

Portrayal of the woman character in the two creation narratives in Genesis: A feminist reading

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
A MASTERS' DEGREE

IN

OLD TESTAMENT AND HEBREW SCRIPTURES

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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Date

30 April 2024

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Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1. Background to the Study

There have been a number of studies conducted addressing gender inequality and the role of women. Despite all of this and the research findings, the spectrum has somehow overlooked the impact of women, particularly in a Church space where they are silenced or considered inconsequential. Subsequently, women are acknowledged as active contributors to the life of the Church, yet only as worship participants (Rooke 2017:117). However, not good enough to lead worship or in decision-making processes as the system remains undemocratic for women, as their ability to govern and manage resources is hugely undermined. Furthermore, Rooke (2017:118) alluded that women are often relegated to softer positions, also only fully trusted and left to lead and make decisions when it comes to putting together a meal for an event and making sure that the environment looks the part. Anthropological studies have somehow proved that even though women are unable to access power through official channels, they can still use informal power to achieve their goals (Yee 2018:20).

Even though women have and are entering a world that is male-dominated in a Church space, the progress of women and their impact in the space and society has been noted as that of a snail's pace. This challenge does not start now according to Yee (2018:20), as she highlights that women and their roles became crucial to the survival of the rural family household during the pre-monarchic period when the focus was on subsistence living. The food preparation and resources were under the control of women, who also engaged in other handcrafts, while played a pivotal role of the empowerment of young children, religiously, morally and socially. Confirming that female power will carry just as much significant importance as her counterpart, maybe even more.

Another battle for women in a Church space is against the better treatment, respect or acknowledgement that is often afforded their male counterparts instead of them, which somehow ranks the two differently. Allen (2020:75) argues that there is no

significant difference between women and men and that they are equal in dignity with each other. She asserts that a woman person is an integral whole being, not a fractional being, just as a man is.

Yee (2018:18) is convinced that equal education and legal opportunities alone would not eradicate the oppression of women, as the issue is entrenched within a masculine-centric system characterised by domination of power and male supremacy. Instead, she highlights that the elimination of the oppression of women requires a multi-faced approach that addresses social, economic, political and cultural factors. This would include the promotion of gender equality laws, providing access to education and healthcare to women or girl children across the globe, challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes, empowering women economically and politically and fostering cultural shifts towards respect and equality for all genders. Bremmer (1985:90) also argues that indeed a woman was never seen as an individual or rather a person enough of her own in both the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) and Old Testament eras. Her definition of existence was always attached to others meaning her existence was by affiliation of or to the opposite sex. This is despite the essential role that women played in the record of Israel's faith. Camp (1985:188) concurs by elaborating that the Hebrew text comprises thousands of unnamed and unnoticed women. This is the result of the Old Testament which is a product of a patriarchal world. The Old Testament text similarly reflects theological perspectives that are patriarchally infused. The composition of the biblical text is presented through the male eyes as its explanation over time tends to centre on male perspectives and beliefs for purposes determined by male authors. This perspective influenced the reception of these texts and the way women were seen in the past and still today. Thus, throughout history, the custodians of biblical scholarship and religious authority, like clergy for instance, have predominantly been men. For instance, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) is segmented or demarcated into districts and comprises fifteen in total. Out of these districts, there are about 650 clergies, of which approximately 129 are the district leaders and out of that 129, only about 25 are female leaders against male leaders (YearBook 2023: 43-118). This suggests that women comprise about 19 % of

the total leadership strength in the space. Therefore, Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) which trains ministers for the MCSA, has noted a huge decline in the number of the female annual intake who respond to the call of the ministry of Word and Sacrament (presbyter), due to such reasons.

Yee (2018:18) admits that the picture changed during the 1970s and 1980s. There has been significant progress in recognising and acknowledging female leaders globally. Yee says while women have held leadership positions throughout history, their visibility and representation in leadership roles have increased in various sectors, including politics, business, academia and activism. She further mentions the increase of professionally trained female biblical scholars who started to incorporate feminist viewpoints into their analysis of the historical and literary aspects of the Hebrew Bible in an effort to reveal that the biblical text itself contains the means to depatriarchalising and counteracting such. A similar change also occurred in the MCSA in 1976 when it ordained its first female minister. It seems therefore possible that a feminist critical reading of these texts might add a more inclusive perspective to these texts that not only originated in a patriarchal context but were also received through that lens. However, Stanton (2017:11) argues that despite these advancements, gender disparities persist, and women remain underrepresented in leadership positions compared to men. It is subsequent to this that initiatives aimed at advancing gender parity and empower females in leadership do not stop, but challenges such as systemic bias, discrimination and cultural barriers still hinder progress.

The book of Genesis conveys the beginning and origins of it all, *'beresit'* in Hebrew as Arnold states (1998:22). Arnold is surprised by how significant creation is theologically, yet we know very little about what goes into the process of creation. Consequently, this results in disputes relating to the creation of the woman and her portrayal, hence the need for this study. This is an examination of the portrayal of a woman in the two creation narratives, inclusive of women across the globe, not only confined to a Church space. The study will focus on Genesis 1 and 2, which reveal significant differences between the creation accounts. However, Arnold (1998:24) notes that the existence of what God put together, is more important to answer than how it happened.

Westermann (1987:24) argues that the difference between the creation of human beings and the world might lie in either the unique nature of events, the varying reasons involved or the identity of the Creator God. Arnold (1998:25) is convinced that humanity represents the pinnacle of creation and God is exceedingly satisfied with humankind. The creation story first gives us a harmonious cosmic overview of the creation and then a plunge into the moral ambiguities of human origins (Alter 1996:7). It will also look into how this has influenced the worldview which led to today's hierarchy. Indeed, the two creation narratives give insight on the relationship between man and woman, not as rivals or one gender dominant over the other but both the dignity and importance afforded a human being.

Firstly, Arnold (1998:32) denotes that this is evidenced in humanity being fashioned in the likeness of God, *“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness”* Gen. 1:26 (NIV). This implies that they are to be the representatives of God on earth by carrying on with the creative activity, *“God blessed them and said, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it”* Gen. 1:28 (NIV). Secondly, humanity was entrusted with dominion over all creation by virtue of reflecting image of God, *“Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over living creature that moves on the ground”* Gen. 1:28 (NIV). Thirdly, being created as divine image bearers also signifies that human beings possess the privilege of connecting with God and each other, which is not the case with other aspect of creation.

It is clear in the study conducted by Keels (2015:108) that what was meant to be an ordained equal relation has resulted in the segregation and subversion of a woman and ultimately relegated below her counterpart. This is often due to cultural beliefs, misinterpretations, or illusions of the creation scriptural narrative. Kessler (2013:125) rules that out by admitting that humankind is given pride of place within God's creation. He depicts an image of the portrayal of humanity in the mind of God, where God has been creating through the Word, there is a shift before the creation of humanity.

In an attempt to transcend the existing misconception, this study will provide enlightenment by first looking at the various scholars' reviews.

1.2. Literature Review

A lot of research has been put together by different scholars in their contribution to understanding the creation of a woman person, which will ultimately determine her position and how she is portrayed in the human race.

Roded (2012:44) exclusively asserts that in determining whether there is a natural place for women which places them under the authority of men, one is to look at the identity of male and female at creation. She further highlights that the same text can be read in different contexts and similarly in opposing ways. This means that different people and groups can understand the same text differently. This is affirmed by Geysler-Fouche (2016:2) when she speaks of how exclusive language contributes as a tool of power and creates identity. While we may think that language is a means of communicating, it is in fact an instrument of power. This means that even a certain accent is a revelation of someone's background according to Geysler-Fouche (2016:6) and will similarly become a determining factor as to whether the person is worth being listened to or even considering their opinion. Thus, the abuse of power is also found in language. Evidently, Geysler-Fouche (2016:8) attests that in seeking to study the identity of Israel, many Old Testament scholars have resorted to exclusive language while a few opted to use inclusive language. She concludes that the supposedly democratic South Africa yet still seems undemocratic highlighting the existent disparity between the poor and rich as the freedom of speech is not necessarily for all. In the same breath, Othmar and Schroer (2015:107) submit that not only does the androcentric language exude abuse of power but also the abuse and oppression of women. This says it comes out in the manner in which language often reinforces stereotypes about women, portraying them as weak, emotional or even subordinate to men. She adds that terms such as 'bossy' for assertive women or 'emotional' for compassionate women are perpetuators to these stereotypes. Sometimes, these stereotypes may find their way through sexist language including derogatory terms or comments that demean and belittle women, ranging from explicit insults to subtle forms of sexism, such as using gendered language to describe professions, 'female nurse' instead of just 'nurse,' female clergy' instead of just clergy. She concludes by

arguing that sometimes language is used to downplay serious issues related to women's oppression, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender inequality, sexism, economic disadvantage among others, therefore, minimising the severity of these issues and make them less significant.

1.2.1. A Preview of Genesis 1 and 2

Roded (2012:45) tells of the idea of women as capable of serving in all capacities and alongside men. She concludes that those in support of male headship, read the creation narrative in Genesis 2 without Genesis 1. The reading of Genesis 2 in isolation has the potential of missing important contextual information that could result in misinterpreting the creation story. Roded connotes that understanding its connection to Genesis 1 enriches the interpretation by providing a broader context to the creation narrative and its theological discourse. According to Westermann (1987:23), the Bible encompasses both general forms, the universal creation depicted in Genesis 1 and the specific creation, more so that of human beings in Genesis 2. This form of exclusive reading Roded (2012:45) says it demonstrates that Adam and not Eve is made first and is thus pre-eminent. This is because Genesis 2 presents Adam's creation before Eve's without an explicit reference to the broader creation account in Genesis 1. According to Roded (2012:46), Adam and not Eve is therefore given the commands by God when it comes to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, making him the natural leader. She furthermore mentions this exclusivity connotes that a woman is made out of a man and is therefore dependent on him. Adam is created from the dust of the ground and then Eve is created from Adam's rib. This sequential narrative, Stanton (2002:19) denotes that it can lead to the perception that Adam was formed prior to Eve, highlighting the sequence of creation. This she asserts that is witnessed in Adam naming Eve, signifying the authority he has over her, that a female is made to be a male's '*helper*.' This Stanton submits that has been used to justify the belief in male dominance or leadership over women, which is often in reference with patriarchy.

Othmar and Schroer (2015:109) also mention that the continued misconstrued leads to the belief that Eve sins first which is an indication that a woman is the weaker gender, more vulnerable to temptation and deception. Othmar and Shchroes further mention that this occurs because Adam has failed in his duty to protect, guide and command her in turn. The principle of male leadership takes its grounds in the order of creation and, therefore deemed closer to God by virtue of their precedence in creation. Suggesting that women are expected to relate to God through men, this is reflected in the patriarchal structures of the Church. Male humans are to take the lead spiritually and female humans are expected to obey, putting men as the rightful owners of the responsibilities for Church governance, exposition of the text, spiritual authority and decision-making. Whitehead (2019:55) in his argument to these beliefs, makes a submission that the term '*rib*' '*tsela*' '*image*' '*likeness*' that is used to describe a human being in both the creation accounts, accentuates an anthropological focus which constitutes them as unique among the rest of creation. Moreover, that implies that humanity is uniquely related to God and creation. He makes a strong assertion that human beings are referential creatures, their being automatically signifies God, and both males and females are like God (Whitehead 2019:56). This is seen in the unique relationship that they have with God as well as with the natural environment. Thus, in line with Genesis 1, the hierachicalists would say that they believe men and women to be equal before God. The truth of this rests in the interpretation of '*ezer*', which is a Hebrew term, translated as 'helper.' A woman being a '*helper*' according to Whitehead (2019:57), denotes that she is comparable to a man as his partner. She is equal in identity and purpose. Freedman (2018:89) argues that when God decided to create another being '*helper*' so that man would not be alone, He chose to fashion a counterpart with strength and power similar and equal to man's own. A woman was not designed solely as a helper for man but as his equal partner instead. The one who not come to another's aid but the one who comes in strength.

The term '*ezer*' according to Freedman (2018:97) means '*to save*' or '*to be strong*.' He further says that '*ezer kenegdo*' is often translated as '*fitting*' or '*appropriate*,' which speaks to the notion of equality. When employing a meticulous literary analysis of the

Hebrew, Yee (2018:19) admires the reinterpretation of the person of Eve by other scholars. Instead of being depicted as just someone whose primary role was merely to help a man, Eve's creation emerges as the climax of Genesis 2, leading to the establishment of sexuality. Rather than a subordinate helper, she becomes the man's partner.

Luttikhuizen (2000:47) asserts that with the two versions of creation in the Hebrew Bible, one account refers to the simultaneous creation of male and female in Genesis 1, while the other one expounds the creation of 'adam,' first then the formation of a female (help-mate) from his 'tse^la' often explained as a rib. Luttikhuizen's argument is thus that God initially created 'adam' as androgynous, embodying both male and female, before later dividing them into distinct entities, which the 'tse^la' was then a physical feature. This is concurred by Alter (1996:6) that 'him' as in Hebrew, 'adam' is grammatically masculine but not necessarily anatomically so. The term 'adam' is to be understood as not gender specific until the creation of the woman. In Genesis 2, after the majestic description of the creation of the cosmos through resonant parallel sayings, Alter (1996:7) notices that the narration shifts radically. He submits; "Instead of symmetry of parataxis, hypotaxis is initially prominent, the second account begins to elaborate syntactical subordination in a long complex sentence that uncoils all the way from the second part of verse four" (Alter 1996:7). "*When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on earth and there was no one to work the ground but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being*" Genesis 2:4b-7 (NIV).

Alter (1996:7) highlights that in the more vividly anthropomorphic narrative, God, referred to as Yahweh instead of Elohim as in the previous account, does not simply call things into existence from a distant height through divine speech alone. Here, God acts as a craftsman, 'fashioning' 'yatsar' instead of 'creating' 'bara' blowing life breath into nostrils, and constructing a woman from a rib.

Marvin (2013:7) on the hand presents a different view, that there is a difference between the two accounts (Genesis 1 and 2). He assigns the creation narrative in Genesis 1 to the Sovereign, Him alone as the Creator with a transcendent view as God. In other words, the perspective of Gen.1:1-2:3 is that of the majestic, transcendent and sovereign God effortlessly bringing existence into being. While the Genesis 2 account brings across God as close and personal. The creation that is by divine artisanship, giving a specific description of man with an immanent view when when creation the first man and woman. Thus, the second account of creation depicts God's being and tenderness in making the first couple. Essentially, Marvin (2013:7) joins the conservative interpreters who suggest that what we have in Genesis 1 and 2 are not two conflicting sources but rather two infused, complementary outlooks on God's creation of the cosmos in majestic and general terms. According to Marvin (2013:8), it thus turns out that Gen.1:1-2:3 and Gen.2:4-25 complement one another in penning how it was that the world came to be.

Furthermore, Westermann (1987:24) says that the Egyptian cosmologies are highly informative, creation, therefore, is often associated with the creation of the world, with little mention of the creation of humanity. Consequently, his view is that the most notable absence from this cosmogonic framework is the absence of humanity, thinking that it is believed that the priestly circles were not concerned with the origins of humankind, hence this omission. Another more likely reason is that the significant shrines that inspired cosmogonies were aimed at ensuring the stability and order of the world. These reflections were directly relevant to the interpretation of the biblical creation accounts (Westermann 1987:24).

Another way to interpret the two stories of creation as per Whitehead (2019:51) is to view the first one as the creation of the world while perceiving the second creation story to be God's creation of Israel. He furthermore alludes that '*adam*' in Gen.1:26-28 and Gen.2:5-25 is depicted as priestly ruler whose care for the temple garden represents peace and cohesion between heaven and earth, bridging the spiritual and physical realms. In Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, the king was seen as the image

of God on earth. Thus, according to Gen.2:15, the role of ‘*adam*’ was to work and take care of the garden (Whitehead 2019:51).

Marvin (2013:8) argues that the final redaction of Genesis portrays Israel as the true ‘*adam*’ or humanity that is. Meaning that God’s overarching plan for humanity has been delegated and will be realised specifically through Israel. This is evident in God’s order to ‘*adam*’ to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the cosmos. Rooke (2017:128) brings clarity that the Biblical ‘*adam*’ was one being infusing two identities, subsequently the view of ‘*adam*’ meant undifferentiated humankind. Alter (1996:6) explains that the way the term ‘*adam*’ is utilised in the two narratives is non-gender specific and not indicative of gender. Moreover, he indicated that at the same time not proposing maleness, more so in the absence of the prefix ‘*ben*’ meaning ‘*son of.*’ Thus, Rooke (2017:128) submits; “the traditional rendering ‘*man*’ is misleading and an exclusively male ‘*adam*’ would make no sense of the last clause of Gen. 1:27, “*Male and female He created them*” (NIV). The word ‘*adam*’ is ambiguous in the text until the differentiation of female and male, ‘*adam*’ is basically androgynous, one creature incorporating two sexes.”

1.2.2. Feminist Criticism

Yee (2018:7) makes an assertion that the discrimination against women is rooted in deeply ingrained societal norms, cultural beliefs and historical power structures that have ultimately perpetuated gender inequality. These discriminatory attitudes Yee thinks are because of different factors such as traditional gender roles, stereotypes, economic disparities, lack of unequal access to education and resources and systematic biases embedded within institutions. Additionally, Stanton (2002:14) acknowledges that patriarchal systems often prioritise male dominance and privilege, leading to the marginalisation and oppression of women. Stanton (2002:14) is adamant that addressing discrimination against women requires challenging and dismantling these underlying systems of oppression through education, advocacy, policy changes and promoting cultural shifts towards gender equality and inclusivity. Accordingly, Stanton says there is a need for the emergence of a new way towards insight that identifies that elements, inclusive of theological elements, are not eternally

nor unchangeably disclosed from beyond, but simply derive a social construction point of view. She further asserts that these are often constructed by those in power, therefore bringing forth cultural and religious symbols solely to affirm one's authority and ultimately the relegation of females. Stanton (2002:15) further asserts that the oppressed woman character is not divinely orchestrated nor associated with innate subordination, but this merely emerges because of male oppression and dominance over women. She further argues that sexism is a transgression against women and against God, going against the divine plan for creation. This means according to Stanton, achieving parity between genders requires more than just interpersonal interactions, it necessitates societal transformation, redeeming communities and reinstating the order of creation. Stanton (2002:17) follows a scriptural view, that they are only incorrectly read and interpreted, however, it is inherently a product of sexism. Therefore, the Bible is perceived as biased towards one gender and imagines a feminist theology and a racially liberated society, away from any kind of influence.

Stanton (2002:18) notes that feminist criticism has profoundly influenced the interpretation of texts by shedding light on gender dynamics, power structures and the representation of women. It has therefore opened means to challenge the traditional literary way of analysis through the examination of how gender shapes characters, plotlines and themes. Moreover, Claassens and Sharp (2017:221) denote that it encourages readers to question patriarchal norms, recognise marginalised voices and ultimately uncover hidden biases within literature. It further enriches by fostering deeper understandings of gender issues, while also promoting inclusivity in literary analysis. Additionally, according to Stanton (2002:25), most of the Reformation, together with the humanist critique that transpired was for the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. This is where voices such as Christine de Pizan, an Italian writer in France between 1390 and 1429 arose boldly claiming a fuller humanity for women.

Subsequently, feminist criticism has played a pivotal role in the liberation of modern-day women through raising awareness about the inherent gender inequalities, questioning oppressive norms and advocating for social, economical, political, cultural

and religious change just to mention a few. The analysis of a text through a feminist lens, Yee (2018:5) believes that it exposes and critiques patriarchal structures that restrict women's rights and freedoms. Stanton (2002:25) recommends that this critical perspective helps women recognise and resist internalised sexism, empowering them to assert their agency and demand equal treatment in various spheres of life. Additionally, she says that feminist criticism inspires activism by highlighting the importance of representation, diversity and intersectionality in addressing the diverse experiences of women. Overall, Claassens and Sharp (2017:222) connote that feminist criticism contributes to the ongoing struggle for gender parity and the advocacy of the rights of women.

1.3. Problem Statement

Even though the literature review demonstrates that some work has been done, it would seem that somehow the patriarchal tone and reading of Genesis 1 and 2 are still prevalent, leading to misinterpretation of the creation narratives in Genesis. One of the main causes is the reading of the text, using certain cultural lens in which it was written. Another contributing factor is that both the development and reception of the text transpired in a male-dominated context. This therefore formed and influenced a certain patriarchal reading or belief and interpretation, subsequently, discriminating against women by relegating them to a lesser position than a man. The patriarchal context in which the creation narratives originated as well as the male-dominated contexts in which they were received led to a poor portrayal of women and discrimination against women. The context and reception of the two accounts (Genesis 1 and 2) influenced the portrayal of the woman character.

1.4. Research Question

This calls into question "The Portrayal of the Woman Character in Genesis 1 and 2" (Two Creation Narratives). This study will thus investigate the possibilities that a

feminist reading of these texts can add to the understanding of these narratives by asking: How can feminist criticism contribute to our understanding of patriarchal texts like the two creation narratives and how can it assist in liberating women to enhance the position of a woman in a modern society?

In answering this question, it would be necessary to not lose focus of the aim and objectives as listed hereunder.

1.5. Research Aim and Objectives

1.5.1. Research Aim

This study intends to research the possibilities that a feminist reading of these texts can add to the understanding of these narratives. By suggesting a feminist reading of these texts (a new reception) this study aims to give another possible understanding of these texts and in the process to liberate women. The following objectives will assist in answering the research question.

1.5.2. Objectives

This study will focus on the following objectives as it strives to answer the research question:

- To define the theories and methodologies that were utilised in this study by giving a theoretical background of Feminist Criticism, and Reception Criticism.
- A socio-historical background study of the book of Genesis will be done with a specific focus on the reception criticism. A study of the reception of these texts to determine how culture and the context in which the texts were written and received influenced the reception and understanding of these narratives and how it relates to the ultimate portrayal and/or perception of a woman
- An exegetical study of Genesis 1 and 2, including a feminist reading of Genesis 1 and 2 to see how feminist criticism can contribute to our understanding of patriarchal texts like the two creation narratives and how

can it assist in liberating women to enhance the position of a woman in a modern society.

- Reading the two creation narratives with a feminist lens.
- The findings and concluding remarks.

1.6. Methodology

This study will be a literary and an exegetical study and will focus on aspects of both diachronic and synchronic studies. It will first do a diachronic reading by having a look at the textual socio-historical background, with a specific focus on the reception criticism. Secondly, it will do a synchronic study by doing an exegetical study with a specific focus on a feminist reading of the text. Once that is done, it may perhaps offer a fundamental discernment into a proposed reading of these narratives and also equally provide a perspective in terms of how further research can be done pertaining to the reading of the text using the Intersectional Feminist Perspective.

1.7. Hypothesis

If Genesis 1 and 2 are read against the context in which they were written and with a feminist lens, it might be possible to translate these texts into the current context with a more inclusive perspective. A feminist reading might assist in liberating women.

1.8. Division of Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Theoretical background on Feminist Criticism and Reception Criticism.

Chapter Three: A background study of the book of Genesis which includes socio-historical background study; feminist and reception criticism and the structure of the book of Genesis.

Chapter Four: An exegetical study of Genesis 1 and 2 which includes a demarcation of the periscopes; a translation of the texts; a structural analysis of how the micro-structures fit into the macro-structure; a detail analysis of the content of the texts with a specific focus on a feminist reading.

Chapter Five: An Intersectional Feminist reading of Genesis 1 and 2.

Chapter Six: This chapter will contain concluding remarks and present the need and possibilities for further studies.

1.9. Orthography and Terminologies

1.9.1. Orthography

The Harvard reference style is used in this research. Abbreviations of books of the Bible will be listed as recommended by NTSSA English.

