

## GOD AND THE RHETORIC OF SEXUALITY

Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.  
Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978),

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**Phyllis Trible in her “God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality” (P. 31-34)** presents this story to define the meaning of *compassion*. The story tells of the motivation of the woman who offers to relinquish her child in order that he may live. She offers “because her *Rahamim* (*compassion*) grew warm, grew tender, or yearned (kmr) for her son” (v. 26). Motivated by *compassion* (*Rahamim*) this woman is willing to forfeit even justice for the sake of life. By exposing the absurdity and insolubility of the power struggle between the two women, the king has occasioned in one of them a transcendent love which brings truth and life. And only after this development does the word *mother* appear in the story. Throughout, the two females have been called harlots, women, or this one and the other. Finally, when their own words identify them, the king is able to call one a mother (v. 27). According to the story, the presence of a love that knows not the demands of ego, of possessiveness, or even of justice reveals motherhood<sup>1</sup>

This ancient story becomes a paradigm for understanding a particular biblical metaphor. The motivational clause, “because her *Rahamim* (*compassion*) yearned for her son (v.26), provides the key word.

Difficult to translate in the fullness of its imagery, the Hebrew noun *rahamim* connotes simultaneously both a mode of being and the locus of that mode. In its singular form the noun *Rehem* means “womb” or “uterus.” In the plural, *Rahamim*, this concrete meaning expands to the abstractions of “compassion, mercy, and love. Further these abstractions occur in a verb, *rahm*, “to show mercy, and in an adjective, “*rahum*” “merciful.” Accordingly, our metaphor lies in the semantic movement from a physical organ of the female body to a psychic mode of being. It journeys from the concrete to abstract. “Womb” is the vehicle: “compassion,” the tenor. To the responsive imagination, this metaphor suggests the meaning of love as selfless participation in life. The womb protects and nourishes but does not possess and control. It yields its treasure in order that wholeness and well-being may happen. Truly, it is the way of compassion

뉴욕에 위치한 Union 신학교의 구약학 교수 Trible 에 의하면 허부리 말, 명사에 *rahamim* 이란 단어가 있는데 이 단어의 단수명사형 *Rehem* 은 “자궁”을 의미하고 그단어의 복수형 *rahamim* 은 자비, 긍휼, 사랑이라는 말로 풀이가 될 수 있다고 한다. 자궁이란 생을 배고 보호하고 키우며 욕심없이 희생과 사랑으로 자라는 생명과 함께한다. 자궁은 소유하거나 지배하지 않는다. 이는 생이 안전하게 자라고 평안하도록 자신의 생을 양보한다. 이 자궁의 역할이야말로 자비 (*compassion*)의 모습이다.<sup>2</sup>

Although the vehicle womb is an organ unique to women, Men also participate in the journey of this biblical metaphor. For example, Joseph sees for the first time “his brother Benjamin, the son of his mother.” Overcome, he seeks a place to weep, “because his *Rahamim* yearned (kmr) for his brother” (Gen. 43:30).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 32-33

<sup>2</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 33.

Benjamin is described not just as the brother of Joseph but also as “the son of his mother,” presence of metaphor *Rahamim*.” In the Psalm 103:13 is the metaphor extends to a father to parallel paternal and divine love. As a father has *compassion* (*Kerahem*) for his children, so the LORD has *compassion* (*Riham*) for those who fear him. <sup>4</sup>

### FROM THE WOMB OF WOMEN

Phyllis would add that In the Hebrew scriptures the wombs of women belong to God.

Yahweh closes the womb for sin or opens it up for fertility (Gen. 20: 1-18). Yahweh opens up Lea’s womb (Gen. 29:31-35) (Trible P. 34). Yahweh closed and opened Hannah’s womb (I Sam. 1:1-20). God forms body in the womb (Jer. 1:5) <sup>5</sup>

히브리 성경에서 여성의 자궁은 하나님께 속한다. 야웨께서 죄를 주시기 위해 자궁을 닫기도 하시고 생명을 낳게 하기위해 여시기도 하신다 (창. 20:1-18). 야웨께서 리아의 자궁을 여시고 (창. 29:31-35) 야웨께서 한나의 자궁을 닫으시고 (삼상 1:1-20), 하나님께서 자궁안에서 생명을 형성하신다 (렘 1:15). <sup>6</sup>

For Job, God molds in the womb all human beings, not just special ones. This organ is the place of human equality, an equality based in the creative work of a God who also governs life outside the womb. Social status and sexual differences (manservant and maidservant) mean nothing in the perspective of creation, and this perspective determines ethical norms and behavior. In choosing how he treats himself and other human creatures, Job must answer to the God of the womb of equality. Thus, the female organ becomes a moral and theological event. These two poets, Jeremiah and Job, who know so keenly the formative power of God in the uterus, wish most fervently to make the womb a tomb.

