was created to serve and accompany Adam, rather than to stand beside him as an equal, has underpinned much of traditional Jewish thinking on gender hierarchy.[3]

The Fall and the Theology of Subordination

The narrative of the Fall in *Genesis 3* deepens this theological structure. Eve, rather than Adam, is the first to converse with the serpent, to doubt divine command, and to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Afterward, she offers the fruit to Adam, who also eats. Although both are punished, the divine judgment upon Eve is especially harsh:

"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."[4]

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This verse has historically been interpreted to indicate two primary punishments imposed upon woman as a result of her transgression: the pain of childbirth and enforced subordination to male authority. These consequences are not framed as sociocultural developments but rather as divine decrees. The supremacy of man over woman is thus presented not as a product of human society but as a direct result of God's will, rooted in Eve's role in the Fall.[5]

The Figure of Eve in Rabbinic Exegesis

Furthermore, in many rabbinic and post-biblical interpretations, Eve is held as primarily responsible for the entry of sin into the world—a theological foundation for the doctrine of Original Sin that would later be developed more fully in Christian thought.[6] Adam, though a participant, is often portrayed as having been led astray by his wife. In some midrashic sources, Eve is even accused of having seduced Adam or acted as a source of temptation.[7] This portrayal reinforces a gendered theological hierarchy, in which woman is both the origin of disobedience and the reason for humanity's exile from paradise.

The Paradox of Female Representation

The interpretations made in this regard, reflect a double standard within Jewish tradition. On the one hand, the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature celebrate the achievements of several women—such as Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Esther—who are portrayed as prophetesses, leaders, and agents of divine purpose.[8] On the other hand, Eve is presented as the archetypal disobedient woman, the symbol of moral weakness and disorder. This tension has led to what

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scholars identify as a paradox in the representation of women in Jewish scripture: women are venerated when obedient and supportive of patriarchal structures, yet are vilified when they deviate from male authority or exhibit independent agency.

In addition, later interpretations of the Genesis narrative often frame the exile of Adam and Eve from Eden not as a predetermined divine plan for human growth or moral development, but rather as a consequence of Eve's sin.[9] This reading diminishes the redemptive or pedagogical potential of the Fall narrative and instead centers the blame upon woman, with profound theological and sociocultural implications. The loss of paradise is thus linked not to human disobedience in general, but specifically to feminine disobedience, reinforcing a long-standing bias against women's moral agency.

In conclusion, the Jewish account of primary creation, as presented in the Yahwist tradition and its subsequent interpretations, lays the foundation for a hierarchical model of gender relations. While the tradition occasionally elevates certain women as exceptions to the norm, the dominant narrative portrays Eve—and by extension, all women—as derivative, morally weak, and inherently subordinate to men. These theological constructs have had lasting influence on gender roles in both religious doctrine and broader Jewish cultural history.

Eve's Earthly Life and Louis Ginzberg's Interpretation

The post-Edenic life of Eve is also treated in **rabbinic folklore**, much of which is preserved and synthesized by the Jewish scholar **Louis Ginzberg (1873–1953)**[10] in his monumental work *The Legends of the Jews*. In his account, Ginzberg draws on a wide range of midrashic sources to illustrate how traditional

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narratives portray Eve's life as one marked by suffering, guilt, and divine disapproval.[11]

According to Ginzberg, earthly life began in misery for both Adam and Eve. After their expulsion from Eden, they mourned together for seven days and wandered in search of fruits resembling those of Paradise, but their search proved futile. Overwhelmed by sorrow and guilt, Eve blamed herself as the sole cause of divine wrath and pleaded with Adam to end her life. Adam, however, refused to harm her and instead urged her to seek divine forgiveness.[12]

In a dramatic act of repentance, Eve stood upon a stone in the lowest part of a valley for thirty-seven days, sinking into the earth up to her neck. This form of penitence was meant to symbolize both her humility and desperation for divine pardon. Yet, on the eighteenth day, she was deceived once again by the Devil, who appeared to her in the guise of an angel. This episode, interpreted by Ginzberg as a **second act of disobedience**, resulted in her losing the opportunity to regain God's favor.[13]