1.9.2. Terminologies

Feminist Criticism: Jones (1998:73) coins Feminist Criticism as the means to so an analysis of the circumstances that influence the lives of women and also get an understanding of the meaning of a woman, culturally. Norris, Stephenson and Trilling (2023:11) believe that Feminist Criticism offers an opportunity to resist and challenge and possibly demolishing those systems that favour ways of inquiring and challenging the primary dimensions of most academic disciplines and cultural norms. Jones (1998:73) further highlights that this form of criticism refuses to acknowledge that gender disparities are deemed natural and unavoidable, yet advocating for their scrutiny and challenge.

Reception Criticism: Reception Criticism is characterised by Holub (1984:57) as a broader transition in focus from the author and their creation to the text itself and its interpretation by the reader. This philosophy commonly applied to literature,

acknowledges the audience as a crucial component in grasping the broader significance of the work.

Diachronic Reading: This form of reading is also known as historical-critical reading as per Davies (2003:118). It is an approach to studying texts or Scripture which enables us to trace the historical and cultural developments, contexts and influences on a particular text. Ultimately, it involves investigating the development and evolution of the text over time, seeking to understand the various literary, cultural and historical factors that influenced the creation and editing of the different books and passages.

Synchronic Reading: Davies (2003:121) connotes that this form of reading emphasises understanding the text within its immediate context, focusing on its present form and function as a single, unified work. It therefore seeks to interpret Scripture as it stands, without significant consideration of its historical or developmental aspects.

Literary Study: This method according to Holub (1984:99) depicts the analysis of texts as a work of literature, by examining its form, style, rhetoric and literary devices. This approach treats the text as a crafted piece of writing exploring its literary qualities and techniques.

Hermeneutic: Hermeneutic concerns the act of interpretation. Davies (2003:190) defines it as the study of the principles and methods of interpreting religious texts, specifically focusing on understanding the meaning and intention behind the words of Scripture. It involves analysing the historical, cultural, literary and linguistic context of the text in order to interpret it accurately. This is done through seeking to understand the original author's intended message and how it applies to the contemporary reader.

This process includes considering various factors such as the genre of the text, the historical and cultural context in which it was written and the literary devices employed.

Exegesis: According to Davies (2003:187), it is the process of interpreting and explaining the meaning of a passage or text within its historical, cultural and literary context. It is the examination of the original language, analysing the syntax, and grammar and ultimately considering the author's intended audience and purpose. Essentially, it seeks to uncover the original meaning and significance of the text to understand the message and apply it to the contemporary context.

Patriarchy: Tickner (2001:1197) explains this as a social system in which power and authority are predominantly held by men and male perspectives and interests are valued and prioritised over those of women. Furthermore, it involves a hierarchical structure where men hold positions of leadership and decision-making, while women are often relegated to subordinate roles and have limited access to power and decision-making.

Ancient Near East: Tickner (2001:13) infers this as the region that encompasses the eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and other parts of the modern day. This is the place that gave rise to some of the earliest civilisations, such as the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians and Hittites, also where patriarchal systems were prevalent in most societies, where men held the highest positions of power, both within their families and the broader social and political spheres.

Androgynous: This refers to the combination of both masculine and feminine characteristics in an individual or in a representation as per Williams (1975:210). It challenges traditional gender roles and norms by blurring the boundaries between

genders. It has been seen as a desirable and ideal state, symbolising balance and harmony between the masculine and feminine energies.

Anthropomorphic: Williams (1975:218) sees this as the attribution of human characteristics, behaviours or emotions to non-human entities. In the context of religious or mythological texts, it often involves the tendency to interpret things in human-like terms.

Imago Dei: Davies (2003:296) defines this as the Latin term for 'image of God' which refers to the belief that humanity is fashioned in the likeness of God. It is the concept which is primarily found in Abrahamic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, suggesting that humans possess inherent dignity, worth and value because they bear the imprint or reflection of God's divine nature.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background on Feminist Criticism and Reception Criticism.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the two theories of criticism, Feminist and Reception Criticism. The intention is to explore these by taking a close look at their respective theoretical backgrounds, and what both theories convey or seek to convey. It will pay attention to their background, emergence and the different types that make up these theories. It will also place a particular interest in the manner in which the feminist reading can contribute to the reading of the text and how the one type of feminism, will be employed within the study in order to realise a more holistic and insightful outcome.

2.2. Literary View

Brettler (2005:13) admits that there are many ways of reading the Bible, which subsequently, makes it a much more complicated and multifaceted process. The complication comes not with the technical aspect of it but rather the ability to decode and resolve the ambiguities that exist in any literary language. Tribble, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:7) believe that since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is widely regarded as the most insightful book ever written. They (2012:7) are therefore of the view that prior to the modern era, the Bible was primarily examined from a literary or theological perspective. This was the case up until the advent of contemporary critical studies, which have opened up a wide range of new avenues for research into the Bible's composition, development, historical accuracy claims, and historical setting. This is until modern critical studies opened up a whole range of new approaches, where they seek to know when the Bible was written, how it developed,

what claims it had or has to historical accuracy and what the biblical world was like. Okure (1995:54), makes a point that one cannot deny the impact that the social setting has on the author and interpretation in their constant search for meaning in religious texts, which ultimately forms their ideology. Brettler (2005:13) adds that words alone do not determine meaning, instead, words are interpreted based on the context in which they exist. Moreover, Brettler goes on to say that the same words will be interpreted differently by different groups. In her argument, Stanton (2002:15) writes that so long as 10 000 Bibles are printed annually and distributed throughout the entire world and regarded as the inspired Word of God by the majority of people in all English-speaking countries, it would be pointless to minimise its impact. Bibles are printed every year and calculated over the whole habitable globe and the masses in all English-speaking nations revere it as the Word of God, it is vain to belittle its influence.

In substantiation, Trible, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:7) submit that the tools of archaeology, sociology and sub-disciplines of each are being used in our endeavour to fully explore the depths of this outstanding book. “How would an economist look at the financial dealings reflected in the Bible?” they ask. What evaluation would a general make of the military tactics and plans? What is the evolution of government and administrative institutions according to the perspective of a political scientist? It is therefore the view of Trible, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:7) that given the variety of methods employed; it makes sense that we would also examine the Bible through the lens of our contemporary gender theories, taking into account how men and women relate to one another as well as the roles and attitudes they play in the biblical world. Thus, West (2007:10), asserts that biblical scholars have championed various ways of biblical interpretation that take into cognisance the context in which one comes from, which in turn influences one’s worldview. Hence in this chapter, the focus will be on some of the methods of biblical interpretation, namely; Feminist and Reception Criticisms. West (2007:10) argues that one is to be mindful of Shectman’s statement that Feminism alone is not a method, but rather a perspective on the text, intentionally or choosing to pay its attention on

women. This is the reason that the feminist analysis often combines this particular approach with some other method or approach, as it may be more complementary.

2.3. Theoretical Background of Feminist Criticism

The term 'feminism or feminist' according to Tanwar (2008:8), made its way to the English language in the 1890s. This was during the time of the women's emancipation movement. According to Scholz (2017:13), it is not widely known either among laypeople or in the academic field of biblical studies that there has been a historical wave of women interpreting biblical literature. She thus points out that feminist theology is not limited to women practicing theology; in fact, women have always practiced theology; it has only never challenged the dominant masculinist theological paradigms. However, women's interpretations of the Bible are not new; rather, they are based on a century-old custom. In the most general sense, in explaining the term 'feminism' Yee (2018:2) states, "It is the political activism by women on behalf of women. When used in biblical studies, feminist criticism is referred to as one of a series of recent methods of biblical exegesis or interpretation that falls under the term Ideological Criticism." Phipps (1992:3) describes the word feminism as, "a critical stance that challenges the patriarchal gender paradigm that associates males and human characteristics defined as superior and dominant."

Yee (2018:2) states that Ideological Criticism is something that investigates the disparities in power within specific social relationships during the text's production, by thoroughly searching for information on who wrote it, when and why. Moreover, she illustrates how readers from different social groups engage with the text and how these power relations are replicated in it. Therefore, in accordance to Yee (2018:2), the study of gender ideologies that justify unequal relationships between men and women is known as Feminist Criticism. Phipps (1992:3) adds that feminist theology introduces gender paradigm reconstruction and feminist critique into the theological sphere. She goes on to say that often, this is witnessed in the exclusive language of male language in referring to God, somehow painting a view that males are more like God instead of

females. Essentially, since God created women as inferior to men, only men can represent God as leaders of the church and society.

Tanwar (2008:8) refers to the emergence of feminism as a movement aimed at targeting the political, cultural, economical and religious structures which validate the idea of gender hierarchy as a socially constructed concept. Indeed, women have actively and independently studied biblical texts for as long as they have lived in societies dominated by the Bible and engaged in Christian and Jewish religious life. It is true that many people received their interpretations of biblical meanings from androcentric institutions like churches and synagogues and it was frequently unsafe for women to speak in public in front of both men and women. However, there was also an alternate experience that was repeatedly encountered: intelligent, independent, and deeply conviction women challenged male political and religious leaders to acknowledge women's equality with men in society and before God. Tribble, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:7), probe even though one is mindful that the Bible is a sacred holy text, "how does a feminist look for meaning in a biblical text that is essentially patriarchal?" Phipps (1992:4) contributes to say that the question has been addressed in a number of ways by academics. This is often dependent on what question one asks, not simply on the answers one gives. Phipps (1992:4) provides examples that raise questions about how women's issues and interests are handled in the Bible stories. Women's roles and the lives of biblical women can be examined from a contemporary standpoint as well as from the viewpoint of the biblical world. In addition, Tribble, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:9), challenge that one may look for distortions borne of a patriarchal perspective. Moreover, persistently ask, how do the modern 20th century readers, relate to the text?

Consequently, it is for such reasons that some women refuse to keep quiet. In raising their voices, Scholz (2017:13) adamantly feels that the ingrained sexism and misogyny structures were being challenged by these women. Occasionally, particularly if they belonged to the lower classes of their community, these isolated voices made the connection between racism and gender discrimination and called for their abolition. Stanton (2002:17) notes with great concern that many other women were not able to

write or publish, and although they likely contributed, their opinions are unknown. As a result, we must pay tribute to the many women who read the Bible in a way that challenged androcentric beliefs and customs. Friedan (1963:111) concurs with Stanton marking the beginning of the second wave of feminism, placing on the agenda, the issue of what it means to be female and male.

According to Jones (1998:2), feminist modes of theorising contest androcentric ways of thinking or knowing, calling into question the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Furthermore, Tribble, Frymer-Kensky, Milne and Schaberg (2012:9), emphasise the pilgrim character of the Bible. Because it is aware that the entirety of Scripture is a traveller through history, interacting in various contexts and never wanting to be contained within the confines of the past. Each generation or group that reads the text approaches it from viewpoints that are different from others. We see that even the feminist interpretation varies because one group sees things that another does not, while also realising that what they see is incomplete.

2.3.1. The Different Types of Feminist Theories

I am mindful that there are quite a number of feminist theories that have since emerged with the sole intention to dismantle the existing sexist forces and patriarchal beliefs, and reassess and redefine the narrative. Essentially, Yee (2018:2) submits that many schools of thought exist in feminist studies such as Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Social Feminism, Postmodern Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Postcolonial Feminism, Eco Feminism just to name a few. These according to Scholz (2010:161), have come to exist in various waves. The first wave occurred in the 18th century and continues to reveal the need to challenge more. This is simply because Christian women theologians from all over the world are working to affirm women's full and equal humanity by criticising sexist symbols in Christianity and reconstructing the symbolism of God, Christ, humanity and nature, sin and salvation. However, she also highlights that women theologians are influenced by respective societal and historical issues, and draw on cultural resources before and beyond Christianity to envision a more just and loving world.

2.3.1.1. Liberal Feminism

Alterman (2008:18) submits that Liberal Feminism is inspired by the French Revolution and seeks to emphasise the equality of opportunity and individual independence, particularly in the political and economic spheres. According to Herouach (2019:138), its emergence is traced to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which first began in the Western countries and later penetrated the rest of the world. The liberal feminists' view assumes that people are autonomous individuals, deciding their own self-interest in light of their individual preferences. Alterman (2008:18) presents the theory that all people are rational agents and that the reason why women are subordinated is because of societal norms and laws that impose restrictions on their ability because women are thought to be incapable of performing specific tasks. Yee (2018:3) goes on to say that liberal feminism largely ignored the concerns of low-income women of colour in favour of the concerns of white, heterosexual, middle-class, educated women. She emphasises how this assumed that women could and should aspire to be like men, giving women the ability to become more like men, furthered the idealisation of being "male." Yee (2018:18) concludes that becoming a man was not ideal for many women to aspire to.

2.3.1.2. Marxist Feminism

Abbasi (2015:89) believes that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the two great German philosophers are the founders, leaders and aspirations of Marxist Feminism as a political philosophy. These two aim to verify that all realities, including those related to culture, class, creed, education, race, and religion, are determined by the state of the economy. Thus, Abbasi observes that Marx and Engels vigorously endorse the potent interpretations of the structures signifying the subjugation of women, primarily due to capitalism. Papa (2017:345) is adamant that gender equality and capitalism's oppression of women will end when socialism takes the place of capitalism.

2.3.1.3. Radical Feminism

Chaudhure (2004:117) claims that these feminists, in contrast to liberal feminists, want to revolutionise the system and find a place for women in it. According to Tong (2009:49), radical feminists hold that heterosexuality and physiology are the fundamental causes of women's oppression and have their roots in the husband-and-wife dynamic of the family. In the end, women's issues were viewed in the 1960s as a by-product of a system in which men as a class oppress women as a class, rather than as a sign of personal failing. According to Tong (2009:51), radical feminists like Mary Daly challenge the idea that society is androgynous. According to Mary Daly, there are virtues and vices associated with both masculinity and femininity. She is adamant that the oppression of women stems from heterosexuality.

2.3.1.4. Socialist Feminism

This method according to Jaggar (1983:182) is another theoretical stance that questioned the biological foundations of the sex-gender divide and challenged the sex-gender binary. It firmly believes that class conflict should be replaced by an alliance where everyone's free development is a prerequisite for everyone else's free development, rather than class conflict being the root cause of women's oppression on its own. Tong (2009:96) notes that sex, race, and ethnicity are crucial categories to comprehend women's oppression in addition to class. Thus, social feminists agree that patriarchy and capitalism are the source of women's oppression.

2.3.1.5. Eco Feminism

Crenshaw (1989:121), explains how this particular brand of feminism sees patriarchy and its emphasis on dominance and control as damaging to all living things, including the earth as well as a source of women's oppression. According to Ka Chack (1995:189), ecofeminists believe that political, economic, social, and cultural elements that are advantageous to all living things as well as Mother Nature herself are connected to women's rights and their empowerment.

2.3.1.6. Intersectional Feminism

According to Claassens and Sharp (2017:216), this form of feminism recognises that social categories like race, class, and sexual orientation interact with gender and ability and aims to address the unique experiences and oppressions faced by individuals at these intersections. This means that even though feminism challenges the patriarchal paradigm that breeds gender disparity and embraces the masculine and androcentric mentality. The intersectional feminism further acknowledges that the struggle is beyond just gender but rather layered in various ways.

2.3.2. A Perspective on the Feminist Theory

The feminist hermeneutic according to Claassens and Sharp (2017:215), intends to assist biblical interpreters to take stock by constantly checking what we have gained thus far and that which we need to be grateful for in terms of where we come from, that which we may continue to do in our efforts to get better and steer clear of some later. This implies that the trip will continue as long as it is necessary to replace the microscope. Claassens and Sharp are adamant that this will be helpful in the attempt to navigate between the old and new frameworks. Particularly, since the intended goal will force one to carefully evaluate the kinds of tools, fuel and energy, techniques, and theories that would be essential not only for the journey's survival but also to drastically alter its course. Consequently, innovate and construct new roads where needed. This is to ensure that in our zeal to solve a problem, we do not create another. "How do we construct human dignity without compromising the dignity of other living beings, through a biblical lens." Claassens and Sharp (2017:217), ask. "How do we move from empire language to Kingdom of God language, using gender as a primary lens?"

This seeks to challenge and remind the biblical interpreters that this is an ongoing struggle and battle between perspectives. Fundamentally, Claassens and Sharp (2017:217), imply that the goal is to develop a completely new story, a new symbolic universe, a language home, and a third space that everyone can live in. This

encompasses all women from all backgrounds, not just those from a particular class or percentage of women. Consequently, homemaking and homecoming are central to the feminist project or goal. According to Claassens and Sharp (2017:217), it is a place that invites us to appreciate, acknowledge, and give account of the complexity and richness of life as it exists in God's universe. It is about expanding and mothering salvation to all, through unrestricted and unconstrained love and hospitality.

Claassens and Sharp recognise Alice Walker to have been the one who famously acknowledged the difference between Feminist and Womanist, connoting that in their similarity, they are still different, just as purple is to lavender. Subsequently, Claassens and Sharp (2017:1), highlight that the efforts of feminist interpretation have since inception been enjoined by womanist and feminist interpreters from Asia, Latin America and Africa who have all come to reflect on their feminist identities pertaining to their unique experiences. Ultimately, this has led to us referring to 'feminisms' in the plural. The conversation or rather the argument has gone as far as asking which term to use, where some scholars refer to themselves as African feminists and others as womanist scholars. Furthermore, Claassens and Sharp (2017:1), note someone like Madipoane Masenya who has coined the phrase 'basadi,' which is a Sesotho term for the word, womanist. This is in her effort to describe her unique expression of feminist biblical interpretation. Claasens and Sharp (2017:1) argue that according to Madipoane Masenya both movements seek to address gender inequality, feminist has historically been centered on womee's rights with a more general approach, whereas womanism specifically addresses the intersecting oppressions faced by women of colour, promoting a more inclusive and community form of activism.

Furthermore, feminist biblical interpretation is increasingly found at the nexus of various approaches, including postcolonial and queer biblical interpretation, as stated by Claassens and Sharp (2017:2). Ultimately, expanding on the initial meaning of feminist biblical interpretation. Evidently, one cannot deny but acknowledge the need to celebrate the rich and various colours that make up the Feminist Framework or Biblical Interpretation. Nonetheless, important to note our different positions and places on the colour picker in relation to or with one another. The truth and reality are

that we see the world from different viewpoints which according to Claassens and Sharp (2017:3), influence us to view and study issues differently depending on the prism used by different individuals in examining and interpreting the biblical text. Moreover, Claassens and Sharp adamantly point out that the various shades of a colour serve the function of demonstrating that despite diversity, there is still a general agreement regarding the association of one colour which raises a specific mood different from another colour. In concurrence, Crenshaw (1989:139) reveals that the discrimination faced by black women can be both similar to and distinct from that faced by white women and black men. Because of this, the experience is distinct yet evokes a similar scent. This indicates that the experiences of black women are considerably more diverse than the broad classifications offered by the discourse on discrimination. She further mentions that black women do not fit the box of either being a white woman or a black man as her challenge is at times on sex and other times on race.

In shifting the paradigm, Florenza (1993:339), is helpful with an overall framework that provides tools for a critical feminist interpretation of a biblical text through her four fold hermeneutical model. First, she speaks of the *hermeneutic of suspicion*, which does not take androcentric texts at face value, but goes as far as analysing the patriarchal interests of the authors of the texts. Secondly, she refers to a *hermeneutic of remembrance* which moves beyond specific texts on women to reconstruct women's history obscured by androcentric historical consciousness. A *hermeneutic of proclamation* on the other hand seeks to assess all scriptural texts and evaluates them theologically for their oppressive impact of liberating tendency. Lastly, Florenza (1993:339), denotes that a *hermeneutic of creative actualisation* is that which stimulates our creative powers to recall, embody and celebrate the achievements, sufferings and struggles of the biblical women whom we will look up to as our forebears in the faith. However, she notes that the potential for consciousness raising is seen as implicit in this model.

Consequently, we are obligated to continually assess our work and ask ourselves, as feminist biblical interpreters, how far we still have to go. Claassens and Sharp (2017:217) warn us not to let the broken realities of our lives and the world take

precedence over the creative possibilities of God's liberating mission of healing. Relentlessly becoming aware that God, not ourselves, is the source of our hope. Encouraging us to read the two creation narratives in the context of "Intersectional Feminism" or use it as a framework for feminist biblical interpretation, rather than just talking in abstract terms about how we each understand feminist interpretation.

2.3.3. Intersectional Feminism

Intersectional Feminism was coined by a gender and equity racial scholar, Professor Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989. It has been recognised to be more of an inclusive liberation as it advocates the rights of all women, though the study recognises that women are different as people, Alice Walker noted the difference between purple and lavender. However, Crenshaw (1989:141), asserts that 'intersectionality' looks at the bottom-up approach instead of being informed or influenced from the top down. This she says is done by first focusing on the most marginalised and oppressed and striving to centre their experiences to advocate for equality. The goal of intersectionality therefore according to Crenshaw (1989:141) is to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups, because the understanding is that when the segregated groups enter, it means we all enter.

Florenza (1993:340) is adamant that we can no longer talk about women's reality without differentiating between women who are privileged and who have access to some power and women who are doubly and triply oppressed by the patriarchal system. She further says that when white middle and upper class women are not conscious of these interrelated structures, we tend to shift from an androcentric paradigm to a gynocentric one. Essentially, Florenza (1993:340), submits that:

...once women are able to analyse the structures of oppression for men of colour and women of colour, for women trapped in poverty and men trapped in poverty, for gay men and lesbian women for women and men crippled by colonial exploitation and militarism and for those dominated by cultural imperialism. The impulse is not to move to a gynocentric paradigm but for a feminist one.

Florenza (1993:339), sees this as an invaluable visual aid in consciousness, raising it will enable us to draw of patriarchal pyramids. These are the pyramids that she believes immediately make visually apparent women's subordinate position in the power structures of society. Additionally, she asserts that the pyramid shows with visual clarity that patriarchy is not simply the domination of all women by men. Nevertheless, social location seems to determine where particular categories of men and women fall on the domination and subordination scale as well as looking at where power relations lie. Therefore, patriarchy used in this sense refers to a political and social system in which a hierarchy of subordinations and dominations concerning economic status, race and gender are integrally related to one another. Consequently, feminism is then seen as the political oppositional term to patriarchy.

According to Claassens and Sharp (2017:212), reading the Old Testament narratives intersectionally, permits everyone to attempt to explain the intricate, nuanced, sociological, hermeneutical, and moral relationships between matters pertaining to the balance of power and the ideals of masculine honor and feminine shame. They both agree that it will encompass not only humanity but also the various manifestations of injustice that warp the very fabric of creation, including classism, ageism, sexism, ecological, cultural, imperialist, and anthropocentrism, among other isms related to ability and endemic poverty. Intersectionality, at its core, studies the ways in which these systems mutually construct one another. This paradigm acknowledges that oppression based on gender always occurs in conjunction with other forms of domination and oppression. According to Claassens and Sharp (2017:212), Madipoane Masenya is adamant that this method of interpretation will enable and empower all to be on a trajectory where they can themselves admit and say, with or without husbands, with or without children, what is of most importance is that women are human. She bases her argument on the complex, stratified social realities that surround the embedded narratives under discussion, where the prevailing patriarchal discourse defines men primarily in terms of their binary relationship with women. The truth is that men are elevated to a position of superiority over women within this binary construct.

