

Women in Judges

Subversion of patriarchy or vision of heterarchy?

Understanding Israel

- Patriarchal Israel?
- Heterarchal Israel?
- Evidence in Judges

The case for patriarchy

- Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (1922)
- Martin Noth, *History of Israel* (1950)
- De Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (1961)
- Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1979)

"In the normal type of Israelite marriage the husband is the 'master,' the ba'al of his wife. The father had absolute authority over his children, even over his married sons if they lived with him, and over their wives. In early times this authority included even the power over life and death; thus Judah condemned to death his daughter-in-law Tamar when she was accused of misconduct (Gen 38:24)." (De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p20)

The case against patriarchy

- Israel, or Greece and Rome?
- Urban, commerce construct
- Lack of definition, inconsistent use
- Public/private dichotomy

"Victorian household patterns, in which the workplace was outside the home and men had control over wives and children dependent on their earnings, had been superimposed on premodern societies in which the household was the workplace for all family members." (Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" p18)

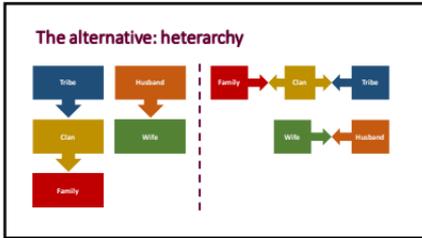
Distinct roles and responsibilities

	Women ("informal power")	Men ("legal authority")
Familial	- Raising, naming, educating children - Food production, inc. grain	- Representing family at village councils - Overseeing trade
Material	- Craft and textile production - Maintaining the home	- Manual labour/farming - Production of tools
Political	- Sharing news/information - Greeting/awakening - Unifying families and clans - Channel for political communication - Negotiated use of shared ovens	- Live of inheritance - Governed nation, tribe, clan, family - Military life - Key decisions: water rights, war, etc - Jurid/legal issues
Religious	- Preparation of ritual/festival food - Overseeing healthcare - Leading some rituals in the home	- Liturgical/priestly duties - Worship/prayer/sacrifice/circumcision - Communal/national religious activity

Women in leadership

"Everywoman Eve's context was the household, the central institution for most economic, social, educative, political, and religious aspects of life throughout the Iron Age." (Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, p125)

"In today's terms, the senior Israelite woman functioned as the household's COO (Chief Operating Officer) and, if the senior male was away or incapacitated, as the acting CEO (Chief Executive Officer)." (Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, p188)



The case for heterarchy

"Multiple sources of power that [do] not necessarily line up in a single set of vertical hierarchical relationships." (Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, p197)

"This concept ... concedes the existence of hierarchies but does not situate them all in a linear pattern. Rather it acknowledges that different power structures can exist simultaneously in any given society, with each structure having its own hierarchical arrangements that may cross-cut each other laterally." (Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" p27)

Heterarchy in Judges

- Judges 1: Achsah – inherits land, influences water rights
- Judges 4-5: Deborah – judge, prophet, military leader
- Judges 5: Jael – kills Sisera, wins military victory
- Judges 9: "A certain woman" – kills Abimelech, wins military victory
- Judges 11: Jephthah's daughter – influences her father
- Judges 13: Samson's mother – communes with God
- Judges 14: Samson's wife – retains her clan identity
- Judges 16: Delilah – outwits Samson
- Judges 17: Micah's mother – priest

Heterarchy vs patriarchy

- Women inhabiting 'male' roles
- Challenging primogeniture: Gideon (Judges 6:15)
- BUT ... informal roles are bound to be undocumented
- Hierarchies among women (Judges 5:28-29)
- Representing social strata
- Practice vs projection
- Exceptions may not prove the rule!

Redefining leadership

- Heterarchy not the focus
- Heterarchy the starting point
- Subverting assumptions
- Vision for renewed humanity? (Genesis 1:27)