As a consequence of her failure, Eve was cursed with **ten distinct maledictions,** which included physical suffering, spiritual inferiority, and social subordination. These postlapsarian consequences, in Ginzberg's interpretation, reflect a broader theological stance in rabbinic tradition that views woman's nature as inherently flawed due to Eve's repeated transgressions. He presents this narrative as one deeply rooted in the biblical and midrashic imagination—one that links womanhood with temptation, weakness, and divine punishment.

Such interpretations reinforce a worldview in which women are perceived

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as inferior—socially, spiritually, and physically. These narratives not only draw upon the textual motifs found in the Torah but also serve to amplify them through moral exemplification. Ginzberg's compilation reflects the long-standing rabbinic inclination to use Eve's story as a theological justification for patriarchal norms and the diminished status of women in religious and social structures.

Further evidence of gender hierarchy in the Hebrew Bible can be observed in the use of symbolic titles such as **"sons of God"** and "**daughters of humans"** in *Genesis 6:1–2*. The passage reads:

"When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose."[14]

This textual distinction between the divine or semi-divine **"sons of God"** (*bənê hā'ĕlōhîm*) and the merely human **"daughters of men"** (*bənôt hā'ādām*) has been interpreted by many scholars as reflecting an implicit **hierarchical valuation of gender and spiritual status.** The masculine entities are elevated by their divine association, suggesting a celestial or exalted origin, whereas the feminine are relegated to a lower, terrestrial position—linked to the mundane sphere of human life and, by implication, subject to male selection and control.[15]

Such language reinforces a structural dichotomy in which **males are cast as active, divine, and dominant,** while **females are passive, earthly, and subordinate**. The pattern mirrors wider biblical and theological trends that consistently place men in closer proximity to God and women in subordinate roles, both ontologically and morally. These symbolic distinctions, embedded in

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the sacred text itself, have historically shaped the **gendered imagination** of Jewish theology and continue to inform traditional attitudes toward spiritual authority and human value.

Women and the *Talmūdic* Legal Tradition

The *Talmūdic* **tradition**, encompassing both the ***Mishnah*** and the ***Gemara***, presents a complex and often contradictory picture of women's status in early rabbinic Judaism. On one hand, several passages acknowledge the **respect and dignity accorded to women** in earlier Jewish periods. Certain texts uphold women's moral integrity, legal agency, and indispensable role within family and religious life. For example, a woman's **consent was required for marriage**, and she had **legal protections in divorce**, including entitlement to a *ketubah* (marriage contract) that secured financial compensation in the event of separation.[16]

The **destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE** marked a turning point, after which *Talmūdic* **texts gained greater authority**, becoming the central source of religious and social norms for Jewish communities. This transition affected women in particular ways. While women were not altogether excluded from public life, the rabbinic texts increasingly portrayed them in **domesticated and subordinate roles.** Numerous passages in the *Talmūd* describe women in **stereotypical terms,** characterizing them as **lazy, cunning, wasteful, or overly emotional**.[17] These depictions contributed to the gradual marginalization of women from formal religious spaces, including **synagogues**, and discouraged their involvement in **Torah study** and religious leadership.

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Nonetheless, there is historical evidence that in **earlier synagogue structures**, particularly those associated with the **Pharisaic movement**, women played meaningful roles. Inscriptions and literary references suggest the existence of **honorific titles** for women, such as *mater synagogae* ("mother of the synagogue") and even female patrons or leaders.[18] However, this visibility did not persist. Over time, **women were gradually excluded from central religious functions**, and their presence in the synagogue was reduced to passive attendance, often behind partitions.

