

“Shut up Woman, and make me A Bacon Sandwich!”

Interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,
in light of ‘ὁ νομος’

By Peter Lennox

Dedicated to:
Major Katerina Lennox

*“She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
She watches over the affairs of the household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness,
Her children call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her;
Many women do noble things,
But you surpass them all.”
Prov. 31:26-29*

I also want to thank everyone who has been part of helping me finish this paper,
thanks to everyone who has read through it, and corrected my mistakes.

And to my wonderful housemates, who have made university amazing.

Contents Page

Preface	2
1. Introduction	3
1.1. Textual Context	4
1.1.1. The Epistles to the Corinthians	4
1.1.2. Other New Testament Texts	4
1.2. Scholarly Solutions	7
1.3. Interpolation	10
1.4. Law	12
2. Women in the Hebrew Scriptures	
2.1. Genesis: Creation and Order	14
2.1.1. Genesis 1: The Creation Poem	14
2.1.2. Genesis 2: The Creation Narrative	16
2.1.3. Genesis 3: The Fall	17
2.2. Mosaic Law: Women and Worship	21
2.2.1. Leviticus 12 and 15: Purity after Bleeding	21
2.2.2. Deuteronomy 12 and 16: Festivals	24
2.2.3. Numbers 30: Vows	25
2.3. Righteous Women	27
2.3.1. Deborah: The Female Judge	27
2.3.2. Hannah: The Silent Prayer	29
2.3.3. The Wise Woman of Abel Beth Ma'acah: Adviser	31
2.3.4. Conclusion of Righteous Women	32
2.4. Other women of the Biblical text.	34
2.4.1. Michal: Silenced Wife	34
2.4.2. Judith: Sexual Warrior	37
3. Talmud and Midrashim: Jewish Oral Law	41
4. Pauline Irony	44
5. Conclusion	47
Bibliography	49

Preface

Anyone who knows me, knows I'm not a champion of women's rights. On the contrary, feminists dislike me, mainly because I say things in order to provoke and cause controversy. Even the very apolitically correct title of this paper is purposefully selected in order to get people's attention. The full meaning of which should reveal itself as one reads through this paper.

Nevertheless, I am the son of Salvation Army officers, Majors David and Katerina Lennox. My Mum was ordained in 1985, a year after my Dad, and has now done 25 years of ministry as a Salvation Army Officer. She has the same roles and responsibilities as any male minister, being equal in all matters. Thus she has as much opportunity to preach and teach in church services as my Dad. However, my Mum is only one of the thousands of women, who are and have active in Salvation Army ministry all around the world. The Salvation Army has always accepted female ministers since it was first founded in 1865, and has found the wealth and richness that women bring to church ministry and ordination.

Thus I took on my current research into 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, firstly because The Salvation Army claims to be biblically based, and yet this verse would seem to counter that claim. Secondly, Pauline theology would seem to advocate an egalitarian view in one verse and a misogynistic view in another. Everything that I had read on the subject before undertaking this research was unconvincing, and in many places disappointing, and so I sort to find out more, to really challenge these verses and put the current scholarship surrounding these verse to the test.

1. Introduction

Paul states clearly in his letter to the Corinthians, “as in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”¹ These verses have been quoted time and time again, by those who wish to show that Paul did not allow women to preach and teach in church, not to mention, hold positions of leadership.

In this paper I will be considering what Paul meant when he stated that women were not allowed to speak in church; in particular looking at his use of the term ‘Law’ and what light it can shed on these verses. I will start by looking at the context of these verses in 1 Corinthians and other New Testament text and, by comparing them to scholarly work, consider the issues in the text. Then I will look at the term ‘law’ and what Paul was alluding to when he spoke of ‘the law’, and what his hearers would have understood him to be referring to. The main body of this paper will be an investigation into different ‘laws’ found in ancient Israel, and contemplating Paul’s interpretation of these laws, and thus what role he allows for women in his communities.

“The Law”, the key term for this paper, is used here as an authority in an interesting amalgamation which sought to prohibit women from speaking in church, starting with other churches examples, then moving onto the law, and finally climaxes with God, “for did the word of God originate with you.” This triple certification for a prohibition on women speaking in church makes it hard for anyone

¹ 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

in Corinth to get out of this command. Nevertheless is there more going on in these verses than first meets the eye?

1.1 Textual Context

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 cannot be seen as an individual passage in a sea of nothingness, and so I want to consider the context of this passage and the view of women that it purports to, both within 1 Corinthians and the rest of the New Testament.

1.1.1 The Epistles to the Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians, Paul answers a few questions that the Christians in Corinth have sent to him, setting them straight on a few of their practices and theologies. In Chapters 11-14, Paul gives advice on three topics that formed part of ancient services, prayer and prophecy, the Lord’s Supper, and Spiritual Gifts. In Chapter 11 Paul stated that women could pray and prophesy, the only requirement placed upon them is that they cover their head, (nevertheless this is for the Church to decide.)² However when we reach the end of Chapter 14 Paul pronounces an outright ban on women speaking in Church. Therefore, what do we do with these verses?

1.1.2 Other New Testament Text

In the New Testament we come across a number of women that play key roles within the church assemblies, and this counteracts any suggestion that women remained silent in the early church.³ In Acts we come across John Mark’s mother⁴ and Lydia the merchant both hosted house churches.⁵ Also Paul mentions a number

2 1 Corinthians 11:13

3 Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in the Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies*, (Translated by Linda M. Maloney; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000)

4 Acts 12:12-17

5 Acts 16:14-15, 40

of women who host their own house churches or are involved in ministry, Nympha,⁶ Phoebe,⁷ and Euodia and Syntyche.⁸ The New Testament also gives examples of women who were recognised as teachers in these house churches. “Priscilla along with her husband, Aquila, instructed Apollos (...) The Author of Revelation acknowledges the effectiveness of the teaching of a woman prophet at Thyatire...”⁹ Therefore we have clear evidence that women played a key role in the worship and teaching within the house churches. Thus the statement “in all the churches of the saints”, which Paul uses to start his prohibition of women speaking in church, raises serious questions about my key passage.

1.2 Scholarly Solutions

Scholars have tried throughout the centuries to come up with a solution to this seeming contradiction. Origen came up with the hypothesis that Paul was talking of different situations that women could pray and prophesy, except in church; using Deborah, Philip’s four daughters¹⁰ and Anna as examples of prophetesses who although they spoke divine words, never did so to an assembly.¹¹ This theory is supported by a range of scholars who have stated that for women to speak in public would have “discredited Christianity”¹², for “both the Jews and Greeks adopted the

6 Colossians 4:15

7 Romans 16:1-2

8 Philippians 4:2-3

9 Carolyn Osiek, and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Women’s Place: House Churches in earliest Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), p. 162

10 Acts 21:9

11 Origen, *Fragments on 1 Corinthians: 74*, JTS, 10, pp. 41-42 cited by Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 28.

12 Quotation of William Barclay by Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 7; Intervarsity Press, 2007), p. 201.

"Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!"
Peter Lennox

same rule"¹³ that women must be silent in public, or at least in a gatherings where men are present.¹⁴

However, there is evidence of women participating in community worship within the Hellenistic world, becoming priestesses and prophetesses, with different ranks and responsibilities according to the deity they were dedicated to. "There were temples to Dionysius, Isis, Serapis, and others in which women took important roles and were free to speak."¹⁵ In particular, "Isis is said to have a special affinity for women,"¹⁶ with a prayer which stated, "You have made the power of women equal to that of men."¹⁷

Lenski¹⁸ notes, that the text does not

...denote a place where these activities are exercised. So we on our part should not introduce one (...) By omitting reference to a place Paul says this: 'Wherever and whenever it is proper and right for a man or for a woman to pray or to prophesy, the difference of sex should be marked as indicated.' Whether men are present or absent when a woman prays or prophesies makes no difference.¹⁹

13 Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter, 1857), pp. 304-305.

14 A number of scholars have agreed with this theory: John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *Calvin's Commentaries* (translated by John W. Fraser, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 231.; Benjamin B. Warfield, "Paul on Women Speaking in Church" *The Presbyterian*, (1919); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1963), pp. 436-7.; John MacArthur Jr., *1 Corinthians* (MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 256-7.; Harold R. Holmyard III, "Does 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Refer to Women Praying and Prophesying in Church?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 154 (1997), 461-72.; J. Carl Laney, "Gender Based Boundaries for Gathered Congregations: An Interpretive History of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35" *Journal For Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 7 (2002), pp. 4-13.