The intersectional feminism shall be utilised in various ways in this study, with the hope that it will assist in deepening the analysis and understanding of social phenomena. Anzaldua (1997:186) mentions different possible approaches:

a. *Analysis of Multiple Identities*

Anzaldua (1997:186) argues that the incorporation of intersectional analysis by examining how different identities such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability and others ultimately intersect and influence experiences. Essentially, emphasising the level of oppression and discrimination that come in different forms based on things such as race or gender. Meaning that although both may experience discrimination due to race or gender but the level or depth therefore, differs.

b. *Inclusive Sampling*

This according to Anzaldua (1997:186) will aid in ensuring that the literary research conducted is diverse and representative of various intersecting identities with the intent to capture the complexity of experiences.

c. *Critique Power Structures*

The intersectional feminism Anzaldua (1997:187) is adamant that it will enable us to critique power structures and systems of oppression, through examining how various forms of discrimination intersect and reinforce each other within societal and contemporary spaces. Furthermore, Anzaldua connotes that analysing how patriarchy, racism and capitalism intersect to perpetuate inequalities may just help with the identification of the root cause and the elimination thereof.

d. *Policy Recommendations*

Post realising the discovery that women experience patriarchy or oppression but on a different level, Anzaldua (1997:187) recommends that the outcome of the research will help us ensure that the focus or solution is not one size fits all. Rather, the intersectional feminism encourages tailoured approaches that account for the unique needs and experiences of various groups.

e. Historical Analysis

The application of the intersectional feminism lens in this study according to Anzaldua (1997:188) will enable a historical view or analysis by examining how intersecting identities have somehow impacted cultural identity, social movements and power dynamics. Sharing some insight on marginalised voices and experiences that have been overlooked.

f. Activism and Advocacy

Lastly, Anzaldua (1997:188) is convinced that intersectional feminism informs activism and advocacy efforts aimed at social change. This could mean highlighting the importance of coalition-building across different identity groups and women altogether. Essentially advocating for policies that will not only encourage speaking for the voiceless, but rather enable the voiceless to speak up, while addressing multiple forms of oppression simultaneously.

The incorporation or use of intersectional feminism in this study, will provide more nuanced insight and analysis and help promote gender justice and equality for all women and contribute to the advancement of inclusivity in all aspects of a woman's character.

2.4. Theoretical Background of Reception Criticism

Reception Criticism according to Halls (1974:176) is a school of literary criticism which acknowledges and places the reader at the centre and, therefore, takes into consideration the reader's response and interpretation of a text. It is noted to have emerged as an unfamiliar and distinct approach in the late 20th century and its origins are traced back to the work of literary theorists and philosophers such as Hans Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. Jauss argued that the meaning of a text was not limited to the writer but was and is actually uncovered through an interaction between the reader and the text. On the other hand, Iser's emphasis was on the importance of the involvement of the reader in the ultimate construction of the meaning.

Consequently, Davies (2003:49) argues that reception criticism gained prominence during the 1970s and 1980s as many scholars started embracing the importance of the reader's involvement in the interpretation of the text, by moving away from a purely author-centred approach. This Davies connotes that it offered a theoretical framework that would enable studying how readers employed and engaged with literary works. Looking at how these interpretations come to differ based on issues such as cultural and historical context. Thus, Jauss and Iser have since recognised a key contribution of reception criticism, is its ability to realise that the meaning of a text is not fixed or determined solely by the author's perspective, worldview and intentions. Instead, the entire meaning is determined and shaped by the reader's subjective response and understanding (Holub 1984:57).

According to Holub (1984:57), reception criticism generally refers to a change in focus from the author and the work to the text and the reader. It is thought to be a response to literary, intellectual, and social developments that occurred in West Germany in the latter half of the 1960s. This idea seeks to replace the outmoded literary scholarship methodology, which involved the study of gathered facts, by emphasising the value of reader interpretation (Jauss 1960:84). This suggests that Jauss approaches literature as a dialectical process of production and reception and treats it from the viewpoint of the reader or consumer. Moreover, Holub (1984:57) notes that reading itself is a creative process according to this theory. Iser (2000:41) agrees that the creation of meaning in literature occurs in tandem with the reader's engagement. This implies that the literary work must fall somewhere in the middle of the text and its realisation rather than being exactly the same as either. According to Iser (2000:41), the work is more than just the text because the text only comes to life when it is realised, and the realisation is in no way independent of the reader's unique disposition. The literary work is created by the relationship between the text and the reader, which Iser (2000:41) acknowledges is impossible to define with accuracy. According to Davies (2003:52), an author cannot claim a special right of understanding of their work simply because they composed it; once they have composed the text, they have no control over how it is to be interpreted or was. Davies (2003:52) essentially suggests that any

interpretation of a text must, therefore, find its authenticity in the text itself, rather than in any extrinsic elements that may be assumed to support it. This theory disproves the notion that an author's intended meaning should be the meaning of their literary work. The revolutionised constant question is: "what does the text say to me was not enough anymore but readers were encouraged to go much further and ask a revolutionised question; what does the question say to me? Even more importantly, what do I say to it?" (Davies 2003:119).

Thus, Davies (2003:51) acknowledges the importance of the link between the two disciplines, Feminist and Reception Criticism, which she thinks have had a fruitful and productive marriage. Moreover, she notes that when feminist biblical critics applied this approach to their reading of the Hebrew Bible, it opened up new avenues in biblical research and served to challenge some of the established principles of traditional biblical scholarship. Davies (2003:51) claims that this phenomenon arose in response to the ideas of the so-called "New Critics" in the 1940s and 1950s. The New Critics emphasised that every literary work should be viewed as an independent, self-sufficient entity that should be examined on its own merits, independent of its cultural and historical context, author's intentions, or reader reaction. Claassens and Sharp (2017:213) believe that regarding the biblical histories of reception and interpretation, this method has been used as a way to circumscribe and control the place of women in family homes, religious spaces and spheres and society generally.

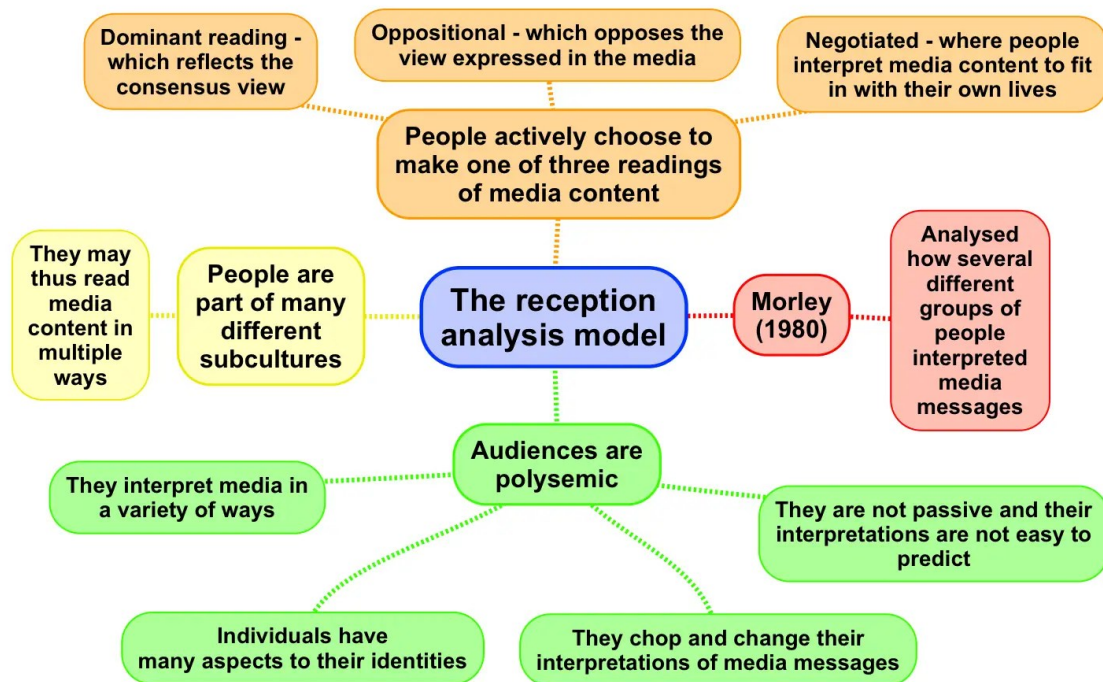
2.4.1. The Different Types of Reception Theories

Iser (2000:51) indicates that there are three types of reception theories according to Morley 1980 as illustrated below:

Preferred Reading (Green): audiences accept the media text's intended message, aligning with the dominant ideology.

Negotiated Reading (Amber): Audiences partially agree with the preferred meaning but adapt it to fit their personal context and experiences, blending acceptance and resistance.

Oppositional Reading (Red): Audiences reject the preferred interpretation entirely, interpreting the media text in a way that opposes the dominant message, often informed by their critical or alternative viewpoints.



2.4.2. The Use of Reception Criticism in this Study

Reception criticism could be very helpful in the interpretation and understanding of Genesis 1 and 2 by providing a view of how the text has been interpreted and received throughout history. This is done through examining how various individuals, communities and cultures understood and received the text over time and ultimately provided meaning based on their context. As a result, the study of the reception criticism in the context of Genesis 1 and 2 might shed light on various interpretations and reactions from different individuals and community readers pertaining to their concerns, perspectives, questions and understanding and how they eventually applied these narratives in their daily lives. This method therefore would enable us to gain a broader insight into the interpretation and application of these texts, culturally, socially, religiously and historically. Similarly, it will enrich us in our continued understanding of

their relevance and impact today, by providing a framework for exploring how Genesis 1 and 2 have shaped religious beliefs, cultural practices and social norms. Eventually, aid in providing insight into how they have been used to support and at the same time challenge certain ideologies. Overall, it provides an invaluable tool for not only understanding and interpreting the text within our contemporary context but a window view of how these narratives have been received, applied and interpreted.

2.5. Synthesis

This chapter examined on how Feminist and Reception Criticisms emerged, their respective intention and function pertaining to the text. Of the various theories of feminist approaches, the focus has been on just a few. In this study, the belief is that the use of the two theories would enable and provide a valuable insight in terms of countering the patriarchal domination head on and drawing the attention on how the text or Hebrew Bible could actually have a totally different meaning outside culture, tradition, patriarchy, misogyny, author and their context. Through these theories, this research would probe, question, challenge and even reject much of what has been counted as acceptable knowledge and subsequently and hopefully read against the grain and unmasked the gendered hierarchy of society and culture.

Yee (2018:5) firmly believes that Feminist Criticism examines literature through the lens of gender dynamics and power structures, highlighting issues of representation, agency and societal norms.

Holub (1984:58) denotes that Reception Criticism on the other hand, focuses on how audiences interpret and interact with texts. In essence alluding that the interpretation of the text is beyond just the author and the author's perspective. Instead, it comes to life upon being within the reader's reach.

Combining these approaches therefore in a study such as this, may yield rich insights into how gendered messages are received, negotiated and potentially subverted by different audiences. For instance, Yee (2018:5) refers to analysing how readers of

different genders respond to portrayals of female characters in literature can reveal underlying biases and cultural expectations. Additionally, Yee is of the view that studying the reception of feminist texts over time can shed light on changing attitudes towards gender equality and feminist ideologies. Overall, integrating Feminist and Reception criticism can provide a nuanced understanding of how literature both reflects and influences perceptions of gender.

Claassens and Sharp (2017:199) believe that incorporating Intersectional Feminism into research of this nature allows for a more comprehensive analysis of power dynamics and social inequalities. This means that by examining multiple dimensions of identity simultaneously, researchers can better understand the complex ways in which privilege and marginalisation operate with different contexts. Enabling a holistic analysis of how depictions of gender intersect with race, class and other factors to either reinforce or challenge stereotypes and power structures.

Moreover, Claassens and Sharp assert that Intersectional Feminist emphasises the importance of amplifying marginalised voices and centring the experiences of those who are most impacted by systemic inequalities. This approach, she suggests that it fosters more inclusive and equitable research practices, as it notices the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and the need to address them holistically. Ultimately the use of this approach, enhances its relevance and capacity to generate insights that can co

Chapter 3: Socio-Historical Background Study of the Book of Genesis.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter endeavours to do a background study on the Book of Genesis and will therefore be a diachronic study. To chart this challenge, the chapter would seek to challenge and question the authorship of the book as per the scholars, when it is believed to be the date and place of conception of the book, what could have been the influence that compelled the writing of the book (purpose), its message and whom it was written for (audience).

Through that mapping, an exploration or analysis of the Historical Setting of the Book of Genesis will also be conducted in terms of the context in which it was written and how the book came to be. By addressing these questions, it might be possible to determine what could have influenced the author's worldview, socially, religiously, politically, and culturally. Essentially, hopefully bring forth an interpretation that is without the structure of domination, less androcentric but rather more inclusive.

3.2. Literary Review

Jacob and Jacob (2007:13) state that Genesis as the first book of the Bible, provides a significant socio-historical background to the origins of the world, humanity and Israelite as the nation. Ultimately, theologians were interested in how creation came to be and utilised data that they could find and was available to them about the natural world to shape the book, integrating secular knowledge with theological perspective.

He further highlights that not everything in Genesis 1-11 corresponds to modern knowledge about the world.

In terms of the socio-historical context, Blenkinsopp (2011:198), argues that also feminist scholars analyse the book within the broader context of the ancient Near Eastern societies. It has therefore been discovered that the patriarchal and cultural nature of these environments influenced the writing and shaping of the gender dynamics. Walton (2001:49) submits that the first 11 chapters of Genesis form a prologue to the rest of the Pentateuch. This prologue is subsequently worded in cosmic terms, taking in all humankind and the entire world. Moreover, he writes that even though creation is not the central topic of discussion for Genesis, the book does however contain the most profound statement that reveals that God alone is sovereign. The biblical account presents a monotheistic worldview that declares God alone as the Creator of the world and everything in it, in contrast to the polytheistic beliefs. It also seeks to critically examine and challenge traditional interpretations, highlighting the need for gender equality and justice (Newsom (2008:27).

3.3. The Historical Context of the Book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis played a significant role in biblical studies during the Enlightenment, as it re-evaluated traditional understandings of the Bible. The first eleven chapters of Genesis became the focus of modern historical-critical research. Researchers like Henning Bernhard Witter and Jean Astruc theorised that different names for God in Genesis reflected original sources. This led to the beginnings of biblical historical criticism, making the book of Genesis a crucial starting point for critical biblical scholarship (Arnold 2022: 1-2).

3.3.1. Authorship

The authorship of the Book of Genesis has been an ongoing debatable topic amongst biblical scholars over centuries, which has at the same time raised several arguments.

Traditionally, Black (1975:178) suggests that Genesis, being part of the Torah, is ascribed to Moses or renowned as Moses' writings. As a result, many of the ancient and medieval Jewish and Christian scholars held the traditional view that asserts Moses as the sole author of Genesis. The reason for this belief is perpetuated by those Scriptural passages outside the Pentateuch which attribute the Torah's authorship to Moses. Black connotes that others base their argument on the belief that Moses had access to various sources. These included oral traditions and written accounts, which he has collated into one final form, that is referred to as Genesis today. Ska mentions that Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was among "the first intellectuals of this time to deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch because of the many repetitions, inconsistencies, contradictions, and anachronisms present in it" (Ska 2022:28).

However, others scholars like Whybray (2001:39) argues that the first five books of the Bible along with Genesis were composed by multiple authors or even groups of authors over a long period of time. This hypothesis referred to these groups of authors or sources as Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P). These are acknowledged as having contributed various layers towards the text. Consequently, due to the different style of writing, distinct theological emphasis and ultimately the various ways of referring and relating to God are enough to indicate that the Pentateuch has been authored by multiple authors. Gibson (1981:3) refers also to the documentary theory and states; "Genesis has been made up out of three major documents or written sources, to which they assign labels, 'J,' 'E' and 'P.' Each of these has its distinctive style and special interest, but none of them points us to an author in any full sense." He concludes that rather the persons responsible for the documents should be regarded as collectors and re-tellers of older traditions which had been brought to Palestine by the Hebrew tribes. Gibson (1981:3) is therefore of the view that the Book of Genesis is strictly speaking anonymous. Gertz (2022:57) on the other hand argues that the focus upon four primary sources and their gradual combination heavily oversimplified the process of literary growth.¹

¹ This source theory and its development will be discussed in more detail later on in the discussion of the structure of the book (see 3.3.4.2 hereunder).

According to McCabe (2011:25) feminists also support this view, arguing that the male-dominated nature of ancient societies likely influenced the authorship of Genesis. These feminist scholars suggest that the text may have been written and edited by male authors who held patriarchal views, resulting in a portrayal of gender roles and relationships that reflect their biases.

Alter (1996:9) shares the same sentiments that one needs not to claim that Genesis is a unitary artwork. Instead his argument is that there are other instances of the work of art that evolve over centuries proving to be the product of many hands.

In concurrence, Walton (2001:439), also argues that Genesis was not a composition of one person but multiple authors. He says that it was a collection of various ancient traditions and sources. As a result, these theories provide a view that seems to suggest that the Book of Genesis is an outcome of a complex literary process over an extended period of time. Accordingly, it is believed that the Book of Genesis, as well as the rest of the Torah or Pentateuch, were compiled by different authors from different times and backgrounds. Subsequently, its redaction is what we have come to know as Genesis. It is therefore a subject that continues to be a scholarly inquiry and research.

It is conclusive therefore and imperative to note that there is still no scholarly agreement when it comes to the authorship of the Book of Genesis. Different perspectives that are for and against the authorship continue to make waves amongst scholars. However, the one thing that comes out strong in all of this, is the ruling out of the individual authorship which I wish to align with. It is evident based on the scholarly review that the work of putting Genesis together, has been a collective effort through individual and group consultation, perpetuated by their rigid tradition and culture which seems to be reflected in their theological and religious perspective. It therefore appears that these scribes had intentions to address certain issues through writing.

3.3.2. The Historical Construction

It is without a doubt that the construction of the book transpired over an extended period. Ultimately, Scholz (2010:13) purports that the stories within Genesis reflect the socio-historical context in which they were written. For example, the creation account in Genesis 1 may have originated as a response to the Babylonian creation myths, such as the Enuma Elish. The biblical account according to Walton (2001:440), presents a monotheistic worldview, declaring that God created the world and everything in it. This is in contrast to the polytheistic beliefs of the Babylonians. Moreover, the belief is that Genesis also explores the early history of humanity, including the fall of Adam and Eve, the story of Cain and Abel and the great flood. These narratives are believed to address fundamental questions about human nature, moral responsibility and the consequences of disobedience. Walton (2001:440) states that, “they provide lessons and guidance for the Israelites, teaching them about the importance of obedience to God’s commands.”

Arnold (1998:11) observes that the latter part of Genesis focuses on the patriarchs, specifically Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These narratives establish the foundation for the nation of Israel and its covenant relationship with God. Scholz (2010:13) suggests that these stories depict the challenges, struggles and blessings experienced by the patriarchs, demonstrating themes such as faith, loyalty and divine providence. Essentially, Scholz (2010:13) argues that Genesis serves as a socio-historical backdrop to the Bible, providing insights into the origins of the world, humanity and the nation of Israel. The book is a reflection of the religious and cultural beliefs of its time while imparting timeless values and lessons that continue to resonate with readers today.

In accordance with Scholz (2010:177), Genesis 1 and 2, provide socio-historical background on the creation of the world and humanity. These chapters present the account of God’s creative relationship with God and each other. From a socio-historical view, Scholz, connotes that these chapters can be seen as providing a response to the religious and cultural norms of the time they were written. It appears that many Ancient Near Eastern cultures had creation myths that sought to explain the

origins of the world and humanity. Consequently, the Genesis account presents a distinct monotheistic worldview that sets it apart from the polytheistic beliefs of surrounding cultures.

Additionally, Newsom (2008:59), says the creation story in Genesis 1 emphasises the supremacy of God as the sole creator of all things. It further outlines a structured and ordered process in which God speaks everything into existence over a period of six days, its culmination is evidenced in the creation of humanity in God's image. Concurring with this narrative, Scholz (2010:177) affirms the Hebrew belief in one God who exercises sovereign control over the entire cosmos.

Newsom (2008:60), further argues that Genesis 2 explores the creation of Adam and Eve in a more intimate and personal manner. It provides a detailed account of God forming Adam from the dust of the ground, breathing life into him and later creating Eve from one of Adam's ribs. Scholz (2010:178), denotes that this creation account highlights the special relationship between God and human beings, emphasising their unique place in creation.

Socio-historically, Johnson (2015:235) asserts that these creation accounts in Genesis reflect the Israelites' understanding of their origins and purpose as a chosen nation in a covenant relationship with God. They as a result convey the idea that all of creation is the result of God's intentional design and that humans have a special role as stewards of the earth. This is the reason Genesis 1 and 2 provide socio-historical background on the creation of the world and humanity, offering a distinctive monotheistic perspective on creation and emphasising the special relationship between God and humans. In essence, Johnson (2015:136) is adamant that these chapters reflect the religious and cultural beliefs of their time while conveying important theological and moral lessons for the Israelites and subsequent readers.

Brown (2012:58) argues that when one examines the socio-historical background of Genesis 1 and 2, it is important to consider the cultural and patriarchal context in which these texts were written. It is therefore worth noting that the Bible as a whole reflects ancient patriarchal societies in its portrayal of gender roles and relationships. She

mentions that Genesis 1 presents the creation of humanity as male and female, both made in the image of God. While this can be seen as affirming the equal worth and value of men and women, Brown (2012:58) highlights that it is also important to recognise that Genesis 1 presumes different roles to each gender. It is in Genesis 1 where God gives both men and women the mandate to be fruitful and multiply, and to have dominion over the earth. However, she says that the language and imagery used in Genesis 2 emphasise the man's role as the head or ruler, while the woman is portrayed as his helper or support. Accordingly, Johnson (2015:235) brings forth that Genesis 2 provides a more detailed narrative of the creation of Adam and Eve. From a feminist point of view, she sees it as significant to note that Eve is created second after Adam, leading some to argue that this suggests her subordinate status. In addition, the language used to describe her creation as being formed from Adam's rib has since been interpreted by some as reinforcing male dominance and woman's derived existence.

Davis (2018:344) raises a concern that, the gendered language and hierarchical portrayal in these texts can be seen as reflecting the patriarchal norms and values of the time. The second narrative comes across as perpetuating traditional gender roles and reinforce male dominance and female subordination. Davis (2018:344) further alludes that it is important to approach these texts critically and to recognise that they were written in a particular socio-historical context. Therefore, it is conclusive that while they may not align with contemporary feminist perspectives on equality and gender justice, they still provide insights into the historical understanding and construction of gender roles. An interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 that excludes the cultural norms and patriarchal voices of that time, aims to challenge and subvert the patriarchal assumptions embedded within the text. They aid in highlighting alternative readings that emphasise the equal worth and value of men and woman as well as the importance of mutual respect, partnership and shared responsibility in relationships. These interpretations, subsequently, aim to reclaim the texts in ways that affirm gender equality and challenge oppressive structures and attitudes.

3.3.3. The Date and Place of the Book of Genesis

While the exact dating of the Book of Genesis is debated among scholars, Hays and Duvall (2011:51) highlight that it is generally believed to have been written around the sixth Century BCE, possibly drawing on older oral traditions. This is recorded to have been during the time of the Babylonian Exile. O'Connor (2018:3) agrees saying that the Book of Genesis became a literature sometime during the early Persian Period, 539-330 BCE. During that time, the nation of Judah continued to struggle with the consequences from the events that took place during the Babylonian Exile, which is also termed as Exilic Period, 587-538 BCE. O'Connor, therefore, believes that a broad consensus among interpreters places the composition of the book after the Persian defeat of the Babylonian Empire. Therefore, the book might be a reflection of the theological experiences of exile, loss and the hope for restoration. He further mentions that it could serve as a means of preserving and reaffirming the identity and faith of the community.

According to Von Rad (1972:24) the books of Genesis to Joshua carry a continuous representation of a number of source documents that were without a doubt woven together skilfully by a redactor, noting the 'J' and 'E' as the oldest simply out of their distinctive use of the name for God. Therefore, it means that dating of the Yahwist is traced to ca. 1950 while for the Elohist may be one or two centuries later. Von Rad (1972:25) further records the Priestly 'P' documents as the latest source, which its actual composition is believed to be within the postexilic period, ca. 538 – 450.

According to Adeyemo (2011:47), some academics contend that the first five books were written over a period of time by a number of different authors, with the majority of the writing occurring between roughly 850 BC and 550 BC. It is thought that these books were not ultimately assembled until the fifth century BC. This explains why different names for God are used in different sections of Genesis.

O'Connor explains that the Book of Genesis springs from a centuries-long process of transmission and composition. Thus, the inspiration takes place among the people from generation to generation in search for God, as they struggle amid human experiences of all sorts, addressing questions of origin, identity and the covenant

relationship with God. It is subsequent to this that he (2018:6) credits gifted poets, storytellers, sages, elders, priests, parents, and ordinary people who contributed directly and indirectly to the composition of the book. These biblical texts, therefore, have become refined and treasured testimony of the people in search of their God. Ultimately O'Connor adamantly submits the Book of Genesis as a work of the people, meaning that its cultural and literary context may have been influenced by the broader region.