Jeremiah laments:

Cursed be the day on which I was born!

The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!

Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, “A son is born to you,” making him very glad.

Let that man be like the cities which Yahweh overthrew without pity;

Let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon,

because he did not kill me in the womb; so that my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great.

Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame? (Jer. 20: 14-18). <sup>7</sup>

God conceives in the womb; God fashions in the womb; God judges in the womb; God destines in the womb; God brings forth from the womb; God receives out of the womb; and God carries from the womb to gray hairs (Is. 46: 3-4). In biblical tradition, an organ unique to the female becomes a vehicle pointing to the compassion of God

하나님은 자궁에 생명을 배게하신다; 자궁에서 생명을 빚으신다.; 자궁안에서 판단하신다; 자궁안에서 운명을 지으신다; 자궁에서 생이 나오게 하신다; 자궁에서 나오는 생명을 받으신다; 자궁에서 백발까지 안고 다니신다 (사 46: 3-4) “야곱의 집안아, 이스라엘 집안의 모든 남은 자들아, 내 말을 들어라. 너희

<sup>4</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 36.

가 태어날 때부터 내가 너희를 안고 다녔고, 너희가 모태에서 나올 때부터 내가 너희를 품고 다녔다.  
“ 성서적인 전통에서 여자에게 특수한 기능인 장기 자궁이 하나님의 자비(compassion)를 묘사하는 수단으로 사용된다.<sup>8</sup>

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너희가 늙을 때까지 내가 너희를 안고 다니고, 너희가 백발이 될 때까지 내가 너희를 품고 다니겠다. 내가 너희를 지었으니, 내가 너희를 품고 다니겠고, 안고 다니겠고, 또 구원하여 주겠다.

### **TO THE COMPASSION OF GOD**

The two adjective forms, “merciful “ and “gracious” are used only for the Creator, never for creatures.

<sup>10</sup> (Ps. 111:4; 145:8; Neh. 9:17) and (Ps. 86:16) (Joel 2:13; 2Chron. 30:9; Jon 4:2)

The verb and noun **Rhm**: Example of Hosea (2:21, 23, 25) p.39-40 Hosea speaks of Israel as child and Yahweh as parent. I shall no more show compassion (Rahem) on the house of Israel. Withdrawing love from the baby girl Yahweh closes the womb of compassion (Hos. 1:6) And in that day, says yahweh, I will have compassion (Werihanti) upon Not Loved (lo ruham) (Hos. 2:21; 23 (23,25)<sup>11</sup>

### **Jer. 31:20 (translation by Tribble in “God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality”)**

Thus says Yahweh: Is Ephraim (Israel) my dear son? My darling child? For the more I speak of him, the more I do remember him. Therefore my womb trembles for him;

I will truly show motherly-compassion upon him.<sup>12</sup>

Yahweh’s love for Ephraim: *My love put his hand to the latch, And my inner-parts trembled within me.* Yahweh here speaks here of the divine inner-parts trembling for Ephraim the child. In some other passages, the word *inner-parts* parallels *womb* (Gen. 25:23; Ps. 71:6; Is. 49:1). It can be read “my womb trembles for him.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus exclusively female image extends its meaning to a divine mode of being:

“I will truly show motherly-compassion upon him,” says Yahweh. These words and expression emphasize the tender memory and the earnest love of Yahweh for Ephraim: “ I do remember him lovingly (v. 20b); “I will truly show motherly-compassion upon him” (v. 20c).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 38.

<sup>10</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 38.

<sup>11</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 39.

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 43.

<sup>13</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 45.

<sup>14</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 45.