15 Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, (ed. Ann Witherington; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 174.

16 Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, (London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 25.

17 POxy. 1380, lines 214-16, cited by Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 25.

18 Who is actually in support of the different location theory

19 Lenski, *First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 436.

Thus, due to Paul not specifying a location in 1 Corinthians 11, he here was advocating his egalitarian view²⁰ that a woman could pray or prophesy wherever, both in public as well as private.

Secondly, some have surmised that Paul's silencing women in public worship was only in reference to chatter or uninspired utterances, and not women led by the spirit to speak.²¹ However this view, based upon a modern generalisation that women talk more than men, does not accurately reflect the situation in the ancient world, where men were often considered to be more chatty.²² Thus why would Paul not simply ban all chatter during church.

Other scholars have theorised that Paul was speaking only to married women,²³ Fiorenza, suggests that only women untouched by a man, are 'holy' enough to speak in church,²⁴ which is totally out of context with Paul's thoughts on salvation and atonement. Klauck, states, "This direction is only for married women, whose husbands are prophets, who should not be judged in public, because of their wives, which might disrupt marital status."²⁵ However, as already stated, Paul

20 Galatians 3:28

21 Scholars who back up this theory include: John Samuel Ruef, Paul's first letter to Corinth, (Westminster Pelican commentaries; Indiana University: Westminster Press, 1977); Maffatt quoted by Morris, 1 Corinthians, p. 201; F. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, (trans. Alexander Cusin; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889).

22 Robert W. Allison, 'Let Women be Silent in the Churches (1 Corinthians 14:33b-36): What did Paul really say, and What did it mean?', Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 10 (1988) pp. 27-60 (36).

23 Hans Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians : a commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (translated by James W. Leitch; edited by George W. MacRae; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 246; Hans-Josef Klauck, 1. Korintherbrief, (Die Neue Echter Bible. Neues Testament; Würzburg; Echter, 1984), p. 104-105; Elizabeth Flonszer, 'Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 33 (1978) pp. 153-166.

24 Fiorenza, 'Women', p 161; In memory of her: a feminist theological reconstruction of early Christian beginnings, (New York: Crossroad, 1983.), p. 321.

25 "Die Anweisung gelte nur für Frauen, deren Ehemänner selbst als Propheten auftraten. Sie sollten von ihren Gattinnen nicht in aller Öffentlichkeit beurteilt werden, das könnte den ehelichen Frieden nachhaltig stören." Klauck, 1 Korintherbrief, p. 104-105

already recognised Priscilla as a teacher. Also the word λαλεω (to speak), refers to all forms of speaking and not just prophetic speaking.

Lias suggested, 1 Corinthians 11 only refers to women covering their heads whilst praying, and Paul reserves the prohibition against prophesying until 1 Corinthians 14, stating that Philip’s daughters probably only prophesied in same sex assemblies.²⁶ However 1 Corinthians 11 clearly mentions both praying and prophesying, also (as mentioned above,) λαλεω indicates all forms of speaking not just prophecy.

Calvin states, “when he [Paul] reproves them for prophesying with their heads uncovered, he at the same time does not give them permission to prophesy in some other way, but rather delays his condemnation of that vice to another passage, namely 1 Corinthians 14.”²⁷ Does Paul have to be explicit in everything he says? He does not explicitly state that men can prophecy with their heads uncovered, however Calvin does not call into question their right. In 1 Corinthians 11, a woman’s ability and right to prophesy is taken for granted. In defence of Calvin, Godet makes reference to both Paul’s prohibition of lawsuits in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, and food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthian 8 and 10:14-22²⁸, suggesting that Paul first urges against something before banning it outright. However when considering lawsuits, Paul does it directly, “If any of you have a dispute, dare he take it to the ungodly to judge?”²⁹ This is a rhetorical sarcastic comment by Paul, which as he states later, is “to shame them.”³⁰ On the other hand when Paul considered eating food sacrificed to idols, he does it as part of an extended section on the matter, which leads to the

26 J.J. Lias, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Cambridge Bible series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892), p. 107.

27 Calvin, *Corinthians*, p. 231.

28 Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's First epistle to the Corinthians*, (2; Clark's foreign theological library; Columbia University: T. & T. Clark, 1893), p. 116.

29 1 Corinthians 6:1

30 1 Corinthians 6:5

conclusion that one can eat food sacrificed to idols, however if possible should avoid it; he does not change his mind or contradict himself.

Therefore, Paul's seeming contradiction of women speaking in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 cannot be explained away by just suggesting the passages assume different locations (Public or Private), different levels of speaking (Conversation or Prophecy and Prayer), Paul's rhetorical style of prohibition, or that this direction is given to married women only. However some scholars have suggested that these verses are not originally Pauline, which deserves serious consideration, if these verses are a later redactor's addition, for this could account for the contradictions in the text.

1.3 Interpolation

[Interpolation] is gaining increasing support today among liberal and liberationist exegetes mostly because it sits easily with contemporary liberationist views and fits well with Paul's eschatological egalitarianism, and because it is therefore easy to be confident of a Paulinist exegesis in spite of the unsatisfactory scholarship behind it.³¹

Those who favour the interpolation theory use a number of reasons to back up their point of view. Firstly, this passage seems to be out of place. However any later redactor would have surely placed this prohibition closer to 1 Corinthians 11. These verses also appear in two locations in early manuscripts,³² which support this theory. Nevertheless, in all the early manuscripts of this text, these verses are always present, and thus this theory has no manuscript evidence of omission, which should give caution to any scholar.

31 Allison, 'Let Women be Silent in the Churches' p. 44

32 These verses appear after verse 40 in Manuscripts D G 88 and Ambst.

Secondly, some have suggested this passage uses certain terms³³ in an “unPauline”³⁴ way. The reference to ‘law’ here lacks any specific scriptural quotation, with some suggesting a later redactor inserted these verses with 1 Timothy 2:11-15³⁵ in mind, however why was this later addition thus not more explicit as to which particular law is in mind (such as Genesis 2, or Genesis 3:16). Also Gordon Fee has suggested “the appeal here to shame as a ‘general culture matter’ is atypical of Paul.”³⁶ Nevertheless, Jervis has pointed out that these language issues should not automatically render the passage interpolated.³⁷ Whilst the interpolation theory as an explanation of these text contradictions is very tempting, it still has many unanswered questions and faults, thus I wish to spend the rest of this paper constructing a new interpretation with fewer limitations.

1.4 Law

Paul’s mention of the ‘law’³⁸ could offer us a way of truly understanding what Paul meant, since he uses scripture in a number of ways throughout all of his letters, however quotation of scripture by Paul raises a few questions, since the majority of Paul’s audience are not of Jewish origin, with a low literacy level, very few of those in these congregations would have even read scripture. Thus Gentile converts were

33 Law, Shame and Permit

34 L. Ann Jervis, ‘1 Corinthians 14:34-35: A Reconsideration of Paul’s Limitation of the Free Speech of some Corinthian Women’, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 17 (1995) pp. 51-74 (56)

35 I will not be considering 1 Timothy 2:12 in any depth in this paper, this verse requires a totally different translation technique, and without going into any depth I would class 1 Timothy as a Pauline pseudepigraphal writing, and some of the problems of the pastoral epistles are misinterpretation or misrepresentation of Paul’s teaching by later writers, who wished to give their understand and theories more authority, through the use of Paul’s name.

36 Gordon D. Fee, *God’s empowering presence: the Holy Spirit in the letters of Paul* (Michigan; Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 279; cited by Jervis, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, p. 57

37 L. Ann Jervis, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, p. 56.

38 “As the law says ...”

fully reliant upon the Jews in their congregations to teach them the Hebrew Scriptures. So why would Paul use biblical quotations?

Chris Stanley put forward three suggestions for Paul's use of biblical quotations, to which I have added a fourth suggestion. 1) Scriptural Authority, since he taught extensively from the Hebrew Scriptures, he expected his converts to understand the authority of scripture, and in most cases he signals his intended interpretation.³⁹ 2) He aimed particular points to the more literate believers. 3) Sometimes he unconsciously reverts to his Pharisaic background⁴⁰ Furnish recognises the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures and Paul's heritage upon Paul's theology even when no scriptural text is cited.⁴¹ 4) Countering an argument made by an opponent who themselves have utilised scriptural authority, for example the reinterpretation of 'Abraham and his seed' to counter claims that only 'the circumcised' will be saved.⁴²

Nevertheless, "In the study of 'Paul and the Law' we have before us a lot of unquestionably authentic statements by Paul on the subject; and, further, we know what law Paul was talking about. With a few exceptions, he meant the *Tanak*, the Jewish Torah."⁴³ However, (as mentioned) 1 Corinthians 14:34 lacks any specific scriptural reference. Thus, in order to fully understand what Paul meant in these verses, I will consider what the Hebrew Scripture and the apocrypha have to say about women, their roles and particularly their voices in the Church.