From a legal perspective, the *Talmūd* **formalized gender roles,** emphasizing the woman's responsibilities within the domestic sphere. She was expected to maintain the home, raise children, and support her husband's religious obligations, while being exempt from many **positive time-bound commandments.**[19] These exemptions were not always interpreted as privileges; rather, they often served as theological justifications for limiting women's spiritual agency.

The rabbinic tradition also preserved a **liturgical expression of gender hierarchy**, most famously in the **morning blessing**, where Jewish men thank God: *"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, for not having made me a woman."*[20] This blessing, alongside others, reflects a worldview in which **male identity is aligned with religious responsibility and divine closeness,** whereas female identity is marked by exclusion and limitation. Moreover, the dominant **masculine imagery of God** in Jewish worship reinforces this spiritual asymmetry.

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Attempts at reform emerged in various periods. Notably, **Rabbi Gershom ben Judah (c. 960–1040 CE)**[21] issued a decree prohibiting **polygamy** among Ashkenazi Jews in medieval Europe—a significant advancement in women's marital rights.[22] However, beyond this reform, the *Talmūdic* corpus remained relatively static in its legal treatment of women. As a result, over the centuries, the ***halakhic* tradition became increasingly rigid**, with few developments that expanded women's roles or addressed their evolving social needs. In this sense, the *Talmūdic* framework became, as some scholars have described, a **"jammed text"—**a fixed body of legal discourse resistant to change in gender norms.

In summary, the *Talmūdic* tradition embodies a dual legacy: it preserves **legal protections and social responsibilities** for women in marriage and family life, but it also entrenches **theological and legal hierarchies** that have long marginalized women from religious authority and spiritual autonomy. While early glimpses of female participation in communal worship exist, later developments reflect a systematic **gender exclusion** that has shaped Jewish religious practice to the present day.

Theological Re-evaluations of Woman's Creation and Redemption

While traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations often emphasize the **secondary status of woman** as derived from man, some theological perspectives present a **counter-narrative** that affirms the **dignity and spiritual autonomy of women.** In contrast to the *Talmūdic* morning blessing in which a man thanks God for not having made him a woman, certain liturgical or mystical traditions imply

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that **a woman, too, may give thanks to God for having been created according to His divine will.** This formulation reflects not a resigned acceptance of inferiority, but rather **a theological assertion of equal spiritual worth**. It suggests that woman's creation is an intentional and positive act, independent of man's superiority.

Indeed, some traditions and theologians propose that **women may be even closer to God** in terms of **spiritual perfection and divine intimacy**. From this perspective, woman is not a derivative or deficient being, but one whose **feminine nature itself reflects aspects of God's will and beauty**. This outlook challenges the conventional narrative that associates woman primarily with sin, temptation, and subordination.

One such re-reading comes from **George Tavard (1922–2007)**[23], a French-American Catholic theologian, who argued that woman was **created in an impeccable state,** without inherent flaw.[24] According to Tavard, her downfall was not due to innate inferiority but came about when she became **aware of her sexual being**, which marked a transition into embodied existence and vulnerability. In that moment, she realized her **need for a male partner**, became subject to **physical suffering in childbirth**, and entered into a condition of dependence—interpreted theologically as **post-lapsarian consequence**, not as her original essence.[25] Yet Tavard's account also sees this development as part of **a redemptive process** rather than sheer punishment, where the woman's journey becomes spiritually significant, not merely tragic.

Such interpretations offer a profound critique of dominant patriarchal

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readings. They affirm that woman's **ontological status before God** is not inferior but potentially equal or even spiritually elevated. Thus, the narrative of woman's creation and fall, as shaped by various traditions, is not monolithic but open to diverse and sometimes liberating theological reimagining.[26]

Patriarchy and the Portrayal of Women in Jewish Wisdom Literature

A significant body of Jewish wisdom literature, particularly composed in the post-exilic period, reflects **negative portrayals of women** that appear to stem from **patriarchal authorship and cultural context**. It is noteworthy that most of the canonical and deuterocanonical books of the Hebrew Bible were **written by men,** which inevitably shaped the gender perspectives encoded within them.