Black (1975:179) argues that it is worth noting that the events described in Genesis are commonly credited to have taken place long before the time the book was written. This could possibly date as far as the early second millennium BCE. Hays and Duvall (2011:51) also add that while Genesis was most likely written during the period of the second millennium, it is also important that we note the stories within it do not only cover a wide range of time but reflect the oral traditions and beliefs prevalent amongst the Israelites throughout their history. Possibly characterised by diverse cultural and religious traditions where the Israelites were exposed to and influenced by other beliefs, leading to a need for a distinct theological expression. Ska (2022:39) mentions: "The idea that Genesis 1, the first creation account, could have been written after the exile was appalling to most specialists in the middle of the nineteenth century." Otto also suggests that the authors of Genesis 2-3 should be regarded as post-exilic (2002:157-162).

3.3.4. The Purpose and Audience

Seeing that the Book of Genesis emerged during the time of the Babylonian Exile, according to Hays and Duvall (2011:39), it therefore answers the big questions of life; Why am I here? Who has brought me into being? What is life about? Commonly, the human experience has proved to be curious about the past, Hays and Duvall bring to the fore that generally people want to know where they come from, how they came to exist, who they are, who their ancestors are, what joins them together, and what connects them to God and other people. Thus, Genesis responds to these deep

human questions with ancient stories of origins, however, he argues that the purpose goes far deeper than just responding to human curiosity about origins.

O'Connor (2018:2) shares the view that the purposes are larger than just that. The book tells the stories to assure its audience that the God who created, ordered and gave life in the ancient past can create them now. In addition, he says the purpose of the Book of Genesis addresses specific historical struggles of the people of Judah in the aftermath of the nation's destruction under the Babylonian Empire. One prevailing theory is that Genesis served as an origin story for the ancient Israelites. Providing them with a shared narrative and identity. The purpose of it all O'Connor asserts that it was to reaffirm their connection to God and their ancestral heritage.

The creation narrative does not explicitly state God's purpose for creating the world, but Whybray (2001:42) points out that this purpose is implied by the strong emphasis placed on humanity's place in God's plan. The creation of mankind, the final act of God's creative acts, is the culmination of the entire story.

Gibson (1981:4) believes that the purpose of this book was mainly for the theological and historical foundation of the Israelites. Fundamentally to bring in an understanding of their origins and how they came to exist. Furthermore, it is their reason for their existence which is in relationship with God and also the establishment of the covenant with them as the chosen nation. Additionally, it is about God's creation of the world and His providence over nature.

From a feminist standpoint, Brown (2012:58) thinks that the purpose of Genesis can be understood to serve as a historical record reflecting the patriarchal norms prevalent in the ancient societies that produced it. The text, through its narratives, can be seen as shaping and reinforcing traditional gender roles, often portraying women in subservient positions. However, Brown (2012:58) believes that it might also involve a critical examination of Genesis to uncover hidden narratives, voices and instances of resistance against patriarchal structures. According to Davis (2018:347), the intention may be to further engage with the text to challenge and question traditional interpretations, seeking to highlight the agency, resilience and contributions of women

within the biblical stories. In essence, Davis (2018:347) concludes that the purpose is to deconstruct and analyse how Genesis contributes to the construction of gender norms and to re-evaluate the significance of female characters. It may also involve fostering awareness, encouraging critical dialogue, and reclaiming aspects of the text to empower women and challenge historical and contemporary gender inequalities.

Jacob and Jacob (2007:11) conclude that Genesis is an exploration of various themes like creation, the fall, the Abrahamic covenant and his descendants and ultimately the origins of different nations and their cultures respectively. The assertion is that Genesis was mainly written with the ancient Israelites in mind, being the target audience. This was in particular for their time in the Babylonian exile to sensitise or serve as a reminder of their identity, faith and hope even for the remnants.

Gibson (1981:3) understands that the Book of Genesis was principally for the Israelites to ensure that they do not lose track of their shared heritage and special relationship which was also rebirthed during their exile. Thus, it serves as a provision of a narrative framework for understanding their place in the world and in the eyes of God, their reason for existence, which speaks to their fundamental purpose and their relationship with their Creator.

Hays and Duvall (2011:40) reasoned that one cannot remove other communities outside the Jewish tradition completely, as Genesis has been read and interpreted widely by different individuals and nations throughout history. It ultimately continued to be studied and interpreted by those beyond the Jewish and Christian communities, needless to mention the countless philosophers, biblical scholars and interpreters from all works of life, different religions, beliefs and cultural backgrounds. As a result, Hays and Duvall (2011:40) make a strong assertion that each audience and reader, from different backgrounds, employing different theories and theological interpretations may likely come up with a different meaning and interpretation of the text. This is because of their different beliefs, traditions, culture and what could be of their influence based on their contextual circumstances.

The intended audience of Genesis from the feminist standpoint according to Florenza (1983:66) could be seen as multifaceted. While the text itself may have been written in ancient times, its impact and relevance extend to contemporary audiences, including women who continue to grapple with issues related to gender roles, power dynamics and societal expectations. Davis (2018:47) purports that feminist scholars argue that historically, the audience included communities that adhered to patriarchal structures and Genesis may have served to reinforce or challenge these societal norms. Today, Davis (2018:47) says the audience includes individuals interested in understanding and critiquing the historical and cultural foundations of gender roles. Moreover, the audience of Genesis may encompass those seeking to reclaim and reinterpret biblical narratives to empower women, challenge traditional interpretations and foster dialogue on gender equality. It further involves those who wish to critically engage with the text exploring its implications for gender dynamics and contributing to discussions surrounding women's roles in both religious and secular contexts.

According to Florenza (1983:66), the intended audience would have primarily been the ancient Israelite community. This is because the text presents stories of creation, the early history of humanity and the origins of the Israelite people, all of which would have resonated with the Israelites seeking both a religious and historical understanding of their place in the world. Moreover, Hays and Duvall (2011:40) are convinced that Genesis also reflects the influences of the broader Ancient Near Eastern culture in which it emerged. It shares similarities with Babylonian, Sumerian and Canaanite myths and narratives. This therefore suggests that Genesis may have been written with an awareness of the surrounding cultures, either to distinguish the Israelite faith or to incorporate familiar themes into their own religious framework. It therefore becomes imperative for one to note that the genre and purpose of Genesis can be difficult to determine. Scholz (2010:188) asserts that different texts serve different functions, including theological, historical and literary elements. As a result, the purpose of Genesis extends beyond mere historical accuracy, but also seeks to convey theological truths, moral lessons and a sense of divine providence. In essence, the understanding of the socio-historical context of Genesis helps us appreciate its

intended audience and purpose, enabling us to delve deeper into its themes and messages as we interpret and analyse its contents today. Mandell (2022:146) states it as follows:

We should contextualize Genesis in the first millennium BCE. Furthermore, we should view it as a work meant to unify the disparate people of Israel and Judah into a cohesive family unit (e.g., to forge a shared history and identity) in the wake of Assyrian and Babylonian military operations and deportations from the southern Levant and onward into the exile and reconstruction periods (from the late sixth to the mid-fourth century BCE).

3.3.5. The Literary Structure of the Book of Genesis

While the book of Genesis is commonly structured in two main sections, the Primeval History, chapters 1-11 and the Patriarchal History, chapters 12-50, Muddiman and Barton (2001:40) explain that it can also be outlined into three thematic sections:

3.3.5.1 Thematic Structure

a. *Primeval History (Chapters 1-11)*

According to Whybray (2001:40), it foreshadows a few of the book's major themes. This part discusses the beginnings of the world, the fall of humanity, and early occurrences. According to Whybray, it establishes Israel's position in the international community and uses a series of genealogies to connect Abraham and his descendants with historical human figures. Hooke (1975:175) refers to this section as the account of God's activity in bringing order out of primeval chaos. It is also regarded as the creation of man and the place assigned to him in the created order, of man's disobedience and the break up of that created order. Subsequently, a time of a great symbolic act of judgement and the dawn of a new hope. Whybray (2001:40) continues to describe it as a universal history of beginnings, where there is proclamation of only one supreme God who has created the world with all its inhabitants. Therefore, he

emphasises that it is concerned with the nature of this God and with the nature of His human creatures.

b. Patriarchal History (Chapters 12-36)

This section centres on the patriarchal stories, which Whybray (2001:40) understands as God's selection of Abraham and his offspring from among all humankind, along with the promises that He bestowed upon them. Whybray is astounded by this choice's uniqueness, which is seen in Abraham's first selection as well as in a number of subsequent choices.

“Not Ishamel but Isaac, not Esau but Jacob are chosen. This theme is pursued further in the succeeding Joseph story: Joseph, Jacob’s eleventh son, is chosen to be the saviour of his family and even in the next generation Ephraim is preferred before Manasseh” (Whybray 2001:40).

Hooke (1975:175) describes this section as the one containing the account of how an act of obedience made possible the first stage in God’s work of restoration and redemption. Also agreeing that these chapters also seem to contain the sagas of the patriarchs.

c. Joseph Narrative (Chapters 37-50)

According to Hooke (1975:40) this section specifically delves into the life of Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, his experience in Egypt, including his rise to power and eventual reunion with his family. He says this is not saga but a romance with an historical basis. Hooke is convinced that it was the author’s intention to form the link between the tradition of the call of Israel in Abraham, and the parallel tradition of the call of Israel in Egypt. Whybray (2001:40) admits that the story of Joseph continues that of the previous section, but acknowledges that it has its own independent character and its own themes. According to Whybray, the main aspect of the Joseph story is the Egyptian setting, which is discussed in some detail. This is primarily done to strengthen the sense of Joseph's distinguished status in Egypt, though it also serves

to give it a believable local colour. As a result, Whybray (2001:40) acknowledges Joseph's character as portrayed with consummate skill. It is therefore in the final part of the book where according to Whybray, the author leaves the readers with hopes of a splendid future.

3.3.5.2 The Source Theory: Focused on Genesis 1 and 2

Source theory, sometimes called the documentary hypothesis plays such a huge part in the research history of the book of Genesis, that it needs to be mentioned. This theory goes as far back as 1711. The documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch has its origins in the observations made by Henning Bernard Witter. At 28 he published his work, focusing on Genesis 1-3, observing different appellations for God in the chapters and after him came Jean Astruc. Ironically, Astruc defended Moses's authorship against enlightened spirits, arguing that Moses used "original memoirs" to write the Pentateuch. He identified two major and ten minor documents in the first part of the Pentateuch, focusing on Witter's theory of divine appellations (Ska 2022:32-33). He was an 18th-century French physician, and in his 1735 work, Astruc noted that the name of God varied between "Elohim" and "Yahweh" in different passages of Genesis, and theorised that in composing the book, there was drawn from multiple source documents. Astruc's observation was developed into a full-fledged documentary hypothesis by later scholars. This hypothesis identified four main source documents that were compiled to form the Pentateuch – the Yahwistic (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomistic (D), and Priestly (P) sources (Collins 2004:49). The documentary hypothesis is supported not just by the variation in divine names, but also the numerous doublets – parallel or variant versions of the same stories and laws – found throughout the Pentateuch. Examples include the two creation accounts in Genesis, the intertwined flood narratives, duplicate versions of patriarchal tales, the Decalogue, and prohibited food lists. These doublets indicate the Pentateuch was compiled from distinct source documents, rather than written by a single author. The pervasive presence of these parallel accounts, beyond just the Elohim/Yahweh distinction, provides strong additional evidence for the documentary hypothesis and its claim of multiple sources underlying the final biblical text (Collins 2004:50). For much of the

19th century, the Priestly source was considered the oldest, but this was later revised, with the order established as J, E, D, P (or J, E, P, D). The documentary hypothesis, with its view of the Pentateuch as a combination of at least four distinct documents, held a position of scholarly orthodoxy for around a century. While there were some variations, such as the identification of additional sources or a fragment hypothesis, the four-source theory was the dominant approach. However, this consensus began to be widely questioned in the last quarter of the 20th century (Collins 2004:49). Scholars like John Van Seters and Rolf Rendtorff have questioned the dating and validity of the J and E sources. Rendtorff and his student Erhard Blum have proposed an alternative model, abandoning the traditional J and E sources and instead finding two main editorial stages in the composition of the Pentateuch. The first was the "D-Komposition" by Deuteronomistic editors after the Babylonian exile, and the second was the "P-Komposition" by Priestly writers. However, this Deuteronomistic editing theory faces challenges, as the Pentateuch contains stories that seem to contradict the Deuteronomic emphasis on a central sanctuary in Jerusalem. The evidence for Priestly editing of Genesis and Exodus is clearer than that for Deuteronomic editing. Ultimately, the text suggests the Pentateuch is a "compromise document" where different theological perspectives, like Priestly and Deuteronomic, were presented side-by-side without harmonisation (Collins 2004:62-64).

Currently, the views of the source theory, the formation of Genesis or the Pentateuch are far from any consensus. In English-speaking circles, particularly in North American studies, the Documentary Hypothesis continues to be widely accepted in Noth's modified version. Furthermore, the circle of Israeli and American Neo-Documentarians has reverted to the mechanical source separation that Wellhausen had previously vehemently denounced. Additionally to variations of a modified version of the Documentary Hypothesis, models that account for compositions of varying sizes that developed independently and at different times before being joined into even larger units through redactional brackets are becoming more and more supported, particularly in continental European research (Gertz 2022:70). Gertz (2022:70-71) refers to the usefulness of this debate and the consequential results of these studies especially for diachronic studies. He mentions that it also is necessary to refer to

synchronic readings, which vary greatly in detail and are all usually combined under the label of "Literary Criticism." These methods, which originate from English studies, see the biblical texts as cohesive literary works. They don't include a historical component, viewing the texts' final forms as artistic creations and concentrating on their internal structural elements and literary devices.

Collins suggests that the aim should be to appreciate the narratives as they have come down to us, rather than attempting to reconstruct J and E, also reading P but separately (Collins 2004:64).²

Since the source theory developed from studies of Genesis, the two chapters that this study focuses on, are obviously at the centre of this debate. Essentially, Hooke (1975:179) argues that Genesis 1 and 2 fall under the Yahwist 'J' and Elohist 'E.' In particular, Genesis 1:1-2:4a is classified as the Priestly account while Genesis 2:4b-25 is regarded as non-Priestly. He bases his emphasis on the Priestly account characterised by the creation order, where each day is carefully ordered bringing forth specific elements of creation in a systematic manner. It is in this order which Hooke believes that it is a reflection of the priestly tradition.

According to Whybray (2001:41), this is also picked up in the repeated refrains in chapter 1 such as; "and God said... and it was so. And God saw that it was good..." Those are characteristics of the Priestly style, reflecting a concern for precision and correctness. He further mentions that the Priestly account emphasises the transcendence and sovereignty of God, who creates the world through the power of His word, demonstrating God's majesty and authority. In the end, the culmination of creation in the establishment of Sabbath as a day of rest reflects the Priestly concern with the ritual observance and the sanctity of time. Von Rad agrees that the Priestly account is quite different in the sense that its text can be recognised even by a layperson because of its striking peculiarities concerning form and content. "It contains doctrine throughout" (Von Rad 1972:27). This means that nothing is without

² A full version of the development in research thoughts and the history of critical scholarship from Witter to the aftermath of Wellhausen's and Gunkel's research in the Twentieth Century can be read in Ska's chapter (2022:11-52).

theological relevance, for he believes that in this work there is the essence of the theological labour of many generations of priests.

Collins (2004:57) describes the Priestly source as follows:

The Priestly document is the easiest source to recognise. The rather dry, formulaic style is familiar from the account of creation in Genesis 1. God said “let there be light” and there was light. It is marked by a strong interest in genealogies, in dates (note the precise dating in the Priestly account of the flood), and in ritual observance (the Creator observes the Sabbath by resting on the seventh day). The book of Leviticus is quintessential Priestly material, as is the description of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. In P, history is punctuated by a series of covenants, with Noah, Abraham, and finally Moses. P has no angels, dreams, or talking animals, such as we find in other Pentateuchal narratives. There is little dispute about the identification of P, although its date remains very controversial.

Genesis 2, on the other hand, is not typically considered a Priestly account, instead Whybray (2001:41) say it draws from both the Yahwist ‘J’ and Elohist ‘E’ sources. This is due to the interchangeable use of both the divine names, Yahweh ‘YHWH’ and the generic term God ‘Elohim.’ Von Rad (1972:26) recognises the immediacy of God with the man, his appearances, and his movement on earth is severely limited. Whybray (2001:41) mentions that scholars have identified distinct stylistic and linguistic characteristics of both the Yahwist and Elohist sources within Genesis 2. This is noted as the Yahwist source tends to emphasise anthropomorphic portrayals of God and uses a more narrative-driven style, while the Elohist source often employs more formal language and focuses on theological themes. Overall, Hooke (1975:179) believes that Genesis 2 is primarily associated with the Yahwist tradition due to its narrative style and focus on human origins, such as walking in the garden in the cool of the evening. Von Rad (1972:24) says Yahweh is the God of the world, His presence is felt everywhere with profound reverence. It is also seen to incorporate elements from the Elohist tradition, indicating a composite authorship.

The two conflicting creation narratives were recognised by most scholars. Collins refers also to the distinction between the two creation narratives, and states it as follows: “The contrast between the two is clearly evident in the two accounts of creation with which they begin—the ritualistic Priestly account in Gen 1:1—2:4a, and the colorful, folksy, Yahwistic account in the remainder of chapters 2 and 3.”

Ska (2022:48) refers to this debate. He says that the activity to compile narratives in major units led some scholars to abandon continuous sources, specifically the Yahwist. He mentions that the question of the existence of an ever-shadowy Elohist arose earlier. Still, many scholars continued following traditional exegesis paths, as theories, methods, and trends do not replace previous ones. Römer (2006:21) summarises the debates on the existence of the Yahwist as follows:

Several scholars have buried him; others, on the contrary, remain loyal to the “old” Yahwist of von Rad and Noth, while still others have attempted to rejuvenate him. To make things even more complicated: a closer look at the advocates of the Yahwist reveals that not everyone defends the same conception of J; quite the contrary.³

Gertz (2002:69) mentions that for Genesis, the primary concern regarding the Yahwist debate is the Primeval History in Gen 1–11 and the book’s connection with the exodus narrative. The idea of an initially separate non-P Primeval History has its roots in the wide thematic and compositional coherence of the classically Yahwistic works in Genesis 1–11, as well as their weak connection to the Yahwistic patriarchal history. Others, on the other hand, credit the traditionally Yahwistic works to a post-priestly revision, using older sources to update the priestly Primeval History. Subsequently, there has been much debate about whether the patriarchal and exodus stories were originally connected by P, who came later, or whether there was a “Yahwistic” shift from the Joseph story to the exodus narrative. In the first scenario, there would be conflicting ideas of Israel’s ancestry between the non-P ancestral and Moses/Exodus

³ See also Schmid (2006: 29-50).

accounts. Concerning the two chapters that are applicable in this study, he concludes as follows: “In the Primeval History, the two-source theory (P and non-P) has basically been proven ... there is much reason to suppose that the non-P Primeval History was a formerly independent composition.”

Regarding the source theory this study will, therefore, only refer to Priestly and non-Priestly sources. Thus Gen 1:1—2:4a is seen as P while Genesis 2, which is considered to be not typically P will be classified as non-Priestly.

3.4. The Historical Setting of the Book of Genesis

Hays and Duvall (2011:39) state that in the Hebrew Bible, each of the first five books, known as the Torah, takes its name from the opening lines of the book. Thus, the reason the introductory book of the Pentateuch is titled Genesis comes from the opening line of the book, *‘in the beginning,’* which is derived from Greek. Subsequently, the naming of the book reflects the setting of the book, as it tells the story of creation. It is therefore in Genesis 1 and 2 where the book deals with the creation of the world and humankind.

According to Whybray (2001:18), each event is described in a distinct chronological order. He does point out, though, that this magnificent history was not initially intended to be a single work. Most people agree that it is made up of two complexes. Historically, he says that the Book of Genesis sets itself off in Ancient Mesopotamia. During its time of being penned down, the Israelites were under the rule and persecution of the Babylonians. Many of the female characters during this time were portrayed in subordinate roles and marginalised positions, which can be seen as reflecting the patriarchal values of the time when the text was put together. Scholz (2010:197) says this is also attested in instances where women are often depicted as wives and mothers, with their importance of existence primarily tied to their reproductive abilities.

A feminist view on the historical setting of Genesis, according to Scholz (2010:197), seeks to examine the text through the lens of gender and power dynamics. It intends

to critically analyse the portrayal of women and their roles within the narratives, as well as the overall patriarchal nature of the society reflected in the text. The historical setting of the Book of Genesis, Davis (2018:58), argues that it is believed to be a combination of different time periods and traditions. It is a part of the Hebrew Bible and the scholars generally agree that it was written down during the Babylonian Exile. However, it appears as per Davis (2018:61), that the stories and traditions found in Genesis likely have much older origins, with some elements possibly dating back thousands of years before they were written down. It is equally important to note that the Genesis narrative contains historical elements, while it is considered a religious and theological text, it contains mythological elements and serves as a foundational text for the Jewish and Christian faiths.

3.4.1 Socially

O'Connor (2018:5) recounts that this book is set when the Israelites were living as a diaspora community, meaning that they were a community that was basically uprooted from their homeland and consequently, found themselves scattered all over the Babylonian Empire. Thus, the writing of Genesis is believed to have taken place when ancient Israel was undergoing significant social changes. During this time the societal structures were evolving and the Israelites were experiencing social transformations which influenced the shape of the book.

Among other things, the Israelites had experienced the destruction of their Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians, resulting in the forced exile of many Jews to Babylon. This Whybra (2001:18) denotes that the event deeply impacted their identity and religious practices. He adds that because of being uprooted from their familiarity and homeland, the Israelites ended up being faced with difficulty in the identity preservation of their own culture and religion, while they were in a different land, practising different cultures and religions and living with different people.

3.4.2. Religiously

According to Hays and Duvall (2011:40), Genesis 1 emphasizes how distinct the Lord God of Israel is from the pagan gods of Israel's neighbors. As a result, unlike the pagan gods, their god did not struggle and fight to restore order to the world. Actually, it was just as the Lord God spoke. Moreover, Hays and Duvall (2011:40) regard the creation of humanity as the story's culmination, with God creating man and woman in his image and bestowing upon them a unique and wonderful status that was alien to the pagan religions of antiquity.

Walton (2001:465) asserts that religiously, the constant grappling with the destruction of the Israelites' Temple was one of their challenges. It included among many challenges the central religious institution and the loss of their land. Subsequently, this raised concerns and questions about their relationship with God and also their identity as the chosen people.

O'Connor (2018:5) is adamant that the writing of Genesis came at the right time when they were in exile. It aided in the preservation of their faith, as it provided them with a narrative framework that expounds on their history, the origins of their people, and most importantly their relationship with God. According to O'Connor (2018:5), the destruction went far beyond death and physical destruction of the habitat. Of most importance for biblical books, warfare and imperial occupation tended to produce profound theological crises. For Israel, long-held traditions collapsed under the weight of Babylonian imperialism. O'Connor alludes that God had promised to dwell with the Israelites in the Temple of Jerusalem but the Babylonians had burned it down. God had made a declaration that a son of David would sit on Judah's throne forever, however, the Babylonians had sent the king into captivity in Babylon. In addition, the land that God had promised to Abraham, was now under the control of the Babylonians and Persians.

3.4.3. Politically

The Book of Genesis is shaped by the disputes between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Jacob and Jacob (2007:11) note that politically, Babylon held and controlled the greatest power at that time, which the Israelites had to submit themselves under. Thereafter, the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and some of their people were taken into the Babylonian exile under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar II.