Parallels between Rachel and Yahweh occur in each of its three sections. The rhetorical question calling Ephraim a “darling child” suggests that God identifies with Rachel’s caring for her children. The motivational clause recalls Rachel remembering her lost sons with tenderness. And the conclusion makes explicit the maternal metaphor for God. As Rachel mourns the loss of the fruit of her womb, so Yahweh, from the divine womb, mourns the same child. Yet there is a difference. The human mother refuses consolation; the divine mother changes grief into grace. As a result, the poem has moved from the desolate lamentation of Rachel to the redemptive compassion of God. Female imagery surrounds Ephraim; words of a mother embrace her son.<sup>15</sup>

According to traditional interpretation, the narrative in Genesis 2:7-3:24 (most interpretations bypass the preface in 2:4b-6) is about “Adam and Eve.” It proclaims male superiority and female inferiority as the will of God. It portrays woman as “temptress” and troublemaker who is dependent upon and dominated by her husband. Over the centuries this misogynous reading has acquired a status of canonicity so that those who deplore and those who applaud the story both agree upon its meaning. Impressive is even a partial list of specifics documenting this consensus:<sup>16</sup>

- A male God creates first man (2:7) and last woman (2:22); first means superior and last means inferior or subordinate.
- Woman is created for the sake of man; a helpmate to cure his loneliness (2:18-23).
- Contrary to nature, woman comes out of man; she is denied even her natural function of birthing and that function is given to man (2:21-22).
- Woman is the rib of man, dependent upon him for life (2:21-22).
- Taken out of man (2:23), woman has a derivative, not an autonomous, existence.
- Man names woman (2:23) and thus has power over her.
- Man leaves his father’s family in order to set up through his wife another patriarchal unit (2:24)
- Woman tempted man to disobey and thus she is responsible for sin in the world (3:6); she is untrustworthy, gullible, and simpleminded.
- Woman is cursed by pain in childbirth(3:16); pain in childbirth is a more severe punishment than man’s struggles with the soil; it signifies that woman’s sin is greater than man’s.
- Woman’s desire for man (3:16) is God’s way of keeping her faithful and submissive to her husband.
- God gives man the right to rule over woman (3:16).<sup>17</sup>

Although

- 남성 하나님은 처음에 남자를(2:7) 그리고 마지막에 여자를(2:22 창조하셨다. 처음은 우월을 그리고 마지막은 열등 혹은 종속(subordinate) 을 의미한다.

<sup>15</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73.

<sup>17</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73.

- 여자는 남자를 위해, 즉 남자의 외로움을 치유하기 위한 배우자로 창조되었다 (2:18-23).
- 자연과는 반대로 여자가 남자에게서 나오게 했다; 즉 여자의 자연적인 출생의 기능마저 거부했고 남자에게 그 기능을 주셨다 (2:21-22).
- 여자는 남자에게 종신토록 의존해야되는 남자의 갈비이다(2:21-22).
- 남자에게서 나왔으니(2:23), 여자는 파생 (derivative)한 존재이지 독립된 (autonomous) 존재가 아니다.
- 남자가 여자의 이름을 지었음 (2:23) 으로 여자를 지배한다 (Power over her).
- 남자는 그의 아내를 통해 또하나의 가부장 단위(unit)를 세우기 위해 그의 아버지의 집을 떠난다(2:24)
- .여자가 남자로 하여금 불순종하도록 유혹 했으므로 세상의 죄에 대한 책임을 진다 (3:6); 여자는 신뢰할 수 없고, 속기 쉽고, 어리석은 존재다.
- 여자는 해산하는 고통(3:16)으로 저주를 받았다. 해산하는 고통은 땅과 싸우는 벌보다 더 심한 벌이다. 이는 곧 여자의 죄가 남자의 것보다 더 크다는 것을 의미한다.
- 하나님은 여자가 남자를 사모함으로 남편에게 순종하고 충실하도록 하셨다.
- 하나님은 여자를 다스리는 권리를 남자에게 주신다(3:16).<sup>18</sup>

여자가 남자로 하여금 불순종하도록 유혹했으므로 세상의 죄에 대한 책임을 진다(3:6); 여자는 신뢰 할 수 없고, 속기 쉽고, 어리석은 존재다. 여자는 해산하는 고통 (3:16)으로 저주를 받았다. 해산하는 고통은 땅과 싸우는 벌보다 더 심한 벌이다. 이는 곧 여자의 죄가 남자의 것 보다 더 크다는 것을 의미한다. 하나님은 여자가 남자를 사모함으로 남편에게 순종하고 충실하도록 하셨다. 하나님은 여자를 다스리는 권리를 남자에게 주셨다 (3:16)고 사람들은 말한다고 Tribble 은 열거한다.<sup>19</sup>

**Issue 3.** In Gen 2:18-23, woman is created for the sake of man; a helpmate to cure his loneliness. Therefore, woman is not equal to man and she should be subject to the man.