39 Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture* (London: T & T Clark international, 2004) pp. 2 & 60

40 Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, p 60-61

41 Victor P. Furnish, *The theology of the first letter to the Corinthians*, (New Testament Theology Series; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 19

42 Galatians 3:15-25

43 E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 3.

2. Women in the Hebrew Scriptures

2.1 Pentateuch: Creation and Order

“In the Beginning”⁴⁴, what better place to start our study into what ‘the Law’ has to say about women and their role in the Jewish worship and sacrificial system. We cannot say with any authority that the Pentateuch gives us a clear view of what society was like in the time of its author, however texts give us either the author’s view of the world including their ideologies, or they give us the author’s perfect worldview. Therefore the texts in the Pentateuch are either a realistic representation, or they are the author’s ideal worldview. With this in mind I wish to set out the Hebrew Bible’s general view of women and their place in worship and sacrifice, before moving on to some more specific examples elsewhere in the text.

2.1.1 Genesis 1: The Creation Poem

In Genesis 1 we come across ‘The Creation Poem’, this masterpiece is where the Bible begins, with a lot more going on than first meets the eye, and more importantly this could hold the clue to biblical views of women. Genesis 1:26-28, God decides to make ‘Adam’ (אָדָם) in his, or more literally ‘their’ image and likeness, and Adam will have dominion over all the creatures of the earth.

However what does this have to do with women? “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”⁴⁵ In the ‘Creation Poem’, God creates men and women together, in one act. He made them to the specifications of himself, his image and likeness. Now the first question to ask is what does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God? Scholars have theorised a multitude of possible meanings, from ‘creator’ and

44 Genesis 1:1

45 Genesis 1:27

'ruler', to God's personality, from human spirituality, to physically being made in the image of God. Wenham even quotes Clines suggesting that man was not made in the image of God, but to be the image of God.⁴⁶ However, what the 'Creation Poem' does tell us is that humans are 'Godlike', just as a son is 'Father-like'.⁴⁷ A son has characteristics both physically and in his personality, which allow people to recognise his heritage, thus people say 'you're just like your dad', or 'those are your dad's eyes'. I want to suggest two possibilities for our 'Godlike' image and what it could mean. 1) "By having the one "Adam" represent the two "male and female", the writer has emphasised the essential unity and diversity of Adam and Eve. Their relationship is fundamental."⁴⁸ And considering God's statement, "Let us make..." I want to suggest that being made in the image of God is about relationships and unity. 2) "God is a God who speaks, and who acts by speaking. It stands to reason then, that human beings are created by, and made very like such a God would be pre-eminently speakers."⁴⁹ Thus being made in the image of God is not only about unity, but also about speaking, two things which if we accept 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 at face value we miss out on.

Nevertheless, even if they were created at the same time, and in the image and likeness of God, was it Adam who was given the command to rule and have dominion?

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'⁵⁰

46 Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, (The Word Biblical Commentary, 1; Word Books, 1987), pp. 29-32.

47 Graeme Auld, 'imago dei in Genesis: Speaking in the Image of God', The Expository Times, vol 116 (2005) pp. 259-262 (260).

48 Aida B. Spencer, Beyond the Curse; (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 21.

49 Auld, 'Speaking in the Image of God', p. 261

50 Genesis 1:28

In this verse, God gives five commands, three are to do with procreation, and the last two are to do with power. If these commands are for the man only, we have some problems, because I am not aware of a man who, without a woman, can be fruitful and bear children. Thus we must accept that God not only commands both men and women to be fruitful but also to subdue the earth, together.

2.1.2 Genesis 2: The Creation Narrative

If we read on we come across ‘The Creation Narrative’, which considers the creation story from a different angle. The Rabbi’s saw Genesis 1-2 as a continual narrative, which has led to some interesting and humorous interpretations.

“R. Jeremiah ben Leazer said: ‘When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first Adam, He made it an hermaphrodite (...)’ R. Shmuel bar Nachman said, ‘When the Holy One, created the first Adam, He created him with two faces, then split him and made him two backs – a back for each side.’”⁵¹

After God creates Adam he places him in the Garden of Eden and commands him ‘not to eat of the fruit from the tree of knowledge,’⁵² notice the lack of a command to be fruitful and multiply, and most importantly to subdue all the earth. Therefore one cannot read into this story a command for the man to rule over his wife. Verse five informs the audience that God intends for man to work the earth, and when creating woman, her role as helper is also in working the earth.

God after surveying Adam concludes that it is not good for him to be alone, and so he creates Eve, as a helper (fit for him), from Adam’s rib. Surely, this passage puts women as subordinate to men? To interpret the word helper as subordinate is to miss the full context of the word. “To help someone does not imply that the helper is stronger than the helped; simply that the latter’s strength is

51 Genesis Rabbah 8:1
52 Genesis 2:16-17

inadequate by itself.”⁵³ 'ezer (helper) is used for Yahweh thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible, therefore one cannot automatically assume a helper is subordinate, thus when this term is used of Eve, we cannot automatically assume her place is under the authority of Adam.

Secondly the word helper is connected to the Hebrew word *kenegdo*.

The prefix *k* signifies comparison, similarity, or proportion. The suffix *wo* is a pronoun signifying “him” (...) The helper is *neged* to him. What does *neged* mean? The basic root literally describes physical relationships. It refers to “the front” or “the visible”.⁵⁴

Therefore the literal translation of this verse is “I will make for him a helper in front of him.” This verse sets up not a subordinate relationship, but a partnership. Matthew Henry’s commentary comes closer to the spirit of the text. “Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”⁵⁵

2.1.3 Genesis 3: The Fall

Therefore from the creation of the world, man and woman were made equals, both in the image and likeness of the divine creator and both are equal partners in the commands and duties of God. And so we can suggest that the author(s) of Genesis 1-2 have tried to set up an image of what humanity was supposed to be like, nevertheless, humankind does not stay in this state of innocence. Genesis 3, ‘The Fall Narrative’, tells us that Adam and Eve disobey God, and therefore they receive curses, and their lives change. Adam and Eve are given one command, ‘Do not eat of the Tree of knowledge, located in the centre of the Garden of Eden.’⁵⁶

53 Wenham, Genesis 1-15, p. 68.

54 Spencer, Beyond the Curse, p. 23.

55 Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Whole Bible, (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1960), p. 7.

56 Genesis 2:17

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

However, one day whilst in the Garden, Adam and Eve meet the serpent, who tempts them into eating of the fruit from the ‘Tree of Knowledge’.

Eve we are told ate the fruit for she saw the fruit was good and she desired to gain wisdom; Eve was tempted by the serpent’s suggestion that she would become like God, knowing good and evil.

“Some contemporary writers perceived Eve’s conversation with the serpent as indicative of her theological acumen. She is ‘intelligent, informed, and perceptive. Theologian, ethicist, hermeneut, rabbi, she speaks with clarity and authority.’ On the other hand, Adam ‘does not theologise; he does not contemplate;’ (...) Instead, his one act is belly-oriented (...) the man is passive, brutish, and inept.”⁵⁷

Adam in this narrative is very passive, he did not speak to God, he did not help create the woman, and here he is being passive whilst Eve is tempted, he does not utter a word.

Once Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, we are told that their eyes were opened and that they realised they were naked. They make garments from leaves and hide in the bushes, nevertheless when God finds out he assigns punishments corresponding to them. The serpent is cursed to crawl on its belly and there will be enmity between its decedents and eve’s. The man is cursed to toil over the ground and struggle with nature in order to gain a little harvest. However it is Eve’s punishment I want to take a closer look at here.

To Eve, God says, “yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”⁵⁸ Scholars have suggested three ideas of what ‘desire’ could refer to.

1) Sexual, the woman will lust after her husband, and yearn for him to be near. 2) Possession and control, linking it with the next phrase, the woman will desire to be

57 Sharon Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century, (Lenham, University Press of America, 1991), p. 57.