According to O'Connor (2018:4), the Babylonians had gained control prior to the rise of Persia by defeating the Assyrians in the year 612 BCE and eventually taking over their conquered territory. O'Connor (2018:5) records that during this time, the Babylonians decimated the nation, deported the leadership, destroyed much of the capital city of Jerusalem, removed the king, burned down the Temple, undermined the economy and occupied the land. O'Connor (2018:5), is convinced that the Persian Empire which conquered Babylon and allowed the exiled Jews to return, somehow exerted significant influence over the region. Persian values, such as centralised power and religious tolerance, may have possibly impacted the authors of Genesis.

Alice Mandell (2022: 122) summarises the impossible task to link the book of Genesis to a specific time and situation so effectively that is worth quoting it as a whole:

...[S]cholarship posits that the biblical stories in Genesis should first be evaluated as the product of Israel's social history, as defined by the Israelite and Judean experience of empire and exile into the first millennium BCE, and its scribal history, which places the composition of Genesis in a late- to post-monarchal context. This downdating of the composition of biblical literature correlates with the peak of Hebrew inscriptional findings (8th–6th centuries BCE). Seen in the political context of the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian empires, Genesis is understood as an ideological composition that reflects the concerns of people living under the shadow of foreign empires in the second half of the first millennium BCE. Genesis, as a literary space, functions as an ark; it is designed as a curated representation of what was,

while its language of covenant and promise speaks to future generations about what could be.

3.4.4. Culturally

The Book of Genesis according to O'Connor (2018:4), particularly chapters 1 and 2 were written during the Babylonian exile, where the children of Israel found themselves outside the space that was familiar to them. Therefore, it comes to the fore from an environment influenced by Mesopotamian creation myths. What is unique amidst all of that, is its ability to stand apart through proclaiming the absolute sovereignty of the Hebrew God under very dire circumstances of the existence of other gods. This is the reason we attest the text, which entertains no polytheism, instead, embraces and relentlessly asserts a strong belief of monotheism. During this period, O'Connor (2018:4) alludes that there was a lot of interaction between various cultures and traditions, leading to syncretism. The blending of beliefs and practices. Some of these were the shift of gender roles and family structures, which is reflected in the patriarchal framework presented in Genesis, where there seems to be a dominant social order of the time, with male figures holding primary positions of authority and power. He therefore likes to believe that the cultural exchange had an influence on the outcome of Genesis. Mandell (2022:123-124) mentions that it was especially Hermann Gunkel's study of Enuma Elish, Gilgamesh, and the Genesis creation and flood stories which led to the suggestion that Genesis 1-11, and particularly the sections attributed to P, originated from the Mesopotamian traditions and that they were also polemically against them.⁴

⁴ See also Walton's (2022: 157-162) comparisons between the Genesis creation narratives and the Near Eastern ones, especially concerning decrees and order.

3.5. Reception of the Book of Genesis and Genesis 1 & 2.

This section is the culminating point of this reception study. In the sections above it became clear that the historical background of Genesis and Genesis 1&2 specifically is not that easy to determine. It also became clear that this book should not be read as a historical account, but rather as a blend of ideologies that represents the concerns of those living under foreign rulers. It is generally accepted that ideologies cannot exist outside a context. Therefore, the study of the reception of these texts forms the final point in this chapter to determine how the culture and the context in which the texts were written and received, influenced the reception and understanding of these narratives and how it relates to the ultimate portrayal and/or perception of a woman. Shectman (2022:189) confirms the importance of such a study.

Black (1975:177) brings to our attention that in our common usage, many people believe that saying something is a myth or mythical means that it is not true. As a result, they interpret the Bible's inclusion of myths as equivalent to saying that it contains false information. As a result, they interpret the Bible's inclusion of myths as equivalent to saying that it contains false information. However, he says such an attitude is based on a mistaken idea of what the Hebrew writer had in mind when he made use of myths.

In concurrence, Brettler (2005:37) rules out the creation story as science but rather a myth. This he says is simply because the job of a scientist, like a modern historian is to analyse competing theories and on the basis of evidence, then determine the correct one. Thus, Brettler argues that the creation story or the Book of Genesis more than anything else is a myth to a great extent. He explains that in the scholarly world, a myth's significance of interpretation is viewed differently, particularly with anthropology and classical studies as there is consensus that a myth is an essential and constructive element of all cultures. Brettler (2005:89) goes on to define a myth as a metaphor. Unlike non-figurative language, metaphors are neither right nor wrong, therefore can be classified as helpful or unhelpful, original or standard. He makes a strong assertion that all metaphors are false by definition, which can be said with myths. Although they may be literal like metaphors, they are true, often profoundly so

on a figurative level. So, both metaphors and myths according to Brettler, play an important role in society because of the limitations of non-figurative language.

In agreement, O'Connor (2018:28) thinks that Genesis, and particularly the creation stories do not answer the questions of modern science as the ancient writers did not know of such. Instead, they were writing for the people of their time, using their own cultural, religious and scientific traditions. So, rather than concluding this literature as of modern science, is a proclamation of an act of faith and inducement of hope employing the human language that resonates with the people of that time. Additionally, Gibson (1981:10) contends that the long-standing, acrimonious debate between science and religion is being written off as history. He acknowledges that Genesis adds only a spiritual element to our understanding and that science is the best source for factual information regarding the physical origin and nature of the universe. He goes on to say that in ancient Israel, ordinary people did not go to school or college, instead, taught themselves and their children through the only means available to them. This took place through storytelling (imaginative stories) to one another either at their homes or social gatherings. We are compelled to first go back across the centuries and try to hear the stories of Genesis as they would be heard by the Hebrews for whom they were first intended.

According to Whybray (2001:39), the Book of Genesis is the ancient, pre-scientific historiography that these historians used as a guide when writing accounts of the histories, ancestry, and origins of the prominent families of their day. In the end, these historians failed to discern between myth, legend, and the historical facts as we know them today. Their main goal was to make their readers aware of their own identity and give them the impression that they were members of a great and noble city of race, rather than to prove the accuracy of the events they recounted.

According to Hamilton (1990:27), the Yahwist (J) wrote in Judah under Solomon's rule under pseudonym. As a result, this source covers Israel's history from the time of its patriarchy until its readiness to enter Canaan. J is the exclusive use of Yahweh as a symbol. Further hints are made by Hamilton (1990:27) that the Elohist was also written in northern Israel under pseudonym soon after the united monarchy fell. As a result, it

essentially covers the same time period as J, albeit with the caveat that J begins with the patriarchs rather than creation. He continues by hinting that the Priestly Writer (P) gave careful consideration to matters of chronology, liturgy, and genealogy. Thus, P is not concerned with presenting, in contrast to J and E.

Without getting caught up (again) in the source debate, it is necessary to refer to the different units to attempt to understand their purpose. Mandell (2022:132-133) explains it as follows:

The juxtaposition of the primeval narratives (Gen 1–11), which have clear Mesopotamian analogues, with the stories of Yhwh's pact with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12–50), which are identity-statement stories, suggest that the aims of Genesis lie not in presenting an accurate view of a received oral history but in creating a unifying origin myth, one that would appeal to contemporary and future generations. This understanding reframes the ancestor stories as a reshaping of history in order to make history. Genesis, as a curated work, was crafted as a response to the social and political crises arising from the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian periods. The compositional complexity of Genesis also reflects the diverse aims of the people who selected, wrote, and revised its materials.

O'Connor (2018:28) confirms these narratives were predominantly confined and understood within Judaism, and therefore interpreted within the theological frameworks of their tradition. Hamilton (1990:27) argues that some interpret these chapters literally, seeing them as a historical account of how the universe was created by God in six days. Others on the other hand view them symbolically, emphasising theological truths rather than literal events.

From a scholarly perspective, Gibson (1981:10) submits that Genesis 1 and 2 are studied within the context of Ancient Near Eastern literature and creation myths, comparative analysis therefore reveals similarities and differences with other creation stories, shedding light on the cultural and theological perspective of the ancient Israelites. Overall, O'Connor (2018:31) asserts that the reception of Genesis 1 and 2

continues to be a subject of debate, exploration and interpretation among religious communities, scholars and individuals seeking to understand their significance. This is because even today, the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 continues to vary widely among different religious groups, cultural backgrounds, scholars and individuals, including women.

In a nutshell, Stanton (2002:118) submits that the reception history of Genesis 1 and 2 spans millennia and encompasses a wide range of interpretations influenced by cultural, religious, and social factors. O'Connor (2018:27) says in the beginning, these texts were likely understood within the context of ancient Near Eastern cosmology and creation myths. This means that throughout history, the reception of Genesis 1 and 2 has been in ways that reflect various religious traditions, theological perspectives and societal norms. According to Stanton (2002:119), the reception of Genesis reveals a complex and evolving interpretation over time. Initially, Genesis was read as a literal account of creation and the early history of humanity. Overall, Stanton (2002:119) highlights the reception history of Genesis 1 and 2 is rich and diverse, reflecting the ever-evolving nature of biblical interpretation, questioning the literal truth of the text and the ongoing relevance of these ancient texts to contemporary religious and cultural discourse.

Provan (2016:12) provides an insightful and comprehensive account of the evolution of Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation from antiquity to the present in his book: *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. He says that many of the first readers of Genesis, both Jews and Christians, interpreted the book in what we would now refer to as a "literal" or "historical" sense, or possibly in the "plain sense" of the text—the meaning we, after reading the text, would surmise the original author wanted to convey. This method of analysing the text is known in Judaism as *peshat*. It involves closely examining the language in a passage to determine its meaning. Rabbi Ishmael's school is more closely linked to this literal interpretation of the midrash than Rabbi Akiva's, who both founded prominent schools of midrashic interpretation in the first half of the second century CE. Rabbi Ishmael built on the hermeneutical approach of the first-century Hillel before him. *Peshat* was closely related to *derash*, the

homiletical application to the present, because the goal of reading the Torah was to learn how to live in the present. Even Philo, who is not usually associated with literal reading, acknowledges the historical validity of the biblical text and occasionally expresses his appreciation for it. Christians also interpret the text for its obvious meaning, and Augustine (at least) emphasizes this in his writings (Provan 2016:12). Although the early Christian readers used this approach they also believed that the “Bible must be read in consistency with itself, with the faith of the church at large and with what was known from other sources to be true and good” (Provan 2016:19).

Provan (2022:342) states that the early church did not only utilise the literal approach but also other approaches like allegorical and moral interpretations.

Shectman (2022:191) sadly notes the damage that the male dominance / female subordination gender paradigm has caused on giving men sexual entitlement or power over women, particularly within the borders of both Africans and African Americans. According to Walton (2001:466), some religious believers, particularly within conservative or fundamentalist circles, interpret Genesis 1 and 2 literally, believing that they provide a straightforward historical account of how the world and humanity were created. While Gibson (1981:11) mentions that other religious believers, including many within mainstream Christianity, reconcile the findings of modern science with their faith by interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 as compatible with the theory of evolution.

Subsequently, O'Connor (2018:31) admits that they see the creation story as conveying theological truths rather than precise historical events. According to Shectman (2022:191) borrowing the thought from female interpreters such as Phyllis Trible, she sees the text demonstrating equality in the creation more than anything else. She argues that the male and female is synonymous with the image of God. Ultimately, in accordance to Shectman (2022:192) relations between male and female become more hierarchically ranked, where the increase in male status over the female becomes encoded in the literary production of Genesis 2. Gibson (1981:12) on the other hand argues that many theologians and religious scholars interpret Genesis 1 and 2 symbolically or allegorically, emphasising the theological and moral lessons conveyed in the text rather than its historical accuracy. This approach ultimately allows

for a more flexible understanding of the creation narrative, while also reflecting a wide range of perspectives influenced by religious beliefs, scholarly research, cultural contexts and individual experiences. Hendel, Kronfeld and Pardes (2010:72) argue that Genesis 1 from the Priestly version of creation serves as the primary exegetical clue in Tribes more elaborate work. With regards to the Yahwistic tale of creation in Genesis 2, Hendel, Kronfeld and Pardes (2010:72) say that Tribe ventures to refute the notion that seem to imply that God created man first and shows that if this were the case, it does not necessarily imply superiority of man over woman. Subsequently, depicting that all these historical patriarchal domination and interpretation led to gender roles and hierarchical environments both in a workspace and home instead of affirming the equality of men and women.

Collins (2004:69) mentions that the closeness between man and woman is reflected in the account of the original creation, but he admits that the idea that a woman is taken from a man's rib and the fact that he was created before her, led in the past to the idea of subordination. He says that for two thousand years the "implication of subordination was thought to be obvious". The reception of these narratives in the New Testament is even mirroring this interpretation. He refers to Paul's interpretation of it as follows:

In the course of his attempt to argue that women should cover their heads when they pray or prophesy: "man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man" (1 Cor 11:8-9; cf. 1 Tim 2:13, which forbids women to teach or have authority over men, because "Adam was formed first"). Even Paul recognised the anomaly of this claim. He added that though woman came from man, "so man comes through woman, and all things come from God" (1 Cor 11:12) and that "in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, or man independent of woman" (v. 11).

It became clear that the reception of Genesis, and the two creation narratives specifically, were traditionally seen as subordination and this certainly added to the roles that were determined in the past for women. Another reading of these narratives

from a feminist lens might assist in another reception and more inclusive understanding of these texts.

3.6. Synthesis

O' Connor (2018:31) asserts that the authorship, date, place and audience of the Book of Genesis are subjects of scholarly debate, that is ongoing. While traditionally it has been attributed to Moses, during the Israelites' wilderness wanderings, which its audience included the ancient Israelites. The modern scholarship has since suggested that Genesis is a compilation of oral traditions, written down by multiple authors over centuries, therefore, reflecting various theological perspectives and cultural influences. Newsom (2008:60) submits that there is still no scholarly consensus on the authorship, however, ruling out Moses as the author.

It is important to note that the socio-historical context factors presented above may be speculative to some extent, given the limited historical evidence available. However, Jacob and Jacob (2007:13) denote that they provide a broader contextual understanding of the societal influences that might have shaped the writing of Genesis. Brown (2012:15) believes that the socio-historical context enables feminists to analyse the Book within a broader context of the ancient Near Eastern. This is having examined the socio-historical context which involves the patriarchal structure that existed during that time, where women were often relegated to subordinate roles and their voices and experiences were marginalised or excluded from historical narratives. This might be the reason that this patriarchal framework is embedded in the portrayal of women in the biblical text. It appears that the current gender inequality and patriarchal norms might have been perpetuated by the male dominance and female subordination that is portrayed in Genesis. Furthermore, the socio-historical context of Genesis is understood to demonstrate the unequal power dynamics between men and women. Women are often associated with temptation, blamed for humanity's fall and ultimately, burdened with the consequences of their actions. This understanding, therefore, might influence harmful gender stereotypes and also subconsciously reinforce the notion of women's inherent inferiority. Thus, Brown (2012:58) argues that feminists are of the

view that the Book may have been written and edited by male authors who held patriarchal views, hence the discrepancy between men and woman.

It is equally imperative to note that a different interpretation and understanding may also highlight moments of resistance and empowerment within the text. This fresh analysis and perspective reveal how patriarchal structures influenced the portrayal and experience of women in biblical narratives. Consequently, Davis (2018:60) believes this call for critical examination of biblical texts and encourages recognition of women's agency and equality in religious and social contexts. Yee (2018:58) agrees that the traditional interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2 have often been used to justify gender discrimination and inequality. Therefore, she recommends that a fresh interpretation is crucial and might aid in challenging these harmful views and promote a more inclusive understanding of the biblical text. Scholz (2010:180) believes that the re-evaluation of these texts through a lens that prioritises equality and justice, could at the end contribute to dismantling discriminatory attitudes and fostering a more inclusive community. This is the reason that Johnson (2015:235) encourages further questioning and interpretation of the text to uncover hidden voices against patriarchal voices or domination. This might assist in reclaiming and reinterpreting and ultimately women emancipation.

However, one needs to consider the manner in which the structure of the Book is sectioned. Gertz (2022:70) infers that some question the validity and dating of 'J' and 'E' sources, others have abandoned the research, others remained loyal, while others have attempted to rejuvenate it. Nevertheless, the source theories enables a deep understanding of God. Regarding the source theory this study will, only refer to Priestly and non-Priestly sources. Genesis 1:1—2:4a is seen as P while Genesis 2, which is considered to be not typically P will be classified as non-Priestly.

The first narrative according to Von Rad (1972:25) indicates the supremacy and transcendency of God as the sole Creator, who is orderly and alone speak things into being. While the second narrative expounds the God who is intimate and personal through the creation of Adam and Eve. It is therefore Johnson (2015:235) who asserts

that the creation of man and woman did not only assign them different roles but has given rise to patriarchy and hierarchy, due to socio-historical context.

The reception of Genesis 1 and 2 varies greatly depending on cultural, religious and scholarly perspectives in diverse contexts. The early church did not only utilise the literal approach but also other approaches like allegorical and moral interpretations. Shectman (2022:191) sadly notes the damage that the male dominance / female subordination gender paradigm has caused on giving men sexual entitlement or power over women, particularly within the borders of both Africans and African Americans. admits that the reception of Genesis 1 and 2, led in the past to the idea of subordination and that this interpretation is even mirrored in the New Testament.

It became clear that the reception of Genesis, and the two creation narratives specifically, were traditionally seen as relegation and this undoubtedly added to the roles that were allocated in the past for women. Another reading of these narratives – from a feminist lens – might assist in another reception and more inclusive understanding of these texts.

Chapter 4: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1 and 2.

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background study of the book of Genesis which includes socio-historical background study, the reception of the text and the structure. Looking at how Scripture was initially developed and over time and how culture, tradition and patriarchy influenced the interpretation and reception of the text, then, and today. Essentially, chapter three has provided a smooth progress into the exegetical phase of the Book. It will be a synchronic study, narrowing it to the two creation narratives (Genesis 1 and 2). Bearing in mind that Genesis 3 is part of the creation pericope, the demarcation therefore is simply to narrow down the study at this stage with the intention to focus on the garden narrative in a future study. Therefore, the thrust of this chapter will endeavour to conduct a research study on the meaning of the author's wording and sentences in the two creation narratives, making use of the different translations and also finding meaning based on the historical context and original language of the Hebrew Bible. The intention is to try and extract meaning through the deconstruction of the text based on the use of language, which might enable a different interpretation and understanding of the text.

Stuart (2009:6) provides insight in terms of different ways to conduct a full exegesis, with the caution that some may not be relevant to the purposes or scopes of the particular needs of the exegesis. Of the important things that make up the exegesis as recommended by Stuart. The historical context is one essential element as it helps in bringing the understanding of the historical background, social setting, geographical setting and date of the passage. However, seeing that this portion has been intensely dealt with in chapter three, the main focus will be a combination of structure and the application of the text (see 4.4 and 4.5). The other exegetical concepts will only be

touched upon briefly (see 4.2 and 4.3). The overarching purpose of this chapter is to investigate a new interpretation of the two creation narratives and an attempt to convey the message for the contemporary audience.

4.2. Pericope Demarcation

In the previous chapter it became clear that according to the source theory, Genesis 1 is seen as part of the Priestly literature while Genesis 2 to 3 is regarded as non-Priestly. Although Genesis 2 and 3 form part of one unit, which is generally referred to as the Garden of Narrative (see Carr 1993), I had to narrow the study down. Therefore, I decided to focus for this study only on the chapters that cover the two creation narratives.

Except for the different sources, there are a few other aspects which indicate that Genesis 1 and 2 can be distinguished as two pericopes. Genesis 1 starts with an introductory formula and Genesis 2:4 has an announcement formula. There is also a thematic shift as well as a change in plot and characters between Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the rest of Genesis 2. The first narrative has a repetitive narration which begins with the announcement of a new day and ends every time with "...and God saw that it was good".

These two narratives can thus easily be discerned as separate pericopes.

4.3. Translation of Genesis 1 & 2

4.3.1. Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

1.¹ In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was moved over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”

⁷ And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament. And it was so.

⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven.³ And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.

¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering place of the water he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so.

¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,

¹⁵ And let them be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, and also the stars.

¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

¹⁸ and to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heaven.”

²¹ And God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.

²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make (hu)man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heaven and over the livestock and over the whole of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And 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 heaven and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heaven and to everything that creeps on the earth, wherein there is the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2. ¹ Thus the heaven and the earth were finalised, and all the host of them.

² And on the seventh day God ended his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work, that he had created and made.

4.3.2. Genesis 2:4 – 25

2. ⁴ These are the generations of the heaven and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heaven.

⁵ no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the land, and there was no (hu)man to work the ground,

⁶ but a mist went up from the land and was watered the whole face of the ground—

⁷ and the LORD God formed the (hu)man of dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the (hu)man became a living creature.

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the (hu)man whom he had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four streams.

¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

¹² And the gold of that land is good; also bdellium and onyx stone are there.

¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush.

¹⁴ And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the (hu)man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and preserve it.

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the (hu)man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

¹⁹ Then out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heaven and brought them to the (hu)man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heaven and to every beast of the field. But for Adam (the human) there was not found a helper fit for him.

²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the (hu)man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the (hu)man.

²³ Then the (hu)man said, “This at last is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵ And the (hu)man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

4.4. Structural Analysis of Genesis 1:1–2:25

Stuart (2009:7) says the understanding of structure is the deep appreciation of the flow of content designed into the passage by the mind of the author. Furthermore he (2009:15) suggests that structure comprises the construction of an outline that will be a representation of major units of information, logically grouped together. Emphasising that an outline should be a natural, not artificial, outgrowth of the passage. The beauty of a structure which develops into an outline relies on one’s ability to notice the number of components included under one topic, immediately when noticing a transition in a topic, subject, issue or concept, an outline is to be formulated for a new topic. In doing this, Stuart (2009:51) submits that it helps one to pay attention to the fact that meaning is conveyed by more than just words or sentences through the examination of the literary and biblical contexts. Subsequently, the aim of exegesis is to draw and determine meaning from the text. Inasmuch as it helps to discover what the text meant, it also desires to uncover what it means now. According to Stuart (2009:26) exegesis remains an empty intellectual entertainment when divorced from application as God’s word is not only meant for individuals of the past but for us and the generation to follow.

Stuart (2009:27) argues that the reason is because the exegesis has the responsibility to define areas within which a faithful response will be found and also the need to warn about putative areas of response that the passage might seek to call for, whether directing or informing.

Therefore, the trajectory of this will follow the formulated structure in a form of outlines, grouped under one title, influenced by the interpretation and understanding of the text with special emphasis on God as the Creator and His creation (including humans). The study will therefore seek to do a word study through examining words and phrases even the gramma found in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, explaining concepts where necessary and noting their meaning. The discussion will be organised based on the structure outline.

4.4.1. Structural Outline

Genesis 1:1-2: God as a subject matter of our lives.

Genesis 1:3-25: The Creator God is still the divine order God.

Genesis 1:26-30: Human beings are the image bearers of the divine.

Genesis 1:31-2:3: The intrinsically artistry work of the Creator.

Genesis 2:4-17 God alone is the Creator (monotheism) and Provider.

Genesis 2:18-25: God establishes a divine community.

4.4.2. An Exegetical Discussion of the Text as Per the Outlines Above.

4.4.2.1. God as a Subject Matter of our Lives – Genesis 1:1–2

The account of creation cautions us of the unique involvement of God right from the beginning of all things, everything that is in the world do not exist by themselves but are a result of the Supreme God. Thus, Adeyemo (2011:47) confidently says that these verses are a revelation of God as a subject. *“In the beginning...”* (NIV), *“At the beginning...”* (ELT), *“In the beginning...”* (KJV) *“In the beginning...”* (NRSV), that is

how the chapter opens. That according to O'Connor (2018:30) refers to the Hebrew term '*bereshit.*' Meaning that this is read as a temporal clause as it provides the start of the divine actions that take place in the rest of the chapter. O'Connor further alludes that verse one is understood as a complete sentence, a declarative statement that introduces the entire chapter.