The Hebrew word *ezer*, rendered here as “companion,” has been traditionally translated “helper” - a translation that is totally misleading because the English word *helper* suggests an assistant, a subordinate, indeed, an inferior, while the Hebrew word *ezer* carries no such connotation. To the contrary, in the Hebrew scriptures this word often describes God as the superior who creates and saves Israel. So it does in our story with connotation of superiority to specify identity, mutuality, and equality. According to Yahweh God, what the earth creature needs is a companion, one who is neither subordinate nor superior; one who alleviates isolation through identity.<sup>20</sup>

Tribble 은 영어로 *ezer* 을 *helper* 번역했는데 이는 아주 잘못된 번역이라 한다. 영어의 *helper* 가 의미하는 *assistant*, *subordinate*, *an inferior* 란 뜻은 히브리어 *ezer* 에는 없기 때문이다. 오히려 *ezer* 의 뜻은 하나님이 이스라엘을

<sup>18</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73.

<sup>19</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73.

<sup>20</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 90.

창조하시고 구원하시는 우월한 분으로 묘사할 때 쓰인 말이다. 그 단어에 대응하는 단어가 *kenegdo* 인데 동일성(*identity*), 상호성(*mutuality*), 동등성(*equality*)을 의미한다. 이는 종속(*subordinate*)도 우월(*superior*)도 아닌 동일성(*identity*)으로 고립을 덜어주는 상대를 말한다(고 Trible 은 해석한다).<sup>21</sup>

**Issue 4.** In Gen. 2:23, man names woman (2:23) and thus has power over her.

**Issue 5.** In Gen. 3:6-7, woman tempted man to disobey and thus she is responsible for sin in the world (3:6); this makes the woman the worse sinner than the man, and she is not equal to man and must be subject to man.

According to Trible, the creature (ha adam) was totally passive throughout the episode (of creating the woman) because God caused him to fall into deep sleep while God performed surgery of taking out one of his ribs and created a new and unique life – the woman.<sup>22</sup>

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히브리 성경에서 여성의 자궁은 하나님께 속한다. 야웨께서 죄를 주시게 하기 위해 자궁을 닫기도 하시고 생명을 낳게 하기위해 여시기도 하신다 (창. 20:1-18). 야웨께서 리아의 자궁을 여시고 (창. 29:31-35) 야웨께서 한나의 자궁을 닫으시고 (삼상 1:1-20), 하나님께서 자궁안에서 생명을 형성하신다 (렘 1:15).<sup>24</sup>

하나님은 자궁에 생명을 배게하신다; 자궁에서 생명을 빚으신다.; 자궁안에서 판단하신다; 자궁안에서 운명을 지으신다; 자궁에서 생이 나오게 하신다; 자궁에서 나오는 생명을 받으신다; 자궁에서 백발까지 안고 다니신다 (사 46: 3-4) “야곱의 집안아, 이스라엘 집안의 모든 남은 자들아, 내 말을 들어라. 너희가 태어날 때부터 내가 너희를 안고 다녔고, 너희가 모태에서 나올 때부터 내가 너희를 품고 다녔다. “ 성서적인 전통에서 여자에게 특수한 기능인 장기 자궁이 하나님의 자비(*compassion*)를 묘사하는 수단으로 사용된다.<sup>25</sup>

하나님은 자궁에 생명을 배게하신다; 자궁에서 생명을 빚으신다.; 자궁안에서 판단하신다; 자궁안에서 운명을 지으신다; 자궁에서 생이 나오게 하신다; 자궁에서 나오는 생명을 받으신다; 자궁에서 백발까지 안고 다니신다 (사 46: 3-4) “야곱의 집안아, 이스라엘 집안의 모든 남은 자들아, 내 말을 들어라. 너희가 태어날 때부터 내가 너희를 안고 다녔고, 너희가 모태에서 나올 때부터 내가 너희를 품고 다녔다. “ 성서적인 전통에서 여자에게 특수한 기능인 장기 자궁이 하나님의 자비(*compassion*)를 묘사하는 수단으로 사용된다.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 90.

<sup>22</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 96.

<sup>23</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 38.

<sup>26</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1978), 38.

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너희가 늙을 때까지 내가 너희를 안고 다니고, 너희가 백발이 될 때까지 내가 너희를 품고 다니겠다. 내가 너희를 지었으니, 내가 너희를 품고 다니겠고, 안고 다니겠고, 또 구원하여 주겠다.