58 Genesis 3:16, the first half of this curse is interesting, however is not worth anything in my study here.

head, and therefore will seek to manipulate the men in her life.⁵⁹ 3) Closeness, that a woman will not want her husband to leave her; she will yearn for his presence and actively seek and pursuing him. “The curses that the woman has to endure, like the serpent’s curses, may each be compared to her pre-fall condition, and her punishments are comparable to her sins.”⁶⁰ After Adam declared ‘This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,’⁶¹ the author says that ‘for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.’⁶² Thus giving the audience the view that a man will pursue and desire his wife. If this relationship is inverted, then woman is now to pursue a husband who will be too busy toiling the ground and moaning about her.

The second part of Eve’s curse is that her husband will rule over her. A number of observations need to be made about this. Firstly, this is a curse; God’s original intention was not for his creation to be ordered this way. Secondly, ‘To rule’, does not mean abuse or mistreat, Paul clearly does not believe in abusive and domineering husbands, when he declares ‘Husbands, love your wives’⁶³, and fulfil your marital obligations⁶⁴, which included providing for their wives, physically and spiritually.

Man asserts his power and authority over the woman in Gen. 3:20 when he names her using the technical naming-formula. He reduces her status to that of the animals he previously named. Yet, the name Adam gives Eve is honorific, the mother of all the living.⁶⁵

59 Spencer, Beyond the Curse, p.37.

60 Spencer, Beyond the Curse, p. 36.

61 Genesis 2:23

62 Genesis 2:24

63 Ephesians 5:25

64 1 Corinthians 7:3

65 Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and Mother Goddess at Ephesus, p59

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

In both creation stories, we see that God has created them equal, in their roles to be fruitful and to have dominion over all of creation. However due to both man and woman’s disobedience to the words of God, God curses the characters corresponding to their roles and place in creation. Thus not only is the relationship between man and God broken, with God putting them out of the Garden of Eden. However Adam and Eve must also struggle with a broken relationship, they must struggle to be fruitful and subdue the earth, and ultimately they must struggle with loneliness.

Nevertheless, what do these verses tell us about how the First Century Rabbi turned follower of Jesus interpreted and viewed women speaking in church? The creation stories and narratives create a social ideal as well as helping us to understand current social imperfections. From these narratives we get a sense of equality of men and women in their image of the creator, which includes their voice; as the creator speaks, so they too speak, as the creator names, so they too name. Ultimately these narratives support Paul’s egalitarian theology of equality, within social contexts of restrictions and limitations. Thus 1 Corinthians 14 cannot be seen as referring to the creation narratives, although reading 1 Timothy 2:11-15 would suggest this, these stories can only be seen as a backing for restrictions placed on women speaking in church as found in 1 Corinthians 11, and not a full ban, as 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 suggests.

2.2 Mosaic Law: Women and Worship

Other than the creation stories, women play an interesting role in the Mosaic Law. In this next section I wish to quickly consider some of the laws found in

Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and how they refer to women, and in particular their place in the temple worship.

2.2.1 Leviticus 12 and 15: Purity after Bleeding

Leviticus 11-15 is Leviticus' purity and purification laws, including laws on clean and unclean foods, purification after birth, skin diseases, discharges and general hygiene. Leviticus 12 and 15, inform us of purification laws after a discharge, the first being purification after birth, which obviously relates only to women. The second being purification after other discharges which include both male and female discharges.

One may ask why birth should make someone unclean in the first place? Keil suggests that blood reminded the Israelites of sin and death, linked with the presumably high death rate during labour at that time. Douglas on the other hand suggested that a bleeding body is an unwholesome and thus imperfect body and therefore just like those with disabilities, are unclean.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Whitekettle suggests that it has nothing to do with death, due to the lack of similar restrictions for those bleeding from a normal wound or haemorrhage, and these verses are actually solely linked to male and female genitalia, suggesting it was about their ability to reproduce, since a man cannot impregnate a woman directly after a discharge, and a woman cannot get pregnant during her time of menstruation and for a period after.⁶⁷

However, why was the particular duration of impurity chosen? It could be that the ancients thought a woman's reproductive system dysfunctional for seven, forty or

66 Gordon J. Wenham, "Uncleanness and its Treatment (11:1-16:34)" in The book of Leviticus, (The new international commentary on the Hebrew Bible, 3; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979) pp. 161-238 (188).

67 Richard Whitekettle, "Levitical Thought and the Female Reproductive Cycle: Wombs, Wellsprings, and the Primeval world", *Vetus Testamentum*, 46 (1996) pp. 376-391 (380-381).

even eighty days after a discharge, respective to the situation of the discharge. More likely it is their symbolic connections to wholeness, and the Israelite view that the womb becomes whole during this time. However, why is the time required for purity after giving birth to a girl twice as long as a boy, if we conclude that these laws are related to wholeness and a woman’s fertility? “No convincing explanation has been offered why the birth of a girl makes the mother unclean for twice as long as the birth of a boy”⁶⁸ Macht did try to offer a scientific proof that this view is justified,⁶⁹ however his research is unconvincing and doubtful. Thus whilst the restrictions against both men and women after a discharge are not intentionally sexist against women, in that they are restrictions about God’s command to be fruitful, there is still an apparent sexism in their view that having a girl makes a woman unclean for twice as long as having a boy for no other reason than the sex of the child.

However, Leviticus 12 has an interesting sentence, which should not be quickly overlooked. “She must not touch anything sacred or go into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.”⁷⁰

[The] uncleanness of [Leviticus 12:4]... suggests strongly that a place is given [to women] in the cultic community, especially since there is the implication that when clean she would normally touch holy things and enter the sanctuary (...) Of special significance is the fact that woman functions here in a completely autonomous and independent manner. We may assume that the husband was her head, but this (...) was not of such a nature that woman was prevented from participating in this individual act of worship.⁷¹

Both Leviticus 12 and 15 also show clear indications that women took their own offerings and sacrifices to YHWH, and that they played a role in the liturgical rituals of the Israelite cult. Placing this alongside a comparison of Leviticus 15:1-18

68 Wenham, “Uncleanness and its Treatment, p. 188

69 David I. Macht, A Scientific Appreciation of Leviticus 12:1-5, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 52, (1933), pp. 253-260

70 Leviticus 12:4

71 Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in Hebrew Bible worship: academisch proefschrift*, (Delft: Judels & Brinkman, 1968) pp.72-73

with Leviticus 15:25-30, which shows clearly that women brought precisely the same sacrifice as men did, and that subsequent chapters begin to distinguish between male and female participation in the regulations laid out. We must assume that the author expected women to take full part in the regulations that precede chapter 11, which include all the sacrificial regulations, which although prohibited by later rabbinical texts⁷² is quite clearly a later social interpretation and restriction which was not part of the original text. Women had an active role in the temple worship of the Hebrew Bible, and more importantly as I will continue to show in the next section, they were enabled and empowered to use their voices in worship.

2.2.2 Deuteronomy 12 and 16: Festivals

“Rejoice before YHWH, you, your sons and daughters, man-servants and maidservants.”⁷³ Although these verses do not specifically mention women’s involvement in sacrifice and worship during these specific festivals, it does mention the inclusiveness of Hebrew Bible worship. Although wives are not exclusively mentioned, “the wife undoubtedly was included with her husband in the “you (masc.) shall rejoice...” and on a par with her husband, with this qualification: the wives (and daughters) were not obligated to attend the feasts with the same rigidity as the men (1 Sam 1:22 – Hannah)”⁷⁴

Samach, the Hebrew term translated as rejoice, unlike the natural translation of rejoice in modern church to mean sing, the Hebrew is an active term for being glad and showing gladness, through loud expressions of joy as those who get merry on wine, also allowing for in certain circumstances the physical expression of joy,

72 The Mishnah, “Manahoth” 9:8 forbids the woman to lay her hands upon the head of the sacrificial victim, however this prohibition is not found in the Hebrew Bible.

73 Exodus 12:12; 16:11,14

74 Vos, *Woman in Old Testament worship*, p. 119.

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

through leaping and jumping.⁷⁵ Thus this term whilst it includes singing, which encapsulates such worship as seen in Miriam,⁷⁶ Hannah⁷⁷ and Deborah,⁷⁸ it also includes all forms of verbal and physical worship used in the Early Israelite Cult. Meyers has suggested that whilst in the Hebrew Bible, women had full roles and rights in the cultic worship, later interpreters changed these to restrict women and keep them out of the sanctuary.⁷⁹ Thus women were allowed to sing, shout and dance in the worship of YHWH, without fear of reproach or restrictions.