To Arnold (2013:29), "*in the beginning*" is a complicated Hebrew term that signifies the beginning of everything except God who has no beginning. He adds to say that the chapter was intentionally composed as a prologue to what follows in Genesis and perhaps beyond Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

This, according to Jacob and Jacob (2007:1), entails that God is not only the beginning but began it all. Through it all Jacob and Jacob submit that God is not simply the architect, but the absolute master of the universe. As a result, no sentence could be better fitted for the opening of the Book of Books. He concludes to say only an all pervading conviction of God's absolute power could have produced it.

"*In the beginning...*" Fretheim (1994:319) sees it as an independent sentence, depicting the first act of creation followed by further phases. Accordingly, verse one serves as a summary of a chapter and verse two describes the prior conditions. However, in all this, God is the only subject through and through.

To Adeyemo (2011:47) '*in the beginning*' depicts '*first.*' With that, he means that the very first thing that God created was the heaven and earth, which he refers to as the raw shell, "*formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep.*" Even in that state, God was still controlling the creation project that He began. According to Gibson (1981:6), this highlights the sovereignty of God, because He created the world which belongs to Him and He decides everything that happens in it. His sovereignty makes Him the subject of our lives through His will and power shown in creation, He is the Lord over all things. Walton (2001:69) concurs that as "*the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*" that signifies that the ongoing creation project takes place under God's watchful eye and results from his power. He says as the earth was without form and void, he locates the Hebrew word '*ruach*' which means '*wind*' as well as

'spirit' alluding that the mighty wind was blowing over the surface, serving as an introductory phase to verse three. Arnold (2009:39) concurs that the announcement that "*the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*" depicts God's presence on the scene, anticipating God's dramatic decree to be revealed in the next verse.

Brettler (2005:40) says God alone structured primordial matter and a world that is unformed and void into a highly organised world. This denotes that only God is the Creator, hence the use of the Hebrew verb, 'bara' 'to create,' which, unlike other creation terms, this one 'bara' always has God as its subject. In accordance to Gibson (1981:23) an explicit evidence of the verb 'create' as translated in Hebrew 'bara,' which other similar Hebrew verbs like 'make' 'asah' and 'form' 'yatsar' can have God or a human being as a subject. Meaning that 'bara' is used exclusively for the Creator (God). Furthermore, Gibson argues that in the English language, we can speak of the creativity of the artist, but in Hebrew, the subject of 'bara' is invariably and solely God. As a result, there is never any mention of the material used in referral to his work in creation.

Fretheim (1994:342) agrees that this makes God the Creator of all things, He has always been there. He is the Creator, never the creature. He further mentions that only God can create and that makes Him the subject of the verb 'bara' with no object or material. In fact, it makes him unimaginable and distinct as God, as 'bara' speaks of what only God can do leading to the formulation of 'Ex-nihilo.' Fretheim expounds the 'Ex-nihilo' as the condition prior to everything, "...the formless void" is neither nothing nor an undifferentiated mass, the waters, darkness, and the wind are discrete realities but refers to the world as void and empty, in the sense of something desolate and unproductive. This according to Gibson (1981:23) Means that God is independent of us, we need Him but He does not need us. In himself, God is before time and beyond space and only enters time and space because he wants to.

4.4.2.2. The Creator God is still the Divine Order God – Genesis 1:3–25

One cannot fail to recognise the profoundness of the divine order of God as the Creator. According to Brettler (2005:49), God admires his work as the only Creator, therefore the verb *'bara'* accentuates God's majesty, hence God self praises himself. God astounds to the receptiveness of the world as it is completely responsive to his commands. Every work of creation according to Jacob and Jacob (2007:2) is introduced in the same manner, "... *let there or the...*" implying pattern and that all of them originate through God's Word. He says out of this derives not only the Creator God but the Divine Order God, who just spoke and through unconditional obedience, the world came into being. He asserts that there was not even a struggle between light and darkness.

Next, He says, "*It is good.*" Brettler (2005:48) finds this not surprising at all given that this is a Priestly Story. The Priestly Story in ancient Israel concerned itself with high order, with chaos as its opposite. Kessler (2013:128) concurs with Brettler in noting the orderly manner of God in the creation story. God first created the three spaces on day one to three. From day four to six, He filled those spaces with inhabitants. His order goes as far as placing all these specific types of living creatures in the spaces below the sky, consisting of air, water and land. In the end, the birds fly in the air, fish swim in the waters, and animals and humans live on the land. Therefore, Kessler admits that it accentuates God's majesty and orderly nature which is evidenced in seeing that there is a space for everything and everything is in its place.

According to Adeyemo (2011:48) each new stage of creation carries in it God's creative utterances as the Creator, "*let there be or let the...*" As a result, all that God ordered to come into being, came to be. This declares that He is both able to create and to command creation. Furthermore, Arnold (2009:39) asserts in remarkably clear and succinct terms that God speaks and transforms everything. He calls God's method of creation, divine *'fiat'* or *'spoken word.'* Something that apparently was very familiar elsewhere in the ancient world, where a king issued a decree, the creative orders were given and fulfilled.

In this case, however, Arnold (2009:39) notes that there is no one else there to receive the command and carry out the order, which differentiates this from others. He gives applause as the very speech of God brings something into existence by *'fiat'* alone things follow the divine order. Walton (2001:69) says as the Creator performs His work in a step-by-step manner, He examines each stage and promotes it as *"good"* before moving on to the next. *'Good,' 'tob'* in this context entails the divine evaluation that He could move on, as that indicates order against disorder. It is precisely what God has ordered, no more and no less perfection and completely satisfying to God in every respect. All the stages of creation are completed in six special days, resulting in a universe that is perfect before the beginning of time and history. Walton connotes that we seek God through His power speaking things into being. In essence, this assures us that we can confidently rely on this same power as what God orders or commands in our life shall come into existence in an orderly fashion.

4.4.2.3. Human Beings are the Image Bearers of the Divine – Genesis 1:26–30

At this moment this chapter reaches a climactic moment, the first human appearance is distinguished by a different kind of divine speech. Adeyemo (2011:48) notes that prior to this time God had simply spoken things into being and ordered a redeployment of something through a spoken word. God gives humans a special place, as evidenced by the fact that this form of creation required a special decision—likely made at a special gathering. The plurality "let us make" emphasises that something novel and significant is about to occur while highlighting the gravity of the choice. Arnold (2009:39) coincides with Adeyemo, in that the use of *'fiat'* and plurality in this context is indicative of something new that is about to happen. This time around He consults the divine council and the lofty plural words *"let us"* make this event distinctive as it also signifies the community of the Godhead, the three in one, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. According to Arnold (2009:44), this is a pregnant way of saying that God thought carefully before creating humans, but it does not necessarily refer to multiple persons or beings involved in the act of human creation. In other words, it does not refer to the Trinity, but it is how God speak when He speaks with himself. This is clear

if we compare it with other similar event, like we find in Genesis 3:22, 11:7. This is a moment that God and all of creation have awaited, hence God Himself decisively steps in to make humankind.

Moreover, Adeyemo (2011:48) alludes that “...*mankind in our image*,” suggests that human beings are different from other created beings like animals, as a result, this very fact has an important consequence on how human beings are to live. Being created in God’s image means that every human being resembles their Creator in some way. Consequently, this fact, positions every human being as special and important, but also responsible. This means that every human being recognises themselves and their Creator in one another. Walton (2001:135) agrees that every human being is of importance in the eyes of God as they are a representative of God simply by being created in God’s image. He says the Hebrew word ‘*selem*’ ‘*image*’ according to the Near Eastern thought is an important theological concept as one is to carry the essence of that which it represented.

However, ‘*selem*’ is a representative in a physical form, not a representation of the actual physical appearance, that which can be seen through a physical eye.

Jacob and Jacob (2007:9), argue that the ‘*image of God*’ ‘*imago Dei*’ does not imply physically that humans are not marked differently about the bodily structure of either animals or humans. He makes a reminder that God is a purely spiritual being without body or form. However, a man being created in the ‘*image of God*’ ‘*imago Dei*’ indicates that man is the highest earthly being, both different and superior. Ultimately, a human being is a representative of God on earth and possesses the divine superiority as an image of God. Adeyemo (2011:51) says this asserts that all human beings are to recognise the Creator in a man and woman, “*male and female He created them.*” According to O’Connor (2018:38), this is clear and against the ancient cultural expectations of male dominance, male and female form equal parts of this creation, ‘*male and female.*’ He goes on to say that men alone are not divinely created in God’s image, meaning that both equally share in the divine like quality. The text portrays that a human being reveals something of God, the iconic status that grants

them human dignity. O'Connor (2018:38) brings awareness that the text is not very explicit in this regard.

However, even though this is not explicit in the text, he pulls in Norren L Herzefeld who provides a very helpful summary of three interpretative notions or approaches pertaining to the *'image of God;'* **substantive, functional and relational**. Firstly, she speaks of the substantive notion that holds that human beings are like God in their substance, that is, in their ability to reason. Secondly, the functional understanding of humans made in the *'image of God'* arises from God's commission for humans to have dominion. Meaning that humans act as God's agents on earth and function like regents in God's place. Finally, O'Connor (2018:39) submits Karl Barth believed that the plural speech used by the Creator, *"let us create humans in our image,"* points to the divine relationship within God self and with humans, tracing the Trinitarian language and formula, and the same relation is expected from humans. Walton (2001:137) concludes that being made in the *'image of God'* confers dignity, entrusts responsibility and implants a certain potential capacity on human beings to mirror their Creator. Strawn (2022:233) refers to the different kinds of images of God that are found in the book of Genesis. He argues that people only truly become like God insofar as they resemble God. Thus reflecting an action rather than a state of being. He concludes:

[L]imits for the human imago seem present already in text (1), which states that humans are not God but only (and at best) in God's image and after God's likeness – which is to say "similar . . . but not identical." The many different instantiations of the human imago, the many imagines in Genesis and beyond, reveal that there are countless ways in which humans properly image God and/or fail to do so in comparison with God's own imagines. The biblical material in Genesis and beyond contributes much by way of rounding out the latter, especially in God's relentless pursuit of humankind, despite its many schemes.

Thus, Fretheim (1994:346) denotes that both men and women were blessed by God and entrusted with a twofold assignment, *"to increase in number and fill the earth and to rule over creation and to subdue the earth."* It is implied that God created the first

humans and has since given all other creatures the ability to procreate. This involves a sharing of the divine creative capacities. According to Fretheim's further explanation, the verb "*have dominion*" (*rada*) must be interpreted in terms of providing care and nurturing rather than exploitation. Humans should relate to nonhumans in the same way that God does because they are made in God's "image."

In addition, '*subdue*' '*kabas*' Fretheim (1994:346) connotes that it offers the human being the task of intra-creational development of bringing the world along to its fullest possible creational potential. Arnold (2009:45) concurs that humans were made in the image of God to exercise "*dominion*" and "*subdue*." In a similar vein, he claims that this sentence expresses the reason God created humans in his image and serves as the purpose clause. According to Arnold, the exercise of dominance in the universe is what makes God's creation bear the "image of God."

In accordance to O'Connor (2018:40), the human vocation to till the earth, '*to subdue it*' and have '*dominion over*' other creatures is a vocation of a relationship.

It is indicative as per Adeyemo (2011:51) that humanity was to increase to enjoy and occupy the space created by God. Crucially, it also suggests that taking care of God's creation was and still is the first way in which each of us can honor and serve God. He points out that only over other living things, not over other people were men and women allowed to rule. Nor were men given the authority to dominate women or vice versa. As bearers of the divine image, Adeyemo says human beings are not to dominate one another but together and communally preserve that image through the stewardship of the creation. It is subsequent to that, that Fretheim (1994:4) puts forward that God who is the natural '*giver*' '*natan*,' provides vegetation to human beings and animals that will sustain their lives as they live in relation to one another.

O'Connor (2018:40) states that God gives plants and fruit with seeds to humans to be their food and to all other living creatures God gives green plants. This distinction gives honour and dignity to humans, male and female, and does not depict exploitation, instead, recognises that creation is organically united, a wondrous whole, a living organism of interrelated beings. Essentially, O'Connor argues that the entire creation

will not survive without harmoniously living together. Therefore, the uniqueness of humans in the world, is in the responsibility for respect and stewardship.

4.4.2.4. The Intrinsically Artistry Work of the Creator – Genesis 1:31–2:3

Kessler (2013:129) submits that by the sixth day when God had finished the work He had been doing and the divine order was impeccably established on earth, He referred to it as “*very good*.” This is an indication of the completion of the structure.

“*It is very good*” according to Adeyemo (2011:49) signifies that nothing comes from the hand of God that is not intrinsically good. He goes on to label him as the good God who does all things for good. So out of admiration, God utters, “*it is very good*.” With this statement, Jacob and Jacob (2007:11) say God praises not what He had just created but the One who created. Essentially, what is very good is not because of the created, instead is due to the Creator.

In echoing the above, Fretheim (1994:346) makes a profound distinction between creation and Creator. He says it is not about how the world came to be but rather about who made it come to be. Hence once everything is orderly established, God decides or chooses to take rest.

Kessler (2013:129) is adamant that this rest is not from divine fatigue as the need for refreshment. However, God’s resting implies the accomplishment of perfect structure and the absence of the threat of disorder. The resting signifies the gift that God gives to himself and us. This means that taking rest is a divine gift. Fretheim (1994:347) asserts that the divine ‘*resting*’ signifies the conclusion of the creation, meaning that the Sabbath belongs to the created order. However, he further alludes that finishing does not in any way suggest that God will not engage in further creative acts, nor did the work exhaust the divine creativity. Fretheim elaborates that the setting aside of one day when human beings attend not to their own responsibilities and freedoms, but to God’s ordering of life, honours the larger creative purpose of God and integrating Godself into them. He concludes by saying that it acknowledges that indeed God is the Creator and Provider of all things. Jacob and Jacob (2007:12) argue that God held

a finishing, not that God finished his work on the seventh day but it declares the work finished or that one stands opposite the finished work. It implies that God set a pattern for the Sabbath to humans by ceasing from work.

O'Connor makes a conclusion that the 'rest' a Hebrew term '*menuchah*' referring to the state of calmness and relaxation, which serves as a reminder that encourages the scattered creation and community of Judah to practice it, to take action, to join together in what matters most, the worship of God. The Sabbath not only brings people together but also serves as a symbolic act of social construction. Walton (2001:448) in concurrence declares 'rest' as the main goal of creation. According to him, the functional cosmos is not set up with only people in mind. The cosmos is also intended to carry out a function related to God. He alludes that it is on the seventh day that we discover what God has been working to achieve rest. As a result, the idea behind the "rest" is that it alludes to the reason for creation and the universe, since God created the universe not just to give people a place to live, but also to act as his Temple.

4.4.2.5. God alone is the Creator (monotheism) and Provider – Genesis 2:4–17

Over and above everything else, we are reminded that Genesis is about God, creating all things to make the earth suitable for human habitation, as the shrub had not yet appeared and plants had not yet sprung up. The reason being according to Walton (2001:464), that the land was not yet claimed by anyone, therefore a land that is not claimed by any town or farmer, is not cultivated. Ultimately becomes a section where plants grow wild. Inasmuch as the concern is with the unproductive and bare earth in which even the wild plants were not growing because of the lack of rain, Walton highlights that the land '*adamah*' which has no (hu)man '*adam*' to till it as God's great concern. Jacob and Jacob (2007:14) assert that even though it had rained, no hand would have been present to till or work the ground. This is because God had not yet established a relationship between man and soil.

According to Adeyemo (2011:53), this necessity prompted God to take the next action, which was to create humans. More information about the creation of men and women is given this time. Adeyemo (2011:53) first suggests that God made or formed "*a man*," or "*adam*" in Hebrew. In doing so, he asserts that even though God did not make a

couple right away, it was still His intention. He asserts that God likely intended for a man to become aware of his need for companionship before anything else, if only because it's possible that if God had created two people with no connection between them, it would have been difficult for them to relate to one another and form a relationship.

Fretheim (1994:349) denotes that God as the Potter, shapes '*adam*' according to the divine design. The picture depicts God as someone who carefully considers each thing that has to be made, molding it into something both beautiful and functional. Jacob and Jacob (2007:18) say God crafts '*adam*' using '*adamah*' so that '*adam*' may not need to go through the agricultural lessons to work and care for '*adamah*' '*ground*.' Consequently, '*adam*' learns it as he himself is a part of the soil, his very own nature guides him much as a baby immediately reaches for his or her mother's breast. In essence, Fretheim (1994:349) strongly alludes that at the same time, the product of the potter's work remains very much bound to the earth and bears essential marks of the environment from which it derives. He says God does not stop there but goes further to breathe God's living breath into *adam*'s nostrils. This essentially conveys that God shares his divine living breath with humanity, transformed from just '*ruach*' into '*nephes*.'

According to Arnold (1998:32) the word 'man' (human) or '*adam*' is gender neutral in the sense that it is a generic term for humankind, not a personal name at all, but rather refers to the creation of humanity collectively.⁵ Alter (1996:6) explains that the term '*adam*,' is used as an account of the origins of humankind, it is, therefore, a generic term for human beings, not a proper noun. He elaborates that it does not automatically suggest maleness, and so traditional rendering of '*man*' is misleading and exclusively male '*adam*' would make nonsense of the text. Roded (2012:278) defines the term '*adam*' as ambiguous until differentiated between female and male. Basically, '*adam*' is androgynous, one creature incorporating two sexes.

⁵ See also how I translated it as human in the given translation.

Evidently, this monotheistic God creates not from any metal but from the dust of the ground ‘*adamah*.’ This according to Adeyemo (2011:53) asserts Him as the only Creator the same as in chapter one. He furthermore purports that from being created out of the dust, what then makes a man or human being different from the rest of creation is the breath of life which moved from God and entered the formed dust through nostrils. The term ‘*breath*’ as per Adeyemo can also be translated as ‘*spirit*.’ He says it is the Spirit of God that places human beings in a living relationship with the Creator and makes all the difference between them and other creatures.

According to O’Connor (2018:54) the uniqueness of the breath of life in a human being, is that the animals do not receive the same breath of life that animates the human. The fact of origins from the ground unites human with animals and birds, but non-human living creatures do not possess the breath of life in the same way as humans. Arnold (1998:32) submits that it is a sign of God’s love for humanity, He did more than just make the earth habitable for humanity but planted a garden and put the formed dust that is a human being in a garden. Therefore, the garden was not a place of ignorance created to prevent people from learning and science. Instead, it served as a site of life’s initiation. O’Connor (2018:53) says the garden was to provide a framework in which God could train human beings and give them reference points in which they would need to face the vast new universe that lay around them. This means that the garden was filled with everything that a human ‘*adam*’ needed to learn first. Westermann (1987:186) infers that the reason there were all kinds of trees in a garden and special attention is drawn to two trees; “*the tree of life*” and “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.” It was the first for a human being to have a concrete understanding of their relationship with God was to be central to human existence. Secondly, through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God’s intention was to make human beings aware that they will always be surrounded by good and evil. This means that the good and bad is parallel to human existence.

4.4.2.6. God Establishes a Divine Community – Genesis 2:18–25

According to Adeyemo (2011:53), humans are not only made in God's image, but they also need to live in a community in order to fully realise who they are. God established the first human relationship in order to model community for us to follow, because it is in the community that the image of God is revealed. But since this community does not exist, God assesses the situation, says that something is not (yet), and starts over from scratch.

Fretheim (1994:352) says this is because the human '*adam*' remains alone, God's presence is not sufficient. God speaks within the divine council; "*it is not good for the man 'adam' to be alone...*" (Gen. 2:18a (NIV)), and upon identifying this problem with the state of creation at this point, He moves to make changes that would improve the state. The problem according to Walton (2001:474) is that a man does not find a companion among animals but is adamant that will do so once one of his own is created.

To solve that problem, O'Connor (2018:54) tells us that God puts human '*adam*' into a deep sleep and performs surgery to remove a human's '*adam*' rib (side).

Jacob and Jacob (2007:21) bring forth that it is only a creation of God that will be able to help a human '*adam*.' Ultimately, he shall not remain alone but to preserve the unity of humankind, no second human being is created, but a partner is produced out of the already existing human. Roded (2012:278) argues that from that performance surgery, the '*rib*' '*tsela*' then was a physical feature. In concurrence, Alter (1996:9) alludes that '*tsela*' is also used to designate an architectural element.

O'Connor (2018:54) says this time God creates another human body. Shaping human substance into a woman. Therefore, there is no mistake this time as He makes this human from '*adam*'s' very body. She has his flesh, like him, she too is animated by the breath of life given directly from God, for she is taken from flesh that is already animated by the breath of life. Thus, God calls her a '*helper*' as she corresponds to him.

A *'helper'* in this case Fretheim (1994:352) says carries no implications regarding the status of the one who helps, he takes it further to say God is often called a helper of human beings. Therefore, this asserts that the notion of a helper cannot be bent into a hierarchy, as the term does not offer such evidence. According to Roded (2012:278), the Hebrew term *'ezer kenegdo'* is often translated as a *'helper'* implying the one comparable to him, his partner. She writes and says when God concluded that He would create another creature so that man would not be alone. God decided to make *'ezer kenegdo,'* meaning a power equal to him. Moreover, Roded submits that *'ezer'* as used in the Bible can also mean *'to save'* or *'to be strong,'* which *'kenegdo'* is often translated as *'fitting'* or *'appropriate.'*

Through a *'helper,'* O'Connor says God makes a partner for the first human by creating sexuality.

As a result, Yee (2018:19) adamantly says that Eve is a *'helper'* rather than a cunning temptress whose sole purpose was simply as man's helpmate. Instead, she alludes that Eve's creation becomes the high point of creation resulting in sexuality in the creation of sexuality itself. Alter (1996:6) sees Eve as a sustainer beside him as per the Hebrew term, *'ezer kenegdo,'* she becomes a counterpart to him, alongside him. She concludes to say that *'help'* alone is too weak because it suggests a merely auxiliary function, whereas *'ezer'* connotes active intervention on behalf of someone.

Taylor (2008:79) submits that even though a woman is built up from the man's side, her first primal contact is with her Creator. So just like the man, her argument is that she knew God before she knew her counterpart until he brought her to him, asserting that her relationship with God does not start with or go via man. This is the reason why God brought her back to him. At the core of all family relationships, Gibson (1981:27) says is the union between a man and a woman (his wife). God joins together what He brought apart back into a community. This is the reason a man sees himself in the woman, *"The man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,"* as a result share in each other's shame. Gibson asserts that this describes that God intended to form relations amongst. In addition, it is for this reason that *"a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh."*

Fretheim (1994:353) submits that it is upon the speech that the man ‘*adam*’ makes, “*flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones...*” that although he acknowledges that he has changed from his pre-surgery self, humanity has expanded to include both genders. Therefore, after the divine creative act, the name implies something different from the woman but does not confer any authority upon her, in contrast to the silent naming of the animals. The man’s words recognise that the “*no good*” situation in verse 18 has now become “*good*.”

O’Connor (2018:54) alludes that “... *this is the bone of bones...*” literally highlights mutuality and equality. The immediately recognisable bodily difference between them, occasions the difference in the name. The man now has a new level of knowledge and his identity as a sexual being in a relationship with the woman. Fretheim (1994:352) denotes that the woman to be named by the man does not subordinate the named to the namer. Instead, building a woman out of already existing material affirms their inseparable and equal nature yet distinct. Alter (1996:9) is convinced that it is at this stage where the first human is given reported speech, when there is another human to whom to respond. The speech takes the form of a naming poem, in which each of the two lines begins with the feminine indicative pronoun ‘*zot*’ (‘this one’).

Fretheim (1994:354) submits that a woman contrasts the ‘*issa*’ with the ‘*adam*’ from whom she was made and to whom she was brought. Per Taylor (2008:79), the excitement in a man comes from a very long search for a partner, upon seeing someone suitable not inferior, someone who enables him to recognise himself. It is against this background therefore that he says she shall be called woman ‘*isshah*’ because she was taken out of a man ‘*ish*.’ Taylor is adamant that this is when the maleness came into existence, something that was non-existent when God created from the dust, only until the female is fashioned. Thus, Adam the name or pronoun comes into existence at this stage when he calls her Eve. Taylor says that somehow indicates new authority over her but without realising that the title is honorific, portraying her as a mother of all living things. This relationship is different to that of a parent and child, according to Walton (2001:474) this suggests this kind of relationship

or tie requires God to be the centre of the union or community that He divinely established.