Among the most prominent texts in this regard are **Ecclesiastes** (traditionally attributed to Solomon and compiled around the 3rd century BCE), **Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of *Ben Sīra*)** from the 2nd century BCE, and the **Wisdom of Solomon**, written in the mid-1st century BCE.[27] These books, composed within an intellectual tradition that primarily addressed male audiences, often articulate gendered moral teachings in which **men are portrayed as bearers of wisdom** and **women as sources of temptation or disorder.**

For instance, the **Book of Ecclesiastes** exhibits a deep **cynicism toward women**, associating them with snares, traps, and corruptibility. One infamous verse declares: *"I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains"* —a sentiment that reflects not only

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distrust but also a moral **demonization of the female figure**.[28] In this worldview, close association with women is discouraged, as it is believed to lead to impurity, downfall, and spiritual contamination.

Ben Sīra's *Ecclesiasticus* (or *Sirach*) takes this misogyny further by asserting that **a wicked woman is a disgrace to her husband**, and comparing the woman to a leaking tent or a burden too heavy to bear.[29] These narratives suggest that even within the religious moral framework, **women are portrayed as inherently problematic,** their presence seen as a challenge to male virtue and domestic stability.

This trajectory of **gender bias** found in post-Torah wisdom literature often goes **beyond the legal norms set by Mosaic Law**, reflecting a **rabbinic interpretative expansion** rather than a faithful rendering of the original texts. While the **Torah itself** may not always express explicit misogyny, **subsequent exegesis and literary developments,** especially during the Second Temple period, **institutionalized patriarchal views** under the guise of divine moral order.[30]

Conclusion

The examination of Eve's portrayal in Jewish theological and exegetical traditions reveals a complex interplay between scriptural narrative, rabbinic interpretation, and patriarchal ideology. At the heart of this discourse lies the account of her creation from Adam's rib—an image that has often been wielded to symbolize her derivative and subordinate status. The fall narrative, in which Eve is depicted as the initiator of disobedience, reinforces a moral and theological

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framework where femininity becomes synonymous with weakness, temptation, and guilt.

Over time, rabbinic texts and wisdom literature such as *Sirach* not only preserve but intensify this perception, codifying a theological anthropology in which women are spiritually and intellectually inferior to men. These views become embedded not only in *halakhic* practice but also in the cultural memory of Jewish identity and ethics. Even where glimpses of female dignity appear—such as in the stories of prophetesses or the formal recognition of women's consent in marriage—they remain constrained within a broader system that interprets male dominance as divinely instituted.

However, such theological interpretations must be viewed critically. The selective emphasis on Eve's culpability, the metaphoric use of her body in the language of hierarchy, and the exclusion of women from public religious life are not inevitable outcomes of the biblical text itself but are shaped by centuries of interpretation informed by the socio-cultural contexts of male exegetes. When re-examined through contemporary theological lenses, the text allows room for a re-imagining of Eve not as the origin of sin, but as a symbol of human agency, moral complexity, and divine engagement.

Thus, the portrayal of Eve in Jewish tradition serves not merely as a story of origins but as a mirror reflecting broader questions of gender, authority, and theological meaning. Recovering her voice and reinterpreting her role opens the possibility of a more equitable religious anthropology—one that recognizes both women and men as full bearers of the divine image.