2.2.3 Numbers 30: Vows

“When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”⁸⁰ Simple enough, however the next thirteen verses go on to talk about the value of the vow made by a woman. When a woman makes a vow to the Lord, if the father/husband hears of this and does not mention anything, then the vow she bound herself to will stand, however if they forbid it, then she is free from the vow.⁸¹

That women could make a vow for themselves is a positive, since it showed they had a position in the Israelite cult, as seen with Hannah.⁸² However, their vows were made within the context of their social status and family situation, being subject

75 Genesis Lexicon

76 Exodus 15:20-21

77 1 Samuel 2:1-10

78 Judges 5:1-31

79 Carol Meyers, *The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel*, *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 41 (1978), pp. 91-103

80 Numbers 30:2

81 Numbers 30:3-5,6-8,10-15. Widows and divorcees were exempt from this male approval on all their vows, however this should not be seen as a positive for widows and divorcees to have a higher control over their lives and vows, but an exemption based upon their very specific social position.

82 1 Samuel 1:11

to their father or husband, the male in their life responsible for their well being.⁸³

Thus, women in the Mosaic Law do have their own rights within the religion of YHWH, but it has boundaries and restrictions within the patriarchal society.

“It seems clear that the law was not designated to deprive women from the blessings of the cult. She was to share in the Sabbath Rest (Ex 20:8; Dt. 5:11) and to benefit from the reading of the law (Dt. 31:9-13) and to rejoice before Yahweh with the men (Dt. 12:12,18 ect...)”⁸⁴

As already stated, the Pentateuch sets out the universal ideal that humans were made equal and in unity, and that God made them male and female with the same commands, to subdue the earth and be fruitful. Thus women played a large role in the worship and sacrificial system, they had roles and responsibilities in the YHWH cult and Mosaic Laws, taking part in sacrificial liturgy, singing and worshipping in festivals, as well as having the power and responsibility of taking on vows.

Nevertheless, the Hebrew Bible does place restrictions upon women; they must be submissive to the men of their lives. Remembering that certain laws were exclusive to men, not for the empowerment of men over women, but to free women from the restraints which would be harder for them to hold to, thus empowering them.

When considering 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in light of the Pentateuch one might lean towards the restrictions of women which are clear in the text, that a women must live in submission to their respective men, however these passages are just as much about the freedom of women, and their roles and responsibilities within the Israelite cult. These passages are more closely linked to chapter 11 than 14, in their allowance of women's open participation in the worshipping community of the

83 Interestingly, the approval of the man is shown through silence and not through speech.
84 Vos, Woman in Old Testament worship, p. 131

church, however still placing submissive restrictions upon them, which were there to empower and free women.

2.3 Righteous Women

The authors of the Biblical Narrative uses a number of ‘Righteous’ women in God’s plan to redeem Israel and bring her back to him. These women also help to fill in a gap, for although we have countless stories of righteous men, prophets, kings, judges, and priests, women in these roles are very rare. By considering how these woman have been portrayed in these various texts, (specifically at Deborah, Hannah (Samuel’s mother), and the wise woman of Abel,) and how God has used their voices, I will contemplate how they affect any interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36.

In the biblical narrative YHWH uses a multitude of unique characters in order to govern and free his people, ‘the Israelites’, from their enslavement of moral sins and idolatry, as well as physical oppression and enslavement. God in the book of Judges uses characters such as, Ehud: who was left-handed, Gideon: who was a coward, Jephthah: who was the son of a prostitute, and Deborah: a woman. Thus, right from the beginning of Judges, the author tries to put across a new idea of God and his relationship with his people. Firstly, that he is a God of forgiveness, who continually rescues his people, when they disobey him. Secondly, that God uses the weak and the unlikely to fulfil his purposes.

2.3.1 Deborah: The Female Judge

Deborah, we are told, takes on the role of Judge during the twenty-year cruel reign of King Jabin. We find Deborah judging and guiding the Israelites from under a palm tree, between Ramah and Bethel.

The book of Judges indicated clearly that Deborah had greater control over the land and its people than any other judge before or after. Unlike the male judges, Deborah seems to have avoided committing sinful actions of the sort fallen into by Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.⁸⁵

Therefore Deborah, the only woman to have such authority in the Biblical text, is setup without flaws or failings. She is neither a coward, nor a man-eater; she does not question God or go against his will.

Nevertheless, before we claim this passage as a trophy for all women everywhere, we must remember,

Deborah is an anomaly. She is notably distinctive in the wide range and nature of her narrative roles: she is a judge and a prophet: a woman who sits in judgement of men and speaks as an oracle of YHWH. It would seem that Deborah is truly a woman in a position of power in the world of men, but we will see the narrative binds her with constraints on all sides.⁸⁶

These constraints are revealed in Deborah's own words, when she states, a woman will kill Sisera.⁸⁷ God will shame Barak by allowing his enemy not to fall by his hand, but by the hand of a woman, thus revealing an interesting social ideal, that women were weak. Therefore both Deborah and Jael still function in a world controlled by men.

85 Leila Leah Bronner, "Valorized or Vilified? The Women of Judges in Midrashic Sources" in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, (ed. Athalya Brenner, *The Feminist Companion to the Bible*, vol. 4, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) pp.72-95 (79).

86 Lillian R. Klein, *From Deborah to Esther: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 33.

87 Judges 4:9

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

“Deborah, a prophetess, and wife of Lippodoth,”⁸⁸ and “Jael, wife of Heber,”⁸⁹ like majority of women in the biblical text, both Deborah and Jael are introduced in connection with a husband.

Many commentators have interpreted the phrase [“women of *Lappidot*”] as meaning that she was married to a man named *Lappidot*. More recently interpretations tend to claim that *lappidot* is not a proper name, but rather a common noun meaning ‘flames’ or ‘torches’ and that the phrase should be understood literally as ‘woman of flames’⁹⁰

Either way we come across an interesting portrayal of a woman, nevertheless due to the connection of women to men in the rest of the book, I would lean towards an interpretation that Deborah was married, and that this did not restrict her, but shows that women could and would function as leaders separately from their husbands.

In Deborah we come across a woman of wisdom, who leads Israel, by her words. Although this story does not have any mention of worship, sacrifice or sacred spaces, it does portray a woman who is allowed to control and direct in a patriarchal society. “And Deborah said to Barak, ‘Go!...’ So Barak went ...”⁹¹

“Deborah as spokesperson in parts of the book of judges, was “Mouth”; as one experiencing charismatic vocation as well, she was also prophet or *nabi*, having been chosen to bear God’s words vertically, from heaven downward and from earth upward. As noted by Buber, “The mission of the *nabi* is to let dialogue between God and man be accomplished in his speaking.”⁹²

2.3.2 Hannah: The Silent Prayer

“There once was a man from Ramathaim, whose name was Elkanah.”⁹³ This story starts out like a lot of other Hebrew narratives; we start with a man, who has a family. In our case, Hannah and Peninnah, Peninnah has children, (we are not told

88 Judges 4:4

89 Judges 4:17

90 Bronner, “Valorized or Vilified?”, p. 78.

91 Judges 4:14

92 Bettina L. Knapp, *Women in Myth*, (New York, State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 58.

93 1 Samuel 1:1

how many, or what sex,) but Hannah has none. Then Hebrew narratives develop, they provide a problem that needs a solution, in Hannah's case, Peninnah constantly picks on Hannah for her barrenness. This is another common theme for the biblical narrative, 'Barrenness'. God continually opens the womb of the barren, in order to use this 'miracle child' for his purpose, Sarah has Isaac, Rebekah has Jacob and Esau, Rachel has Joseph, (to name a few). Hannah is no different; God has closed her womb, however he will give her Samuel, who will become a great prophet and the last judge of Israel.

However I want to quickly look at Hannah's prayer, which gives us some interesting insight into the place of women in temple worship during the writing of 1 Samuel. Peninnah, who continually torments Hannah due to her bareness, drives Hannah (after another sacrificial meal at the temple,) to tears. At which point she rises and goes into the temple, and silently pours out her soul to YHWH, which brings some interesting insight into prayer and worship in the Hebrew Bible. Eli rebukes Hannah drunkenness, simply because her mouth is moving, but she is not speaking. Thus, we can assume two things, that prayer was supposed to be said out loud and that both men and women can openly pray in the sanctuary.

When more correctly informed, [Eli] seems to place his approval upon her prayer and gives his benediction upon it (...) We should [also] note that after Eli has rebuked her it does not seem improper that she, a woman, defend herself; and her defence is immediately accepted.⁹⁴

There are two other significant points to take from Hannah's story. Firstly, I would like to point out that Hannah names Samuel.⁹⁵ "A statistical summary indicates that in the 45 cases in which the naming of children is recorded in the

94 Vos, *Woman in Hebrew Bible worship*, p.153-154.

95 1 Samuel 1:20

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

Hebrew Bible, in 26 it is ascribed to women, in 14 to men, and in 5 to God.”⁹⁶
Remembering back to the creation story and how Adam names Eve after the fall as a mark of his authority over her, and her subordination to him, here we have women naming male children, which shows a level of authority supporting 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, that men and women are not independent, for they came from each other.