4.5. The Application of the Text

It is clear that the Book of Genesis was not only relevant for the children of Israel then, who had a deep need for their identity, background, purpose and wanted so much to trace their relationship with God. Book of Books as the scholars call it, is very much relevant for us today as it speaks to us as different individuals and communities in our respective exiles. There is a need therefore for us to know who began all things and for what reason. The text indeed conveys an unwavering assurance that only God can create, subsequently, He is the subject of who and what we are. Not only is He the Creator or Subject of our lives but He speaks order into disorder and gets obeyed. In essence, this tells us that God has the power to speak things into being.

As created beings, we are divinely elevated, we are given the position of honour above the entire creation. However, our elevated position does not in any way imply exploitation or the abolishment of the rest of the creation. Instead, as the divine image bearers, humans (male and female) are entrusted with a huge responsibility to preserve that image, in the manner that they relate with their Creator, with one another and with creation (in working the ground in which they come from).

The image of God in us reveals God's creativity and artistic self, and therefore proud of what He created. God is incapable of mediocrity, He alone is the Creator. God is transcendent, He is the Creator of all things and only He can go back and recreate and rework the state of 'not good' into 'good.' His sovereignty discovers the need to expand in '*adam*' without reducing and threatening the ordained unity in a '*human adam*.'

At the same time, in God's sovereignty, a community is established. Essentially the text cautions us that even though God separated us into two distinct individuals, yet, we remain inseparable. There is a deep need for one another as we realise the fullness

of life in our relationship or unity. It is only upon the creation of another (woman), that the other (man) realises their identity. None is placed under the authority of the other.

There has been the development of scholarly views over the years concerning the interpretation of what the book of Genesis or creation stories seek to communicate. Scholars hold the view that there is a relationship between the two creation narratives. O'Connor (2018:46) submits that they represent God as the Creator, both present a world of beauty and interconnection among all created beings. Both the creation accounts portray human beings as uniquely related to God among the entire creatures and ultimately responsible for serving God and creation.

According to Hays and Duvall (2011:47), the two narratives do not suggest any difference, however, the two showcase the same story narrated by various sources, hence the different names in the interpretation of God. The first chapter presents the Elohim, the most transcendent God. The One who creates through *fiat* (spoken word) alone, while the second chapter portrays the most immersed potter, immanent and anthropomorphic God, Yahweh.

Still, Yee (2018:8) says the two (male and female) do not imply difference or hierarchy. Instead, she argues that recognising patriarchy in the Hebrew Bible as a Christian believer, the objective is not to create or perpetuate patriarchy but rather to assist in the salvation of both women and men. This is evidenced in the creation of Eve, not just as a helpmate as often misinterpreted but as a self-identity discovery.

Additionally, Scholz's (2017:13) view on her interpretation of being created in the image of God, critiques the androcentric status quo of antiquity, which held that women were inferior to men as human beings. According to her, the biblical text affirms women's complete and equal participation in God's creation. O'Connor (2018:46) holds a strong view that the two accounts have two different but related theological goals. The God of Genesis 1 brings the world into existence merely by speaking. There is an assurance for Israel that the word of their God is more reliable, it is potent and creative beyond human imagination and comprehension. The God of Genesis 2 underscores sexuality as a divinely ordained gift to. It presents God who performs

physical deeds and the role of a surgeon and artisan and also goes as far as finding a perfect partner for the human.

Taylor (2008:79) concludes that God created both male and female as covenant partners, for the two to portray God together. Even though there is gender differentiation there is no gender superiority or inferiority. She goes on to say that both were created to work together, a woman was not created to compete with a man but to meet his deficiency.

4.6. Synthesis

This chapter aimed at taking a close look at the two creation stories, intending to get a deeper understanding through exegesis and exposition of the text. It is conclusive therefore that the text as it is continually interpreted, aids in portraying a picture of the relationship between God and humanity and between humanity itself in the absence of cultural ties. Indeed, a reading of Genesis 1 and 2 immediately demonstrates two totally different and separate and distinct accounts of creation which can somehow be compared and even be contrasted with one another. O'Connor (2018:51) submits that these two accounts are rather complementary than contradicting. He further says that Genesis is not strange for employing a panoramic view and then coming back to focus on important details.

Arnold (1998:31) sees or reads these as aspects of tension and complementarity in stories. The story presented in the first chapter presents a Creator who is radically transcendent (Elohim), the God who is very far removed from God's creation. In the second chapter, on the other hand, we witness God choosing the way of less than absolute control. Meaning that in the very act or event of creating, God still gives others a certain freedom and independence. He is no longer aloof but in relation and personal with his creation. He is a relational God (Yahweh), active in the world, who goes as far as establishing a relationship with human beings such that their decisions about creation truly count for both God and the creation.

The harmony in these accounts, provide an enlightenment of intimacy and unity between human beings, emphasising their complementarity and companionship in their functionality of taking care of creation. Through these narratives, the insight enables us a new interpretation and meaning pertaining the sacredness of creation and unique role of humans and importantly, the role of God as the Creator and humans as equal in all aspects.

Chapter 5: Reading the Two Creation Narratives with a Feminist Lens.

5.1. Introduction

The first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, have been influenced, read and interpreted in a way that femaleness or a woman has been devalued, due to the context in which they were composed and received. As a result, these narratives of the creation story, have been understood with cultural ties of that time, which seek to segregate women and relegate women as lesser human beings and to soft positions while men continue to take positions of power and influence. Thus the need for a fresh interpretation of these two narratives. It is against this background that the feminist perspective is valuable for interpreting Genesis 1 and 2, because it provides insight into gender roles, power dynamics and the portrayal of women in these biblical texts. This means that examining these creation stories through a feminist lens helps to highlight challenging traditional interpretations from cultural and historical contexts. It also aids in fostering a more inclusive understanding of the roles of men and women in religious and societal contexts.

These traditional interpretations as well as women's experiences in the world of patriarchy and androcentrism have pushed women to discover a new and inclusive interpretation and meaning. An interpretation that is totally different to the way that men interpret these texts. Undeniably, women in the Bible were not always acknowledged and credited, even today to some extent and this brought about an emergence of feminist theology right in the middle of the 20th century, but was mostly developed in the 1970s.

The feminist tendency therefore is to critique the androcentricism which is in the biblical narrative or world, as well as in our world. Androcentrism, assumes that the male perspective and approach are the norm for humanity. It is Osiek (1994:181), who asserts that narratives that count only men and leave women nameless when men are named or even go as far as treating women as expendable and simply discount them as part of the active audience, reveal a serious problem. Furthermore, she says that the moral exhortation that addresses women only to criticise their behaviour or somehow outline a prescription for their submission to men raises the need for reinterpretation. Additionally, Florenza (1993:76) explains that the feminist interpretation of biblical texts or feminist hermeneutics constitutes part of the human revolutionary movement known as feminism. She is highlighting that it is Mercy Amba Oduyoye in her description of feminism that is seen as a shorthand for the proclamation that women's experiences should be an integral part of what goes into the definition of being human.

In her submission, Florenza (1993:76), records, "It emphasises the wholeness of the community as made up of male and female beings."

Ultimately, feminist hermeneutics is a reliable weapon that might enable the accomplishment towards the full liberation of women. Subsequently, Scholz (2017:14) concludes that every woman possesses some bit of freedom, despite how minimal it may be. This she alludes that it symbolises going beyond just speaking of liberation but rather of the way in which that female liberation comes about.

Accordingly, Dube (2000:59), is convinced that historical research was done not only for the sake of the ancient people but even more for the generation of today. This is so that there is a constant inquiry on whether the text that is to be studied is itself marked by an androcentric point of view. Thus, the historical context, Dube is adamant that enables us to analyse the text through hermeneutics of suspicion, questioning the theological content of a text and its purpose and function in the lives of women then and today. Essentially, this chapter seeks to conduct a feminist reading of Genesis 1 and 2, focussed specifically on Intersectional Feminism. It is important in reading these texts to keep in mind the warning from Mandell (2022:146):

We must keep in mind the periodization of Hebrew scribalism, social and political changes, and keep in check our own inherent biases – that is, what we ourselves bring to the text regarding what it communicated to ancient audiences and what we wish to see (or not see) in it.

This means that every reader arrives at the text with certain preconceived ideas and biases, but it also means that the text should be reinterpreted from the contexts for which it was intended into our own context and it should be translated into a new context with a new understanding.

5.2. Feminist Perspective of Genesis 1 and 2

Scholz (2017:14) claims that women read biblical passages in favour of Genesis 1:26-27, they interpret the Bible independently of one another, and they adhere to their belief that women are not second-class citizens. *“Then God said, let us make [hu]mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created [hu]mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them”* (NIV).

This therefore suggests that the text discards the patriarchal and hierarchical structure between male and female, instead Dube (2000:59) connotes that God intended to convey that both genders share in the divine likeness, emphasising equal value and significance. She defies the traditional interpretation that often emphasises male superiority or dominance and argues that both men and women are created in the image of God, with equal dignity, value and worth. Vanier (1989:49) argues that God’s wish was that man and woman be one, the emphasis is on recognising the dignity, worth and spiritual equality of both genders. The difference between men and women is a radical and fundamental one which permeates the depths of their consciousness and affects all human behaviour. This implies that their variation was not for their division but was complementary. Instead, Dube (2000:59) is convinced that the text affirms the equality, agency and autonomy of both men and women, encouraging a

more inclusive and egalitarian understanding of God's vision for humanity. Scholz (2017:14) goes on to say that, contrary to what Bingen's modern male medieval colleagues maintain, this verse does not restrict any aspect of *imago Dei* to women only, rather, it introduces the idea that both male and female are made in the image of God. They accord the full *imago Dei* in terms of memory, intelligence and will (*memoria, intelligentia, voluntas*) only to men and deny women as fully created in the image of God. Strauch (1999:16) points out that in the ancient world, the Genesis account of the creation of man and woman stands out as truly unique. This is because it is not coloured by the pagan, polytheistic religions of the Ancient Near East. In concurrence, Crowder (2016:61) also sees this notion as an affirmation of inherent equality between genders. Rather than emphasising a hierarchical structure, it in fact supports the idea that both men and women share the divine likeness, suggesting equal value and significance. Moreover, she says while the exact nature of the image of God is not explicitly defined, it is understood to reflect attributes and qualities of God in both males and females such as rationality, creativity, moral consciousness and spiritual capacity. These attributes distinguish humans from the rest of creation and not from one another. According to the creation narratives, Strauch makes an assertion that there is only one God who created all things by His Word. However, the creation of man and woman was unique as it was to specifically bear His image and represent Him on earth. She comes to the conclusion that, although the statement of gender equality was revolutionary in its day, both men and women bore the mark of the divine image of God. In actuality, God created them (male and female) not as rivals but covenant partners, to collectively and not individually portray his image. Scholz (2017:16) holds a strong view that the image of God in this context emphasises the potential for cooperation, shared responsibility and equality between men and women in their relationship with both each other and the natural world. Moreover, Scholz asserts that the fundamental equality of men and women, recognises and values the diversity among individuals while rejecting the idea of inherent superiority or inferiority based on gender.

Furthermore, according to Strauch (1999:17), God created both male and female humans, two sexually distinct species, and He deemed sexuality to be good. God could have created female humans with the ability to procreate on their own; He did not need to create distinct male and female humans. In fact, the Bible demonstrates that both men and women are equal in their beings but significantly distinct in roles, both are equally entrusted with the same kind of authority. Strauch admits that He did not have to create male humans but God had a specific purpose in mind when He created the two sexually distinct human beings. Their fundamental existence was for them to participate in relationships with God and others. She concludes that the fact that both sexes individually bear God's image demonstrates that they are equal in dignity, value, existence and being. In concurrence with this, Allen (2020:18) argues that at first, it was the man that was superior to the woman by nature, then later on, it changed that it was the woman who was superior by nature. She then says after the development of Christianity, Augustine argues that men and women are equal in dignity but significantly different.

According to Kensky (1992:65), stories of human creation are often incorporated into larger mythic traditions. Some, for instance, she says are used in myths which describe the creation of the entire cosmos, others are used to introduce histories of the human race. Enuma Elish therefore exemplifies the former idea in which human creation helps to put order into the cosmos. Kensky (1992:65) denotes that Marduk created the human race to relieve the defeated gods of their onerous duties. Subsequently, after this creation, all the gods unite to celebrate Marduk's accomplishments since he has finally stabilised the divine world. Westermann (1987:20) adds that contrary to purely intellectual interpretation of the belief in creation, it must however be emphasised that these stories are to be understood as myths. He argues that the myth has its meaning for the present life of the community. In an ancient historical context, Westermann explains myth as a traditional story that is used to explain natural phenomena, cultural practices or the origins of people. They are not merely fictional but are considered to hold deeper truths and significance in understanding the world and humanity's place within it.

Therefore, Walby (1990:78) notes that it is in Genesis 1:26-28 where the human race is the final step in God's well-conceived plan of a complete cosmos. Human beings, including women, are the crowning glory of creation and are given dominion over the earth. Thus, Vanier (1989:49) asserts that men and women are complementary in their bodies and their psychology. They each discover their being in relation to God who created them, each in the image of God, they are called to become like God. She says that such is their fundamental ultimate goal in the universe. Jackson (2002:18) brings in Genesis 2:24 to take it further and says that men and women are also in the image of God in their union and their unity of love. Each one is with and for the other. Each one discovers his or herself in relationship to the other. Suggesting that although Genesis 1 is quiet on the relationship between the two, it at the same time does not suggest that one is below or above the other. It is therefore in Genesis 2 where there are naming of creatures which in the end somehow gives clarity of that which makes up 'adam.'

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (NIV).

Kensky (1992:83) suggests that perhaps the illusion to the unity may be rooted or come from the use of masculine adjectives, masculine nouns and masculine verbal forms, which unremittingly deliver the subliminal message that God is male. According to Kensky (1992:83), God has no form, so He cannot be a male. However, this is due to the gendered language that seems to set limitations and make way for misunderstandings. Walby (1990:70) concurs that this cumulative impact of male-centred language and imagery is profoundly alienating to women. At the simplest level, it seems to carry intimations of masculinist theology: if God is male, then perhaps every male is a little bit of God. Kensky (1992:93) highlights that this limited understanding may imply that God and men share something that women lack. She concludes that this develops a vicious circle, the fact that these images are used for God, then reinvests these male images with even more status and power. This Kensky (1992:93) alludes leaves women completely out of both the imagery and the power loop. The greatest omission in the understanding is that God created the [hu]man

'adam' in the Hebrew term meaning a human being, someone that embodies the idea of both maleness and femaleness together.

For this reason, Scholz's (2017:14) interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27 is characterised by an inner conviction about women's equality, which also serves as a critique of the androcentric status quo of her era, which views women as less human than men. Her assertion that the biblical text affirms women's complete and equal participation in God's creation, however, is an isolated occurrence and does not have the backing of a broader movement advocating for reform. Stanton (2002:11) believes that the Bible is the primary source of women's oppression and is certain that the only way to end sexist forces in society and achieve women's equality is to conduct a methodical analysis of the Bible's oppressive passages. She also believes that women's religiosity fosters their complicity in the denial of their rights. Therefore, Stanton's next logical step is to show that religion is the actual and primary cause of women's oppression. Davies (2003:12) concurs that few would deny that the Bible is an overwhelming patriarchal book. It is in the beginning chapters of Genesis that strike the keynote of woman's inferiority and it is a note that subsequently resonates throughout most of the biblical texts. According to her, the biblical traditions are primarily androcentric, pushing women to the periphery and giving them a subservient place in Israel's religious and social life. This Davies (2003:15) evidently portrays in Genesis 2, where God is depicted as creating man first, then all the lower animals and finally, almost as an afterthought, He created the woman to relieve the man's loneliness and to serve as his helper.

"So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man" Genesis 2:20-22 (NIV).

Therefore, Davies (2003:15) suggests that the male is considered the original human prototype from the beginning of the Hebrew Bible, while women are considered to be

secondary and auxiliary beings. However, Strauch (1999:24) sees this as a demonstration of equality in nature, where God fashioned a partner for Adam out of his rib. A woman was not created as an inferior creature like the animals, instead, she was taken out of his side, and thus Strauch (1999:24) views that as a woman sharing equally in his nature and the bearing of the image of God. Consequently implying gender variation yet no superiority and inferiority, instead, the man immediately recognised that the woman shared in his nature. According to Alter (1996:9), this is the first instance of a human being receiving a reported speech, and it can only happen when there is another human present to respond to. The speech is noted to take the form of a naming poem, in which each of the two lines begins with the feminine indicative pronoun, 'zot' – *'this one'* which is also the last Hebrew word of the poem, cinching it in a tight envelope structure.

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man" Genesis. 2:23 (NIV).

This is the reason that Brenner (1995:162) submits that men discover who they are by setting themselves over against women. It is when the man sees the woman that he knows who he is. Subsequently, according to Kensky (1992:188), that is enough to make him leave his father and mother and want to live with her.

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh" Genesis 2:24 (NIV).

Brenner (1995:163) submits that men admit to their loneliness without women as they are created as inseparable and dependent beings. In addition, this asserts God's intention in the creation of woman upon realising the loneliness of man. Therefore, it means that a woman's creation is in no way an accident. However, Strauch (1999:18) says that a man needed more than just a companion but someone to complement his task in fulfilling the reason for God's creation in them. According to Strauch (1999:22), the woman's genesis from the man indicates both role distinctions and equality in nature since God created her from the man's side. Genesis 1:28 also reflects that authority was designed to be shared by men and women. According to Strauch

(1999:18), God crowned the man and woman as king and queen of the earth. This means that both were created to work together and not compete but complement and meet one another's deficiencies. She declares that man on his own would not be able to fulfil the divinely given task of being fruitful and ruling over the entire creation.

“God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (NIV).

The above mandate is based on the fact that both bear equally the divine image. Strauch (1999:18) alludes that what people see as a man's world, God says it is his world. He created both men and women as necessary parts of his plan for humans to rule and fill the earth. Equal as they are but were created with carefully distinct features and assigned various roles to be a true representation of the monotheistic God, one yet distinct *“let us...”*. create 'adam' the humankind. Crowder (2016:76), submits that the re-evaluation of this text emphasises responsible stewardship of the earth, instead of domination. She further mentions that this promotes cooperation and shared responsibility between men and women in caring for the environment, and eradicating any form of subordination of women or the exploitation of nature.

As a result, Strauch (1999:18) boldly asserts that there is no indication in the creation stories for man to be the dominant species on earth. Furthermore, she argues that gender hierarchy must first be inserted into the text in order to be removed from the Genesis creation stories. Strauch goes on to say that since it is not based on the biblical text, any teaching that places authority between Adam and Eve in God's creation design should be strongly disregarded. In fact, in applying a careful literary reading of the Hebrew Bible, Roded (2012:19) reinterprets the person of Eve. She is not just someone whose only function was to be man's helpmate; rather, her creation becomes the pinnacle of Genesis 2, leading to the creation of sexuality itself. She transforms from a deferential assistant into the man's companion.

According to Stanton (2002:12), a critical and methodical analysis is required to demonstrate how the Bible oppresses women and their roles in society and the church.

According to Davies (2003:16), the story of Israel that follows is told primarily from the viewpoint of men. In the biblical narratives, women are typically mentioned in passing and only play supporting roles in a plot that primarily centers on the male protagonists. It is acknowledged by Davies (2003:16) that women's status underwent somewhat of a shift during the time the Hebrew Bible was composed. Nevertheless, the biblical narratives do tend to confirm and amplify the inferior role attributed to women in the legal tradition. Stanton (2002:12) posits that Genesis 1:26-28 plainly shows the simultaneous creation of man and woman and their equal human importance in the development of the race. Proving that a woman is an equal factor in human progress.

In accordance to Kensky (1989:91), the Bible focuses on sexual behaviour as a form of social behaviour, but never incorporates sexuality into its vision of humanity or its relations with the divine. The terminology used to describe human beings Whitehead (2001:47) shows an anthropological focus, where *'image and likeness'* constitute it as unique among creatures. This implies that humanity is uniquely related to both God and created order. As a result, Roded (2012:44) asserts that human beings, including women, are referential creatures as their beings automatically signify God, they are like God, and a woman too is like God. Both men and women have a unique relationship with God and a unique relationship to their natural environment.

"Then God said, let us create mankind in our image, in our likeness..." Genesis 1:26 (NIV).

Strauch (1999:16) declares that the two equally display the divine image and are both entrusted to preserve it. She concludes that the first man enthusiastically prized and loved the first woman, she was not his property nor was she his slave.

Hildegard von Bingen, a medieval female interpreter, as per Scholz (2017:14) was not alone in her belief in women's equality. Later in the fourteenth century, Christian writer, Christen de Piza, defends women's equality based on Genesis 1 and 2. It is subsequent to Genesis 1 and 2 that provide one with a complete theological overview of the whole created order. She maintains that woman like man, is not only created in God's image but also consists of much better material than man. She depicts this

argument from the basis of a woman being taken from human flesh whereas man is made of soil. Moreover, Scholz's (2017:14) interpretation of the text signifies that the location of a woman's creation is better than that of a man. A woman was created in Paradise and as a result, her noble nature is guaranteed by God. Freedman (2018:67) writes that when God concluded that He would create another 'ezer kenegdo / helper' so that man would not be alone, God decided to make a power equal to him, someone whose strength was equal to the man's. In essence, Freedman (2018:67) is convinced that a woman was not intended to be merely a man's helper, instead, she was to be his partner, the one who does not come to another's aid but the one who comes in strength. This means that there is nowhere in the term helper where it connotes less, inferior or subordinate. Instead, it is from God observing that without a woman, a man is not good on his own.

Roded (2012:218) says that even though a woman is built up from the man's side, her very first contact is not with the man but with her Creator. Suggesting that just as man knew God before knowing his partner, only until God decided to introduce his partner to him. It concludes that the woman's relationship with God does not in any way go via man. In actual fact, De Piza, as per Scholz (2017:14), regards the first woman as God's masterpiece because she appears last in the creation process in Genesis 2. The LORD God created man, Roded (2012:218) argues that the word 'adam' is ambiguous in the text until differentiated of female and male, 'adam' is androgynous, one creature incorporating two sexes. None of them are called forth into being but are uniquely and respectively created.

"So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and then closed the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man and He brought her to the man" Genesis 2:20-22 (NIV).

Thus according to Scholz (2017:14), a woman is the culmination of divine creation, a conviction that later feminist readers repeat. Similarly, it is the expression of

excitement that comes from a very long search for a partner. Therefore, upon seeing someone suitable, not inferior, a woman enables him to recognise himself.

“... She shall be called ‘woman’ ‘Ishah’ for she was taken out of man ‘Ish’” Genesis 2:23 (NIV).

This according to Vanier (1989:49) affirms and marks this as the beginning of the existence of maleness, something that was non-existent when God created from the dust, only until a woman or female was fashioned. Freedman (2018:16) says, therefore, that both male and female simultaneously came into being together and certainly in relation to one another.

Other proto-feminist interpreters according to Scholz (2017:15) who affirm women’s equality before God and in society are the medieval mystics Mechthild of Magdeburg, Gertrud Von Hackborn and Gertrud the great, the 15th century Italian Isotta Nogarola, the 17th century radical Italian nun Arcangela Tarabotti, the early 17th century interpreters Lucretia. During a period when women did not even have the right to public speech, they and many others discover that the biblical text enshrines full equality of women. A systematic approach to the Christian Canon of the Bible was published for the first time in the Western history of interpretation in the nineteenth century, thanks to the courageous and bold voices of these individuals challenging androcentric primacy (Scholz, 2017:15). Eventually, their efforts resulted in a full choir. Arnold (1998:23) says as one reads Genesis 1:1-2:3, one is to notice the recurring pattern that gives structure to the whole. There is some degree of variation in the use of this recurring formula. Arnold (1998:23) pays attention to the object created, which is just as should be with no flaws or blemishes. In this case, God is ascribed as the gifted artist who steps back to admire and approve his work. Thus, the role of humankind that is inclusive of women, in creation, for Arnold (1998:23), is emphasised by the admiration or the response of God. This time the recurring formula includes the divine evaluation with a subtle change, when God inspects his creation of man and woman, He deems them not just good but very good. It therefore means that the inequality and the not-so-good of the other person, being woman in this case, comes not with the created order that was established by God.