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Recommendations

1. **Encourage Reinterpretation of Classical Texts through Gender-Aware Lenses**
   There is a dire need need to revisit foundational Jewish texts with interpretive frameworks that critically assess gender dynamics. This approach can help uncover underlying patriarchal biases and open space for more equitable theological insights.
2. **Integrate Feminist Thought into Theological Discourse**
   Incorporating perspectives from feminist theology into Jewish studies can enrich contemporary discussions on gender and spirituality. Such integration fosters interpretations that uphold the moral and spiritual integrity of women within scriptural traditions.
3. **Reassess Liturgical Practices for Gender Inclusivity**
   Traditional prayers and blessings that reflect male-centered theology should be critically reviewed. Revising or contextualizing these expressions can contribute to a more inclusive and balanced spiritual practice.
4. **Restore and Expand Women's Roles in Religious Life**
   Historical traces of female involvement in Jewish communal and religious structures suggest that broader participation is both possible and grounded in tradition. Efforts should be made to revive and expand women's roles in education, leadership, and liturgical engagement.
5. **Promote Cross-Traditional Dialogue on Gender Theology**
   Consid[31]ering the shared roots of creation narratives across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, interreligious dialogue on gender and theology can

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be a valuable avenue for mutual learning and reform. Such conversations may offer collective strategies for reimagining the role of women in sacred narratives.

6. **Revise Rabbinic Education to Include Gender Critique** Rabbinic training programs should adopt interdisciplinary tools—especially from gender studies, literary criticism, and historical analysis—to equip future scholars with the skills to engage critically and responsibly with traditional texts.

References

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Historians continue to face significant challenges in reconstructing the original trajectory of Jewish history. The first attempt at a comprehensive account was made by Flavius Josephus (37–c.100 CE), whose works, though invaluable, were met with skepticism among traditional Jewish scholars who did not regard historical writing as a distinct or authoritative discipline. Until the nineteenth century, Jewish historiography lacked a formally recognized canonical text that could serve as a definitive historical source. As a result, determining the precise beginning of Jewish historical consciousness remains problematic.

Despite these difficulties, the Torah itself contains expansive historical narratives, including the accounts of fifty-five prophets, seven of whom are women. Notably, some female figures—such as Rebecca (Rivqah), Sarah, Rachel (Raḥel), and Leah—are depicted with a prominence that in some instances appears to exceed that of patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, indicating a measure of theological and narrative privilege afforded to women in the Hebrew tradition. However, this recognition is inconsistently applied. For instance, relatively limited attention is given to the figure of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, despite her key role in the Exodus narrative.[5] The Hebrew Bible refers to her as a ***nabīyy'ah*** **(*nevi'ah in Hebrew)** —a female prophetess—and she is remembered particularly for her hymn of praise after the crossing of the Red Sea, which has become a notable example of poetic thanksgiving in Hebrew scripture. In Hebrew, the term ***nabīyy'ah*** meaning "prophetess," carries multiple connotations. It may refer to a woman who teaches the commandments of God, one who sings hymns of praise, or, in certain exegetical traditions, a woman associated with a prophet—such as a prophet's wife. The association of this title with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, reflects the significant reverence accorded to her among women in biblical literature. Other women also occupy

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prominent positions in the Hebrew Bible. Figures such as Rebecca (***Rivqah***), Sarah, Leah (***Lē'āh***), and Rachel (***Raḥēl***) are repeatedly entrusted with spiritual and communal responsibilities in Jewish tradition.[3]

Modern Jewish theologian Leonard Swidler further highlights the roles of lesser-emphasized female figures, such as Jochebed (***Yōkheved***), the mother of Moses, and the daughter of Pharaoh, both of whom played pivotal roles in the liberation narrative of the Israelites from Egypt. Sarah, in particular, is recognized with esteem for performing the act of circumcising her son—a significant religious gesture indicating obedience to divine covenant.[5] In addition, the prophetesses Huldah and Deborah are explicitly identified in the biblical record as legitimate bearers of divine messages. However, critical historical inquiry has established that such women are primarily associated with the early period of Israelite history, suggesting that their prophetic status reflects a more egalitarian ethos that gradually diminished over time. For further readings please see Shiekh Abdul Malik, In *Thy Seed: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* – Addressing Some key Issues, Paramount Publishing Enterprise, 2010, P. 120-1, and Sheve Grumer, Brun, *Thinking about Judaism – Philosophical Reflections on the Jewish Thought*, Jason Aronson Inc., New Jersey/Jerusalem, P 125 and Roth, Recil, "*Historiography*" in Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8, P 560-2.