Secondly, that she acts and makes decisions independently of her husband, she prays, vows, names the child and dedicates him back to God, all without interacting with her husband, who is a passive and insignificant character for majority of the narrative. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind the value of a vow made by women which was still subject to her father or husband’s approval,⁹⁷ and thus by not saying anything, Hannah’s husband was silently and passively giving permission. Therefore, reinforcing the theory that women could decide and act; however were always bound by restrictions and limitations of their patriarchal society.

2.3.3 The Wise Woman of Abel Beth Ma’acah: Adviser

Although I could spend much time and space talking about named and recognisable women in the Hebrew Bible, I just want to quickly consider an unnamed woman and her social status and what it can tell us about how the Hebrew Bible views women. This woman is the wise woman of Abel Beth Ma’acah.⁹⁸ Sheba son of Bicri has been causing trouble in Israel, and he has convinced some of the Israelites to desert David and join himself; so David sends men to go and kill Sheba. When they reach Abel, where Sheba is hiding, they set about sieging the city; however a wise woman comes to speak to the siegers. Joab gives her the option that if they

96 Vos, *Woman in Hebrew Bible worship*, p. 161.

97 Look at 2.1.4.3; Numbers 30: Vows, p. 22-23.

98 2 Samuel 20

hand over Sheba, they will be saved. So she goes away, advises the city and convinces them to kill Sheba and throw his head over the city walls.

So what does this passage tell us about the role of women? Bach has put forward a hypothesis that both the wise woman of Abel and the wise women of Tekoa,⁹⁹ hold civic positions that were widely used in pre-Davidic Israel, however were slowly phased out after his reign.¹⁰⁰ Stating, “in the early years of Israel, with its egalitarian principles and desperate need for able minds as well as bodies, such qualities might have placed women not uncommonly in positions of authority in the village-tribal settings.”¹⁰¹

Other than Joab, there is no explicit mention of any other men in this tale. The city of Abel, which has walls (showing it has status), had a woman represent them. Thus confirming that this woman was important and potentially more powerful than any man in this city. Therefore, we have here a mighty woman within her own social context. The wise woman of Abel, is never given a name by the author, showing, unlike Deborah she is a minor character in the biblical text; nevertheless she is not introduced by a male counterpart either. Thus we can assume that she is free from the restrictions of a patriarchal system. However, what is certain is that she held authority and could command action.

2.3.4 Conclusion of Righteous Women

Thus in these Righteous women, both those named and unnamed, we find women acting in their own right; with women who have the power to command entire armies and cities with their words of authority and wisdom. Women in the biblical

99 2 Samuel 14

100 Claudi V. Camp, “The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?” in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, (ed. Alice Bach; London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 195-207.

101 Camp, *Wise Women of 2 Samuel*, p. 202.

text, were given the authority to enter the holy sanctuary and petition YHWH, with just as much authority as men, they could come and go, sacrifice and bless within the early Israelite cult. Women had the power to name, another sign of authority.¹⁰² Thus when thinking of women in his congregations, Paul would have been aware of these amazing and powerful women, and how YHWH used them to implement his will, even within the constraints of a male dominated society.

Therefore, not only does the reference to ‘the Law’ in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 not refer to the Pentateuch, but also it does not refer to any interpretation including these mighty and wise women. Therefore if we are to conclude that Paul was considering the Hebrew Bible when referring to ‘the Law’, we must also conclude that Paul is unaware of the allowance that the Hebrew Scriptures has for women in the Israelite worship.

2.4 Other women of the Biblical text.

Although we do have some wise and mighty women in the Hebrew text, however there are still two other areas that I wish to look at before making a full conclusion of the Hebrew Bible and its effect upon our interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. Firstly, ‘wicked women’ of the Hebrew Bible, such as Delilah and Jezebel. However I will only be considering one ‘wicked’ woman, Michal.¹⁰³ She has an interesting place within the text, in particular her conflict with David.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, women in the Jewish Apocryphal literature, namely Judith, who gives us an insight

102 Look at 2.1.3; Genesis 3: The Fall, p. 15-18 (17).

103 The reason I will only be considering Michal, is that I do not want to consider any foreigners in this paper, because, representations of foreign women and their roles and abilities, distort the biblical view of women, for they are sometimes purposefully rebellious according to biblical standards.

104 2 Samuel 6:16,20-23

into women and their place in society, a little closer to the time of Paul, than the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

2.4.1 Michal: Silenced Wife

Michal and David probably have one of the most interesting relationships in the biblical text. One could not claim that she is a major character in the biblical text, however when she does appear she fulfils an interesting role, not only in action, but also in how she is represented. Saul gives Michal to David as a reward for his bringing Saul a gift of 100 foreskins.¹⁰⁵ However, everything then starts to go wrong for David, and in a plot by Saul to kill David, Michal helps him escape through a window.¹⁰⁶ During many years, when David is absent Michal is married off to Palti;¹⁰⁷ However on David's return, he reclaims Michal in order to take the throne.¹⁰⁸ This whole narrative raises an interesting question, of how David viewed Michal, as loving wife or as political leverage. The romantics out there may point out that David did risk life and limb to secure 200 foreskins as a gift in order to win Michal, double what was requested. Nevertheless, I would suggest this was driven more by his thirst for power and the throne, for he required Michal in order to be crowned king of Israel.¹⁰⁹ Although David has many encounters with Jonathan in his years of exile, he does not ensure he keeps in contact with Michal. "We were told twice she loved him whilst

105 1 Samuel 18:20-29

106 1 Samuel 19:11-17

107 1 Samuel 25:44

108 2 Samuel 3:6-21

109 As we learn from 2 Samuel 3:6-21, Abner would not make a contract with David to make him king of Israel without Michal. Another interesting point is that David's heart desired being ruler over all of Israel, v. 21.

all that could be safely inferred from his attitude towards her was that the marriage was politically useful.”¹¹⁰

Michal has an interesting relationship with both her father Saul and her husband David, in that she finds herself in the middle of their feuds. She is either introduced in connection with her father, Saul or her husband, David. It becomes clear that in connecting Michal with either Saul or David, the author is trying to give us a clear indication of whose side she falls on, for even after her marriage to David she still appears as Saul’s daughter.¹¹¹ Thus, Michal’s connection to her male counterpart in a particular passage or situation, affects the readers opinion of her and her actions.

In 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23, David comes into conflict with Michal over his way of worshipping Yahweh on the returning of the ark of God to the city of David. On entering the City, Michal sees David leaping and jumping, and from what we learn later flashes his maidservants. On returning to the household, Michal comes out to greet the king as was customary for the Queen to do. However Michal instead of greeting the king, rebukes him for his actions, and moment of exhibitionism. “Michal speaks with authority, with an assumed voice of strength. Her speech concerns ‘honour’ (glory), ‘the maids’, and ‘uncovering shamelessly’. Her words drip with sarcasm and anger (...) Michal believes David has forfeited the respect he must have to be a ruler.”¹¹²

Notice, that David does not rebuke Michal, by stating she has no right to speak to him, but he “uses Michal’s words to dismiss her. Michal has no future, no

110 Robert Alter, “Characterization and the Art of Reticence”, in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 114-125 (120)

111 2 Samuel 6:16

112 Walter Brueggemann, “2 Samuel 6”, in *First and Second Samuel*, (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville: John Knox, 1990), pp. 251-253 (251-252)

claim on Israel, no prospect for life.”¹¹³ Michal states, "How the king of Israel honoured himself today, (...) before the eyes of his servants' maids (...) shamelessly uncovers himself!"¹¹⁴ Comparatively David rebukes Michal stating,

It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father, and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, (...) I will make myself yet more contemptible than this (...) but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honour.¹¹⁵

Michal as the “daughter of Saul” is setup to fail, and it is this position as “daughter” in which she remains barren. Here she does not speak as or with the authority of Michal, but with all the authority of the house of Saul. “Michal and David engage in a battle of words in which David has the last word because he holds the power. These are the only words he ever speaks to her, words of rebuke, and they have the effect of critically wounding their victim.”¹¹⁶ The power of words (including those of women,) comes across powerfully in this section. Therefore, in the ancient world we can see the fear of allowing people to speak and destroy with their words. God created the universe with the Divine words, he gave his creation voice, allowing them to create and destroy through naming and interacting. Also in the worship and sacrificial centre, words play a powerful role, and one must be careful with what they say. However, when considering Michal's words, we must also note that David uses her own words against her, and thus silences her, but not through asserting his authority over her, as husband. Finally Michal dies barren, not as wife of David, but as daughter of Saul.