Scholz (2017:15) infers that the meaning of the text gradually changed particularly during the nineteenth century, this is when many women, black and white, American and European, lifted their voices against male dominated patriarchal structures as they began to reinterpret biblical texts for themselves. The suffrage movement, which aimed to end oppression in Western societies, was led by pioneers. The early twentieth century saw the success of the socio-political movement, but Scholz (2017:16) laments the fact that most suffragettes did not live to see the benefits of their tenacious work, unwavering dedication to women's rights, and determined patience. Their names are many although some of them have been lost to the vagaries of time and history. Yet Scholz (2017:16) says whether we know of those women or we do not, either way, we owe them a great deal. American women devoting their working lives to women's rights include Marie W Miller Stewart, Anna Juliat Cooper, Sojourner Truth, Antoinette L Brown Blackwell, Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth, Candy Stanton. All of these Scholz (2017:17) applauds for reading the Bible against the status quo of patriarchal order and social hierarchies. Their efforts helped in the discovery of the climax of creation as per Arnold (1998:26). Something that is witnessed in the creation of humankind,

“Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness...” Genesis 1:26 (NIV).

Arnold (1998:32) notes that this highlight bore the dignity and importance afforded a human being. Therefore, evidently, in Genesis 2, humankind becomes the pivot of the story as in Genesis 1 humankind was the climax. According to Arnold, in the first creation narrative, we witness the majestic God, Elohim, who simply spoke the word into existence. But the second narrative introduces us to the LORD God, Yahweh, who is more personal and loving. Arnold (1998:32) observes that Yahweh speaks directly to Adam and Eve and seems to have such an intimate relationship with them. Ultimately, this means that both man and woman relate to God in the same way.

Arnold notes Genesis 1:27, *“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them,”* as the lofty creation of humankind, mirrored by the intimate, personal details of Genesis 2:7, *“Then the LORD*

God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being” (NIV).

Evidence suggests that the theme of the creation of a specific object predates that of the general creation, and that the creation of humans, in particular, predates the creation of the world, according to Westermann (1987:23). By this, Westermann means that it is made abundantly evident that the story of the creation of humans is told differently from the story of the creation of the world, which was an entirely different event at first. Westermann asserts that Genesis 2 gives the impression that the creation of human beings is an act in the scheme of universal creation as in Genesis 1. The conclusion according to Westermann (1987:23) is that even in Genesis 1:26-28, one can discern a variation from what has gone before in the account of the creation of human beings.

According to Whybray (2001:42), it has long been believed that the creation story has special connections to the Babylonian Enuma Elish; however, a cursory examination of the latter reveals that the relationship is at most very distant. Apart from the fact that the Genesis story is monotheistic, the most crucial difference that is noted by Whybray between the two creation accounts is that Enuma Elish belongs to the category of the conflict tradition which is absent from Genesis 1. Muddiman and Barton continue to suggest that although God's purpose for creating the world is not stated explicitly in this story, it is implied by the emphasis placed on humanity's place in God's plan. Barton and Muddiman (2001:42) are also convinced that the creation of mankind as being the last of God's creative acts, is the climax of the whole account, hence the other creation was for the human beings' survival and for them to rule.

“Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” Genesis 1:29 (NIV).

For Whybray (2001:43) this depiction sets human beings apart from all the other creatures and putting them in a unique relationship with God Himself. Allen (2020:57) argues that this complementarity asserts that man and woman are equal in dignity,

value, and humanity. She says they are equally and significantly different so that when they come into a relationship, and become synergetic. Stanton (2002:12) also argues that Genesis 1:26-28 contains a plain declaration of the existence of the feminine element in God, equal in power and glory with the masculine.

Walton (2022:147-148) explains the creation narratives as follows:

History has a beginning in the minds of those who trace the flow of events, but history is insufficient to portray the beginning. Consequently, many cultures use “myth” to convey the deeper, and in most ways more important, realities that shape their understanding of themselves, the world, and the gods.

This means that the two creation narratives could never be read as historically correct, but they should be interpreted within the context they were written. In this case, it was a male-dominated context with no agenda to portray equality.

5.3. Intersectional Feminism

A framework coined by Professor Kimberely Crenshaw, which Claassens and Sharp (2017:218) credit as it is not confined to one aspect, rather, it acknowledges various aspects of a person’s identity, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability and more, intersect and interact to shape the experiences of oppression and privilege. Therefore, this framework notices the limitations that come with other frameworks which the focus has often been on the experience of white, middle-class women, subsequently neglecting the unique challenges faced by women of colour, LGBTQIA+, differently abled, and many others. Thus, Professor Crenshaw pioneered Intersectional Feminism as it seeks to address these intersecting forms of oppression and advocate for social justice and equality for all individuals, irrespective of their identity or orientation. According to Anzaldúa (1997:191), Intersectional Feminism emphasises the importance of understanding how all these factors influence the current picture of a woman's character. It therefore proposes to address ways in which different forms of discrimination overlap and compound, advocating for a more

inclusive and equitable feminist movement that addresses the needs and experiences of all individuals, especially those who are marginalised or underrepresented. Of the six approaches Anzaluda suggests,⁶ only two will be applied hereunder.

5.3.1. Critique Power Structures

Anzaldua (1997:191) infers the importance of recognising and analysing how the systems like patriarchy, hierarchy and power reinforce and perpetuate inequality and oppression of a woman's character. Scholz (2017:18) points out that from a very young age, individuals have been socialised into gender roles and expectations that privilege certain genders or identities over others. Claassens and Sharp (2017:222) agree that patriarchal societies often reinforce traditional gender norms that prioritise masculinity and subordinate femininity, leading to unequal treatment and opportunities for individual based on their gender identity.

This Tanwar (2008:39) says is also seen in patriarchal structures and institutions which often uphold and perpetuate gender based discrimination. She further highlights that the manifestation of this come in policies and practices that systematically disadvantage women and marginalised individuals. This means that the root cause of oppression which is because of gender base discrimination or violence usually germinates in power imbalances influenced by societal attitudes that normalise and excuse such behaviour. Scholz (2017:223) argues that patriarchy and oppression contribute to economic inequalities by devaluing women's labour, limiting their access to economic opportunities and ultimately perpetuating economic gaps in the form of income or wage between genders. This is the reason that there is overrepresentation of women in low paying jobs while men tend to dominate higher paying and powerful leadership positions. Tanwar (2008:42) submits this is also seen in how society depicts and seeks to control women's bodies and reproductive choices, limiting or taking away their autonomy and rights. In Chapter 3 we saw how the reception of Genesis 1 and 2 had led to creating power structures in our society. Yee (2018:67) argues that

⁶ Refer to Chapter 2 where these approaches are described.

addressing these systems requires comprehensive efforts to challenge and dismantle the structures and beliefs that uphold them, promoting gender equity and social justice for all. These power structures can be challenged and changed in a different reading of Genesis 1 and 2.

5.3.2. Activism and Advocacy

According to Anzaldua (1997:191) Intersectional Feminism informs the social change that needs to take place in terms of activism and advocacy. She says this can happen in various ways, beginning with continuous teaching and ongoing dialogue. West (2007:19) argues that it calls for an endless re-interpretation of the biblical text, as it will aid in advocating against systemic inequalities and injustices. This endless reinterpretation of texts like Genesis 1 and 2 might assist in sensitising persons to androcentric and exclusive understandings of biblical texts, which leads to discriminating against persons. Yee recommends the establishment of an inclusive and supportive community where individuals from diverse backgrounds could come together fostering solidarity and collective action driven by their shared challenges and experiences. Anzaldua (1997:193) is adamant that this will not only bring fairness and eliminate biases in the way that the text is interpreted but will enable marginalised voices, challenge the oppressive systems and stereotypes, dismantle cultural and patriarchal narratives, offer a new and fresh meaning of the text and hold institutions accountable. Ultimately, Claassens and Sharp (2017:223) think that Crenshaw sees a multifaceted approach as the only way for a solid coalition among various groups addressing the interconnectedness nature of oppression and promoting social justice and equality despite an individual's identity. Intersectional Feminism amplifies the impact and work towards common goals.

5.4. Synthesis

This chapter endeavoured to achieve a new interpretation of the two creation narratives employing feminist hermeneutics. This approach aligns with broader social

justice concerns, seeks to address not only gender issues but also intersectional challenges, and recognises the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression and ultimately advocates for liberation and equality for all. The feminist perspective on Genesis 1 and 2 offered a re-evaluation of traditional interpretations, challenged patriarchal norms and ultimately yielded a new meaning. The study shows that the importance of this lies not only in discovering the interpretation of the text on people of the past but also in providing us also with an insight that enables us to see how that influenced both traditional and contemporary readings and understandings of the narratives. Thus, the feminist lens enables and provides a valuable insight in terms of countering the patriarchal domination head on. In this study it aids in drawing attention to how the text of the Hebrew Bible can have a very different meaning outside culture, tradition, patriarchy, misogyny, author and in different contexts. It emphasises the need for inclusive language and imagery and aligns with broader social justice and liberation for all. Through this theory, this chapter probed, questioned, challenged and even rejected much of what has been counted as acceptable knowledge and interpretation, subsequently, read against the grain and unmasked the gendered hierarchy of society and culture as the chapter intended. Overall, this chapter has provided evidence that the feminist theologians agree a fresher reading of Genesis 1 and 2 might provide a new interpretation.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks.

6.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to synthesise the whole research study. It will therefore be inclusive of what the study entailed; the relevance or motivation of the study, research objectives in the form of recapitulation of chapters, methodology, hypothesis, findings and concluding remarks. Fundamentally, the study called into question “The Portrayal of the Woman Character in the Two Creation Narratives in Genesis using a Feminist Reading, with the intention to answer the primary research question;

Did the reception of the creation narratives (Genesis 1 and 2) influence the portrayal of the woman character and can a feminist reading contribute to our understanding of these patriarchal texts; can it change this perspective and assist in liberating women to enhance the position of a woman in a modern society?

6.2. Relevance and Motivation

In the first chapter, the study indicated the existential factors that have influenced the research study. The church which is often the space where the woman is relegated to soft positions and also thinking that the study might contribute to the ongoing theological discourse and literature, have motivated and inspired me to conduct this research. Despite the number of studies that have been done (as per the literature review) on the interpretation of the Book of Genesis as well as gender equality, it seems that the woman character is still discriminated against. This emerges from a prevalent problem statement, from the unending patriarchal tone and reading of Genesis 1 and 2, leading to misinterpretation of the text. Being mindful that all of this takes its root from the time of the development of the biblical text in which it transpired, a prominently male-dominated environment, ultimately influencing how the text was received.

Therefore, the then cultural and patriarchal context in which the creation narratives originated, formed and influenced a certain belief and interpretation, subsequently led to a poor portrayal as well as discrimination against women.

Essentially, the study was to understand the portrayal of the woman character in the absence of cultural ties and patriarchal flavour through an in-depth research of Genesis 1 and 2. In order to accomplish, the study sought to understand:

- The theories and methodologies that would be utilised through a theoretical background of Feminist Criticism and Reception Criticism.
- A socio-historical background study of the book of Genesis.
- An exegetical study of Genesis 1 and 2.
- A feminist reading of Genesis 1 and 2.
- An intersectional feminist perspective of Genesis 1 and 2.

Subsequently, the study hoped that the feminist reading of the text might enable a new insight and fresh interpretation that may liberate the woman character in modern day society.

6.3. Recapitulation of Chapters

The below is a concise recapitulation of the research chapters conducted in the study.

Chapter One is a preamble concerning the research topic which seeks to ascertain; the ‘Portrayal of the Woman Character in the Two Creation Narratives.’ It therefore presented the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, research question, research aim, objectives, methodology, and hypothesis. In the preliminary literature review it became clear that the composition of the biblical text in Genesis is presented through male eyes and this is the reason that its interpretation throughout the ages has been to focus on male interests and ideologies, as the outcome was solely determined by male authors’ worldview. Ultimately, this perspective influenced the reception of these texts and the way women were seen in the past and still today.

Scholz (2017:13) notes therefore the important role that feminist criticism played and continues to have a profound influence in the interpretation of texts by shedding light on gender dynamics, power structures and the representation of women. It has also opened ways to challenge the traditional literary way of analysis through the examination of how gender shapes characters. Claassens and Sharp (2017:221) view this as an encouragement to readers to question patriarchal norms, notice those underground voices and ultimately uncover hidden biases within literature which will aid in fostering a deeper understanding of gender issues, while also promoting inclusivity in literary analysis.

Chapter Two presented theories in which the ascertaining of 'Portrayal of the Woman Character' might be achieved, through making use of these theories; Feminist, and Reception Criticism. This is because Brettler (2005:13) does admit that there are number of ways in which the Bible is read and ultimately interpreted, therefore making a much more complicated and multifaceted process. The complication comes not with the technical aspect of it but rather in the decoding and resolving the ambiguities that exist in any literary language. It was necessary for this study to have the background of theories and understanding of their period of emergence, under what circumstances and their purpose and function on text(s). This research was necessary to unmask the gendered hierarchy of society and culture to enable a new interpretation. The newness would come because of having questioned and challenged the norm, and in the end, reject what has been an acceptable treatment or position of the woman character.

Scholz (2017:13) therefore highlights that feminist theology is not just women doing theology, as women have been doing theology. However, the challenge is that their theology at the time did not push them to question the masculinist paradigms of theology with the intention of depatriarchalising and deconstructing the norm. This means that women interpreting the Bible, is certainly not something new as it is grounded in a century's long tradition. Yee (2018:2) infers that women's interpretation is now the political activism by women on behalf of women. Their interpretation is now with the intention to investigate the power differentials in certain social relationships from which the text was composed, by thoroughly searching for information on who

wrote it, when and why. Consequently, display how these power relations continue to be reproduced in the text itself if not aware off or intentional in dismantling them. It is for such reasons that we witness women refusing to keep quiet, as by raising their voices, Scholz (2017:13) believes that these women demanded to address and demolish the root cause that birthed issues like oppression, sexism and misogyny. Therefore, all these were efforts to change the way in which the text was received as Holub (1984:57) characterises reception criticism as a general shift in concern from the author and to the reader. The reception criticism could be found helpful in the interpretation and understanding of the text as it gives a view of how the text has been interpreted and received throughout history, based on the different individual's believes, culture and communities' social norms. This analysis might enable a new and broader insight into the interpretation and the way in which the text is applied culturally, socially, religiously and historically. It would similarly enrich a continued understanding the ancient norms and their relevance and impact today, and how they have shaped religious beliefs, cultural practices and social norms. Something that could only be achieved through the combinations of these theories.

The focal point of Chapter Three was to conduct a Socio-historical Background of the Book of Genesis, with the intention to at least have a view of how the text was received and what might have shaped and influenced the writing and the outcome of Genesis, culturally, traditionally, religiously and socially. The diachronic study enabled a depth of understanding of the socio-historical background that is not necessarily only for the ancient people, but for people of today, as it enables a broader contextual understanding of the societal influences. Ultimately, the then social beliefs, gender inequality, and stereotypes influenced the interpretation and reception of the text. However, the importance of having a broader understanding of the socio-historical context, encourages a fresh analysis and critical examination of the text. It became clear that this book should not be read as a historical account, but rather as a blend of ideologies that represents the concerns of those living under foreign rulers. It is generally accepted that ideologies cannot exist outside a context. The book of Genesis

played a pivotal role in biblical studies during the Enlightenment, as it re-evaluated traditional understandings of the Bible. This is with the understanding that the first eleven chapters of Genesis became the focus of modern historical-critical research. The reception of Genesis 1 and 2 vary in relation to cultural, religious and scholarly perspectives. Therefore, with a great consideration that the socio-historical context factors presented in the chapter may somehow be speculative to incomprehensive evidence, Jacob and Jacob (2007:13) assert that they still help provide a more contextual understanding of the societal influences that might have shaped the writing of Genesis. According to Brown (2012:15) the socio-historical context somehow enables feminists the ability to critically analyse the Book within a broader context of the Ancient Near Eastern. Due to the intense examination of the socio-historical context that involves the patriarchal structure that existed during that time, which embraced male dominance and female subordination. It also became clear that the male dominated reception of Genesis 1 and 2 contributed to discrimination against women. A new insight therefore uncovers how patriarchal structures influenced the portrayal and experience of women in biblical narratives. Something that Davis (2018:60) recommends calls for critical and continued examination of biblical texts that might aid in recognition of women's agency and equality in religious and social contexts. According to Yee (2018:58), the traditional interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2 have often been used to justify gender discrimination and inequality. Therefore, also recommending the critical need for a fresh interpretation that might help dismantle these harmful views and promote a more inclusive understanding of the biblical text. Scholz (2010:180) equally believes that the re-evaluation of these texts through a lens that prioritises equality and justice, could at the end contribute to the deconstruction of what has been accepted as the norm and provide means for fostering a more inclusive community. However, the understating of the structure of the book is imperative. Von Rad (1972:24) notes that Genesis 1 is assigned the Priestly 'Yahwist' status and Genesis 2 is Non-Priestly, although it is classified as both 'Elohistic' and 'Yahwist.' Gertz (2022:70) argues that infers to question the validity and dating of 'J' and 'E' sources, where in some instances it compelled others to abandon the research, others remained loyal, while others made means for the restoration of these sources.

Nevertheless, it is the source theories that are believed to enable a deep understanding of the portrayal of God.

The reception of Genesis 1 and 2 varies greatly depending on cultural, religious and scholarly perspectives. It also became clear that the male dominated reception of Genesis 1 and 2 contributed to discrimination against women.

In Chapter Four, the study sought to first share the reason for the demarcation of the pericope and then move on to investigate the meaning of words and phrases used in the text, through conducting an exegetical study of the original language, being the Hebrew Bible. Transitioning from a diachronic to synchronic study, intentionally confined within the two creation narratives (Genesis 1 and 2). While being aware that Genesis 3 is part of the creation pericope. Therefore, the chapter endeavoured more of a research study on the meaning of the author's wording and sentences in the two creation narratives, the intent being to uncover the meaning behind the words in a text that might bring a fresh insight and interpretation of the text altogether.

The thorough study revealed no difference between the two creation narratives, except that they are recognised as originating from different sources. However, they remain consistent with each other. An understanding of some of the Hebrew terminologies which were misinterpreted like, '*adam*' formed also part of this chapter. Subsequently, this definition or understanding of '*adam*' shed new insight pertaining to the creation of a human being, man and woman, having been created both in the image of God, with great intimacy and unity, distinct in roles, yet equal in all aspects, even in areas of functionality to creation and relation to God, to complement one another and not as rivals. The chapter also provided insight in terms of the God who is radically transcendent and later immanent and personal, is no different but the same God, differently portrayed. This means that the relevance of the Book of Genesis goes beyond the children of Israel then, who had a deep need for their identity, background, purpose and wanted so much to trace their relationship with God. However, the Book of Books as the scholars call it is very much relevant for us today. The infusing together of these accounts, brings an understanding of intimacy and unity between human beings, emphasising their reason for existence which is found in their complementarity

and companionship. These narratives therefore, provide a new interpretation and meaning in the creation of humans in relation to their Creator, rather both created in the image of God and equal in all aspects.

Lastly, Chapter Five attempted to address the ensuing issues of that time which could have led to the way the narratives have been interpreted and understood. This happened through the application of the Feminist Reading of the text, a hermeneutic approach that goes far beyond just addressing gender issues, but also intersectional challenges. This is simply because this approach recognises that the root causes of all the injustices are interconnected. In the sphere of intersectional feminism, this study focused especially on two approaches. They are the notion to critique power structures and the one of activism and advocacy. With the Critique Power Structure, Anzaldua (1997:191) infers that it cautions us on the importance of recognising and analysing how systems like patriarchy, hierarchy and power reinforce and perpetuate inequality and oppression of a woman's character. Something that Scholz (2017:18) says emerged from socialisation on issues such as gender roles, expectations and norms and even privileges for certain genders over others. This means that oppression usually germinates and thrives in power imbalances influenced by societal attitudes that normalise and excuse such behaviour. The second approach, Activism and Advocacy informs the need for social change that can happen in various ways (Anzaldua 1997:191). However, beginning with continuous teaching and ongoing dialogue. West (2007:19) also argue that the change of the current norm could be an impact of an endless re-interpretation of the biblical text.

The feminist lens therefore countered the patriarchal domination head on and enabled a very different meaning outside culture, tradition, patriarchy, misogyny, author and in different contexts. It has provided means for inclusiveness in terms of language and imagery with broader social justice and liberation for all as an end goal. Moreover, the theory probes, questions, challenges and even rejects much of what has been counted as acceptable knowledge and interpretation, and ultimately read against the grain and unmasked the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Consequently, it discovers that the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, have been influenced, read and

interpreted in a way that has reduced one gender over the other, this is simply because of the context in which the text originate, which also influence its reception. Therefore, leaving these narratives of the creation story to be understood within culture, which failed to favour the woman character yet recognised and assigned power to the man character. Thus, the much need for a fresh interpretation of these two narratives. It is against this background that the feminist perspective is valuable for interpreting Genesis 1 and 2, because it provides insight into gender roles, power dynamics and the portrayal of women in these biblical texts. Therefore, seeking liberation from all forms of oppression for all. Indeed, this chapter helped in providing a fresh perspective of the text, by countering the acceptable knowledge and an understanding that is enabled by patriarchal domination and culture. The feminist reading of the text faces all these head-on and ultimately enables a very different meaning that is without an androcentric mentality.

6.4. Hypothesis

The research of the study has confirmed the following hypothesis:

Firstly, the study has demonstrated that the feminist reading of Genesis 1 and 2 could enable a new insight and interpretation of the text that is more inclusive than patriarchal and cultural.

Secondly, the study proves that reinterpretation and rereading of the text might indeed be a means of rewriting the narratives of creation and ultimately liberating the woman character.

6.5. Conclusion

Based on the research, it is conclusive that the Book of Genesis is the work of a number of scribes or authors, ruling out Moses as the sole author, yet to still determine whether these authors have names or not. Something that is not of much essence

though at this point, rather, the message is. The research study provided an insight that God as the sole Creator (*bara*), created human beings, both equal in significance, existence and relation to God, significantly, both being the equal image bearers of God. The research also discovered that reading the text by employing a different lens, such as a feminist perspective, may enable a fresh and new interpretation and meaning that is without an androcentric and patriarchal tone, while considering the influential factors based on the historical context and development of the text.

Subsequently, the study has provided light in terms of what has come to be known and acceptable, it is actually not. Instead, encourages constant examination and interpretation of the text and probing and challenging. One should not work or conclude based on assumptions or traditional or societal beliefs. The Creator (God) therefore, does not reduce the woman character, rather, those who authored the book, their intentions and the influence of that time as well as cultural norms have reduced the woman character. The context in which the texts were created as well as the contexts in which they were received led to discriminative attitudes towards women. Furthermore, the study reveals that the misconstrued interpretation is influenced by the lens used to read the text, which informed the reception of the text. However, to God, a human being is one and equal, until God decided to create gender, and that distinction, only comes into play during the roles allocation, which is complementing instead of competing. The dominance is not on one another but both have been granted equal authority to look after the creation.

6.6. Recommendations for Further Study

Indeed, the research has through this in-depth study, managed to generate a fresh perspective that is not entangled in culture, tradition and certain beliefs. Although this study has managed to somehow determine the Portrayal of the woman character in the two creation narratives, it has also revealed traces of layers of misinterpretation, misogyny and hierarchy that are still there even today, between man and woman. Subsequently, this indicates the need for further research that will aid in perhaps

discovering the woman's character in the fall of humanity and the meaning behind the pain of child labour.

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