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[3] Phyllis Trible, ***God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 74–85.

[4] ***Genesis 3:16***, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

[5] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, ***In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*** (New York: Free Press, 1992), 112–114.

[6] Elaine Pagels, ***Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*** (New York: Vintage, 1988), 17–19.

[7] ***Genesis Rabbah*** 19:5; also see Louis Ginzberg, ***Legends of the Jews***, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909), 66–68.

[8] See Exodus 15:20 (Miriam); Judges 4:4 (Deborah); 1 Samuel 1–2 (Hannah); Esther 4–8 (Esther).

[9] Judith Plaskow, ***Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*** (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1990), 25–29.

[10] **Louis Ginzberg** (1873–1953) was a Lithuanian-born American Judaic scholar, born on November 28, 1873, in Kovno, Lithuania (now Kaunas), and died on November 11, 1953, in New York City. He became one of the foremost *Talmūdic* authorities of his time and played a foundational role in the development of Conservative Judaism in the United States. He is especially renowned for his monumental work ***The Legends of the Jews***, a synthesis of rabbinic Aggadah and biblical lore. Please see: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louis-Ginzberg

[11] Louis Ginzberg, ***The Legends of the Jews***, vol. 1, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909), 66–68.

[12] Ibid., 69.

[13] Ibid.

[14] ***Genesis 6:1–2***, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). For interpretations, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, ***Reading the Women of the Bible*** (New York: Schocken, 2002), 31–33.

[15] Susan Starr Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts, The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 46.

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[16] Judith Hauptman, ***Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice*** (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 115–120.
[17] The Babylonian *Talmūd* includes many such depictions; see ***Berakhot*** 24a, ***Kiddushin*** 80b.
[18] Bernadette J. Brooten, ***Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*** (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 14–33.
[19] ***Mishnah Kiddushin*** 1:7; see also Rachel Adler, ***Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*** (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998), 23–25.
[20] ***Babylonian*** *Talmūd,* ***Menachot*** 43b.
[21] Gershom ben Judah of Mainz, also known as **Rabbenu Gershom** and honored as **"the Light of the Exile",** was a foundational rabbinic authority in medieval Ashkenazic Jewry. Born in Metz and active in Mainz, he served as head of the local **rabbinic academy**, where he introduced Babylonian and Palestinian *Talmūdic* traditions to Western Europe. His legal enactments profoundly shaped Jewish communal life, including the prohibition of **polygamy**, the requirement of **mutual consent for divorce,** bans on reading private correspondence, and protection for **returning forced converts.**
Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gershom-ben-Judah
[22] Jacob Katz, ***Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*** (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 47–49.
[23] George H. Tavard, A.A., was a French-born Roman Catholic theologian, Assumptionist priest, and leading figure in 20th-century ecumenism. He served as a **peritus** at the Second Vatican Council and took part in major ecumenical dialogues, including **ARCIC, ARC-USA,** and Catholic–Methodist and Lutheran conversations. Tavard taught at institutions in Europe, the U.S., and Africa, and authored over twenty books on theology, ecumenism, and spirituality. Please see
 Joseph A. Komonchak et al., eds., ***The New Dictionary of Theology*** (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), s.v. "Tavard, George H," and William G. Rusch, ***Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity*** (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 42, and George H. Tavard, ***The Church, Community of Salvation: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology*** (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), xii.
[24] George H. Tavard, ***Woman in Christian Tradition*** (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 15–17.
[25] Ibid., 22–24.
[26] Swilder, Leonard. *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism*. (N.J: The Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, 1976), 18
[27] Michael D. Coogan, ***The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures***, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 453–468.
[28] Ecclesiastes 7:26, New International Version.
[29] Sirach 25:13–26:27, in ***The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha***, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[30] Ibid.