113 Brueggemann, “2 Samuel 6”, p. 252

114 2 Samuel 6:20

115 2 Samuel 6:21-22

116 Exum, J. Cheryl, “Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative”, in *The Pleasure of her text: Feminist Reading of Biblical and Historical Texts*, (ed. Alice Bach; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), pp. 45-68 (55).

2.4.2 Judith: Sexual Warrior

This book has a very strong correlation to the Deborah/Jael story from Judges 4-5. Here we come across the story of a widow, who hears the distress of her people, and that the leaders of the city have already decided to surrender to their enemies. So she goes to the city elders and convinces them to let her go to Holofernes, who is the commander of Nebuchadnezzar’s army. When she meets Holofernes, she convinces him, that she has left the city, for she knew he would win and wanted to help him overthrow the city quicker. Whilst there, each evening, she leaves the camp to ritually wash and to pray to YHWH; thus after she eventually cuts off Holofernes head, the guards do not suspect her as she leaves, in order to return to the city and inform the people of her victory. When she shows the head of Holofernes to the occupants of the city, and commands them to attack the camp, they are encouraged and win. Finally they celebrate with Judith leading them in a song of victory. Judith in this way is a combination of Deborah and Jael. She not only has Deborah’s power to advise and command, but also Jael’s power to seduce and destroy her enemy.

Judith, is portrayed as the descendent of some great ancestors, if not directly, but through name recognition, such as Joseph, Salamiel, Sarasadai and most importantly Israel. Judith being the only named female in the text thus represents a very important exemption to the rule. She is a widow, and a very pious Jewess (which coincidentally, the name “Judith” means Jewess). “Judith’s widowhood conforms to the traditional representation of Israel as a woman in mourning.”¹¹⁷ This

117 Amy-Jill Levine, “Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith”, in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna*, (ed. Athalya Brenner; *The Feminist Companion to the Bible*, 7; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 208-223 (212).

rewriting of the Deborah story to be obviously fictitious, allows the Jews to rethink the position of Deborah as allegorical, placing themselves into the role of a woman.

Nevertheless whilst many have used the Bible to reiterate male domination over subordinate women, it can also be used to free women from a male dominated and controlled world.

It is possible to exploit Judith's story as a consciously feminist argument for women's high spiritual potential and the special favour in the eyes of God. This was particularly useful as a counterargument to the traditional view that women were spiritually weak and therefore rightly subordinated to men's governance.¹¹⁸

Judith, like Deborah as already mentioned has the power to advise the elders of the city and command their armies into battle against the attackers. "Listen to me... for your words are wrong... stop provoking YHWH, your God, making him angry." Judith does not mince her words, but confronts the elders of the city. "Judith does not act on the advice of men, but takes the initiative in an independent manner... Judith invites them into the shelter on the roof of her house and teaches them a lesson."¹¹⁹ In Judith we have a competent leader of men, who acts and commands in her own right.

We are told that Judith was extremely beautiful, and that she uses this beauty to seduce Holofernes. She dresses herself up in all her finery and goes into to eat and drink with Holofernes. We are informed, "the heart of Holofernes was delighted to ecstasy at her, and his soul reeled, and he was exceedingly eager to lie with her; and had been biding his time to deceive her."¹²⁰ Firstly note that Holofernes had wanted to deceive Judith, however the audience already knows that it is Judith who

118 Margarita Stocker, *Judith: Sexual Warrior, Women and Power in Western Culture*, (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 49.

119 Jan Willem van Henten, "Judith as Alternative Leader: A Rereading of Judith 7-13", in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna*, (ed. Athalya Brenner; *The Feminist Companion to the Bible*, 7; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 224-252 (250).

120 Judith 12:16

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

is playing Holofernes. Secondly, Judith uses her feminine wiles to get him drunk, and only after her maidservant and his eunuch have left, does she take the opportunity to take off his head. Thus, here we find a leader represented not only by her ability to lead and command but also her sexuality, and ability to get the attention of men. Raising an interesting view of women, that in a world of men, women will always be seen as one of two things, mother or whore.¹²¹

Nevertheless, Judith is a woman with the ability to lead in a patriarchal world. She is allowed the authority to call men to her, and to command and advise them on the path to victory.¹²² What is by societies designation a male dominated area of life, war. However, within this strong female character, we have a woman that all Jews can connect with, thus we have a woman who must not only be able to function in the domestic world, but also have authority over the society. Therefore, we see that the society at this time was willing to see women as having the power to control men, and to function in war.

Thus, in my investigations into women and their roles in the Hebrew Bible, I have failed to identify any scripture which could be linked to Paul's thoughts in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, neither the original laws, which allows for women to be active participants in the cultic worship. Nor does the Hebrew portrayal of righteous women suggest that these women were or should have been silent. Although they show signs of subordination to the men in their lives, they still have an active role in the societies and religious environments they find themselves in.

121 By the term whore, I do not mean to be derogatory, but I to suggest that women will be seen as someone who is sexual in nature, able to use their sexual form to get what they want, and being able to deceive and manipulate the men in her life.

122 Noting that although Judith advises and leads them into battle, in most cultures war is classes as a purely male sector.

3. Talmud and Midrashim: Jewish Oral Law

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 is one of the only instances in the Pauline letters where Paul makes reference to an unknown source.¹²³ Nevertheless, this prohibition offers us clues, which might explain its origins. “It is not permitted...” is a “common rabbinic formula for applying biblical law to contemporary life situations”¹²⁴ There is evidence in the gospels that this formula is used in Judaism at the time of Jesus; in Mark 2:24, “why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath.” Although in the Greek there is not uniform term or formula for prohibitions, Josephus confirms that all these different terms reflect a clear Semitic expression used by the Jewish Scribes.¹²⁵ It becomes clear that Josephus’ use of the term ‘law’ in prohibitions is generally expected to be associated with the written torah. Nevertheless, “In some places the phrase ‘the law does not permit’ prefaces minor regulations which have no obvious basis in the text of the Old Testament.”¹²⁶ Therefore, although there are clear links between the term ‘law’ and the Hebrew Bible, it is also clear that Josephus employed the multi-levelled Jewish understanding of this term, which referred also to the Sanhedrin’s authority to interpret and expand upon the Torah.¹²⁷ Thus, there is cause to look into the ‘Jewish Oral Law’, by considering what the Talmudic and Midrashim taught on female participation in temple worship and sacrifice,¹²⁸ and how this relates to Paul’s use of this quote in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36.

123 Another example of this is 1 Corinthians 4:6, however, 1 Corinthians 14:34, is the only time this happens in connection with the ‘law’, namely the Torah.

124 Allison, ‘Let Women be Silent in the Churches’ p. 45

125 S. Aalen, “A Rabbinic Formula in 1 Corinthians 14:34”, *Studia Evangelica*, 2, (Ed. F.L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), pp. 513-525, (514-515).

126 Aalen, *Rabbinic Formula*, p. 517.

127 Aalen, *Rabbinic Formula*, p. 520.

128 I feel it important to put a disclaimer upon claiming that Paul was referring to the Talmud and Midrashim, since these laws, were in Paul’s time explicitly Oral, they only became written down after the Diaspora of the Jews and the destruction of the temple, in 70AD. Therefore, although in this next section I will be quoting many verses from the Talmud and Midrashim that we currently hold, it must be understood that Paul and thus the original

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

Jewish literature reveals some interesting teaching on women and their roles both in society and in religious spheres. Josephus states,

The scripture says, ‘A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.’ Let her, therefore, be obedient to him; not so, that he should abuse her but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God has given the authority to the husband.¹²⁹

Also Seder Zera‘im informs us “a hundred women are no better than two men.”¹³⁰

Thus there is a definite cultural thought that women are not only subordinate to men, but are inferior to them.

Judith Hauptmann, has suggested that not all rabbinical authorities were agreed on the exclusion of women from communal worship and prayer, suggesting that there are some minority groups with stood in support of women’s intelligence and spiritual abilities.¹³¹ Tomson states,

...the evidence of literary and archaeology sources is that female attendance in synagogue was regular practise. Women used to pray along with men in the main room (...) Combined evidence also suggests that women played prominent roles (...) [as] ‘leaders’, ‘elders’ and ‘mother of the synagogue’.¹³²

Nevertheless, even though there were minority groups that did support the involvement of women in worship, there is also much evidence that synagogues did ban women from speaking. In the *Talmud Babylonia Megillah* 23a, we find that the sages ban women from even reading Torah in public worship, and the Tannaic traditions stated a woman could not officiate a meeting.¹³³ The Essenes went one

audience of this verses did not understand the Talmud in the same strict sense, and when referring to Talmud and Midrashim in these texts, I will be referring to this fluidic law, taught orally to Jewish children, from father to son.

129 Against Apion, Book 2, v.25

130 Berachoth 45b

131 Judith Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formation of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*, (London, Bandeis University Press, 2002), pp. 83-84.

132 Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish law: halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, (*Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, vol 1, Assen, Netherlands, Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1990), p.134.

133 Tomson, *Paul and Halakah*, p. 137.

step further and did not even allow women in worship.¹³⁴ Thus we can claim that there is definitely at least a branch of Judaism during the time of Jesus and Paul, which did not allow women to speak in worship. There are three reasons found in the Talmudic tradition, which explain this prohibition against women speaking in synagogue. 1) They talk too much; The Seder Zera'im suggests, "women are fond of talking."¹³⁵, whilst the Seder Nashim put it, "Ten Measures of Gossip descended to the World: nine were taken by women."¹³⁶ 2) They are not sufficiently educated; Rabbi Eleazer ben Azariah expected men to come and learn Torah, but women came only to hear, not study.¹³⁷ "Consequently, women were often treated as persons who had little education."¹³⁸ 3) They were too sexy; "The Rabbis Taught: Rahab inspired lust in her name; Jael in her voice..."¹³⁹ Thus as "Samuel said: A women's voice is a sexual incitement, as it says, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely."¹⁴⁰ Therefore, whilst there was no general prohibition of women speaking in Jewish worship during the time of Paul, we can see that there were certain circles in which these thoughts abounded, and which were recorded in the Talmud at a later date.

134 The Temple Scroll, XXXIX, states that women may not enter the inner court; The community rules, VI, does not mention women even being present during community assemblies.

135 Berachoth 48b

136 Kiddushin 49b

137 Hagigah 3a

138 Spenser, Beyond the Curse, pp. 56-57.

139 Seder Mo'ed, Talmud Babylonia, Megillah 15a

140 Seder Zera'im, Talmud Babylonia, Berachoth 24a

4. Pauline Irony

Thus we come to two possibilities that, Paul knowingly quotes from a rabbinical source, either, in support of his prohibition against women speaking in church, or, as an ironic statement used to argue for the allowance of women speaking in church. Let me first establish a definition of irony upon which we can build to test this theory out. A dissimulative ironic form, seeks to make an argument through misdirection by either over- or underemphasising a point, in order to convince the audience that the argument of the author or speaker is correct, thus saying one thing whilst alluding to another, not necessarily its polar opposite.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless,

Irony is both difficult and a risky form of argumentation, more prone than most to misunderstanding by one's intended audience. Because Irony makes its point only indirectly, (...) there is always the chance that the rhetor's irony will be misunderstood, and that he will fail to communicate the message he intends.¹⁴²

Quintilian suggested one must correspond the nature of the topic, the character of the speaker and the delivery of the statement with the words of a given statement, and if you can discover any discrepancy between these two, that is an ironic statement.¹⁴³ Thus in 1 Corinthians 1:25, when Paul states, “God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.”

The idea that God is weak and foolish reverses the standards of heaven and earth, thus this ironic statement argues for a reinterpretation of priorities and values.

Another example of Irony can be found in Galatians 5:12, where Paul uses an

141 Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's letter in First-Century Context*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 34; and Glenn Holland, “Paul's use of Irony as a Rhetorical Technique”, in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, (ed. Stanley E. Porter, and Thomas H. Olbricht; *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1997), pp. 234-248 (234-5)

142 Holland, *Paul's use of Irony*, p. 234.

143 Inst. 8.6.54 cited in Nanos, *Irony in Galatians*, p. 36.

interesting play on words to state that those who were teaching that all believers should be circumcised (περιτομη), should castrate (ἀποκοπτω) themselves. For if cutting a bit of your penis off is essential to faith and salvation, why not cut the whole penis off.

We know that many of the churches Paul wrote to, he had also visited, with Rome being the only exception, thus we can assume that Paul's audience understood and knew him, and due to the sheer volume of ironic statements found in his epistles that his readers expected his use of ironic statements, especially when correcting misinformed theologies and practises. Also "Once the presence of irony has been realized, it creates a heightened sensitivity on the part of the recipient to detecting other such manoeuvres on the part of the author/speaker."¹⁴⁴ Thus when Paul begins his letter with the ironic statement,¹⁴⁵ his audience would have been more sensitive to any further discrepancies.

Nevertheless, why read 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 as forming part of an ironic statement in support of women speaking in church? I believe there are a number of clues hidden in the text which support this theory. Firstly, this passage falls into the stereotypical dissimulative form, with an over exaggeration of key points within the verse. The reference to "all the churches of all the saints" which has already been discussed does not reflect the actual situation at the time of writing. Then the use of the terms *prohibit, shame and law* form an iron clad forbidding formula, which has the official rabbinical prohibition, linked with the authority of the law, and just for good measure, a reference to shame and guilt just to top it off. Nothing about this passage is small, everything is happening on a large scale with massive backing.

144 Nanos, Irony in Galatians, p. 36.

145 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, already discussed above.

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

Second thing to note is the delivery, in verse 36 Paul says, “Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?” The first part of this verse obviously refers to the Torah or scripture. These obvious rhetorical questions, which were meant to cause the audience to consider their position of women speaking in church. Some in the past have suggested that these questions are meant to suggest that the Christians in Corinth were advocating women speaking church, which Paul was against. However I want to put across that these rhetorical questions back up an ironic theory of these verses, for they fall into the obvious category of ironic statement. Paul here is actually drawing attention to the lack of any quotation in the Hebrew Bible to support this stance.

Finally, these verses are contrary to Paul’s own character and view, which we can see from a number of other sources is quiet clearly egalitarian. 1 Corinthians 11, Paul clearly puts across an egalitarian agenda, even if there is not full integration, with women being asked to cover their hair, nevertheless, for a Jewish man in a strict patriarchal society, this is quiet a large step for him to take, and one which should have been used to support a more egalitarian church, a lot earlier on in history. Nevertheless, we also discover his egalitarian view through other verses such as Galatians 3:28, which states “There is neither Jew nor Greek (...) male or female, for you who are all one in Christ Jesus.”

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show what Paul was referring to when he was talking about 'the Law' in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. I first looked at the Hebrew Bible, considering the Pentateuch, and other female characters we come in contact with, in both the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha. I discovered that Paul's allusion to the 'law' in this verse was not in reference to the Hebrew Bible or Apocrypha. This interpretation has caused misinterpretation of Paul and his view of women in the church. However there is a strong connection between this verse and Jewish Oral Law, thus, suggesting that Paul here is quoting Jewish teaching, which was being taught in Corinth. Therefore, using these findings, how would I interpret this passage?

I would suggest that we have here a prime example of Pauline ironic rhetoric, in an attempt to try and counter some opponents' in Corinth, who were teaching that women should be silent in church.

This group, as we have seen, consisted of persons who were opposed to participation by women in the services, and who attempted to silence them by fiat (...) It seems likely that the group in question was male. Secondly, the Jewish characteristics of the decree of silence which we noted above lead to the conclusion that the men whom Paul was opposing were getting their ideas from some kind of exposure to Judaism and the synagogue-whether as recent proselytes or Gentile converts or as men of Jewish background themselves is unclear.¹⁴⁶

As in many of his churches, Jewish converts were teaching Jewish practises and theologies which Paul disagreed with, and thus did not want teaching to new converts, such as circumcision, food laws and festival observances. Paul is well known for using the arguments of his opponents against them, and here is no different, where he uses their Rabbinical Formula, to counter their argument and convince his audience that he is correct.

146 Allison, 'Let Women be Silent in the Churches', p. 49.

“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

Thus, the next time that someone challenges you with 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, suggesting that it means that women cannot speak openly within church. You can now, challenge them with Paul’s own words. “Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only one it has reached?”¹⁴⁷

147 1 Corinthians 14:36

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“Shut up Woman and make me a Bacon Sandwich!”
Peter Lennox

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