

Gender Parity in Patriarchy? Heterarchy and Reclaiming Women's Rights in Judg 4:4 and an African Context

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ABSTRACT

This article is inspired by Madipoane (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) Masenya's essay titled, The Dissolution of the Monarchy, the Collapse of the Temple and the "Elevation" of Women in the Post-Exilic Period: Any Relevance for African Women's Theologies? Masenya questions the possibility of gender equality within a patriarchal household due to claims of egalitarianism in the pre-monarchical and the post-monarchical communities in ancient Israel. Joining this conversation, this article suggests that describing ancient Israel and pre-colonial Africa as patriarchal may embolden patriarchists. It notes that patriarchists do not take responsibility for their patriarchal tendencies by claiming obedience to Scriptures and pre-colonial African tradition. Therefore, the study explores the idea of heterarchy as a social science model to explain the gender dynamics of the pre-monarchic and pre-colonial eras. It is argued that by establishing pre-monarchic Israel and pre-colonial Africa as heterarchical, patriarchists will be unable to hide behind the Bible and African tradition for their patriarchal tendencies. They will have to take ethical responsibility for the violation of the dignity of women. To demonstrate heterarchy in pre-monarchic Israel, the story of Deborah is used as an illustration and in the case of pre-colonial Africa, the status of four Southern African women—Nozidiya, Mkabayi, Lozikeyi and Modjadji—is considered.

KEYWORDS: Deborah, Gender Parity, Heterarchy, Patriarchy, Pre-Colonial Women, Second Temple Community, Settlement Period

A INTRODUCTION

This discussion is triggered by Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s question regarding the possibility of gender parity within a patriarchal household. She raises this question following Carol Meyers' claim that there was

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Submitted: 03/03/2024; peer-reviewed: 01/06/2025; accepted: 04/06/2025. Ntozakhe Cezula "Gender Parity in Patriarchy? Heterarchy and Reclaiming Women's Rights in Judg 4:4 and an African Context," *Old Testament Essays* 38 no. 2 (2025): 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2025/v38n2a4>.

some egalitarianism between women and men during the Settlement Period in the Old Testament.¹ According to Masenya, Tamara Eskenazi echoes this sentiment, stating that the egalitarianism of the Settlement Period also typified the Second Temple community of the Achaemenid period.² Meyers argues that the term "patriarchy" is an inadequate and misleading designation of the social reality of ancient Israel. She therefore suggests that "heterarchy" is a more flexible model that can better accommodate the complexities of gender, acknowledging that Israelite women were autonomous actors in multiple aspects of household and community life.³

To initiate the discussion, I will: (a) Present a prolegomenon where I state my reservations in participating in gender discourse; (b) Elaborate on Masenya's question of gender parity in a patriarchal household; (c) Explore the appearance of full-blown patriarchal political theory in seventeenth-century English politics and the prevalence of patriarchy in Africa; (d) present Meyers' suggestion of heterarchy as a social science model to explain gender dynamics in pre-monarchic Israel; (e) Examine certain pre-colonial African heroines to provide insights into pre-colonial African gender dynamics; (f) Explore Deborah as a pre-monarchic heroine to see if there is anything of value for our discussion and (g) Conclude with closing remarks.

B PROLEGOMENON

Male participation in gender equality conversations is a fragile exercise. The unconscious prejudices that men carry against women have a great potential to cause damage, even though the intentions may be good. This is a risk I take by starting this discussion. The awareness of this reality makes me reluctant to engage in gender equality discussions. Whereas I sometimes make remarks on the issue, most of the time I choose to be quiet and listen to what women say. This does not mean I agree with this stance. I am also challenged by remarks such as Robert W. Connell's assertion: "As long as any systematic gender inequalities persist, delivering advantage to men over women and promising future advantage to boys, the advantaged have an ethical responsibility to use their resources to change the system."⁴

Therefore, I also have an ethical responsibility to use my resources to help change the system. My academic paraphernalia can be a resource for reasoning

¹ Madipoane Masenya (*Ngwan'a Mphahlele*), "The Dissolution of the Monarchy, the Collapse of the Temple and the 'Elevation' of Women in the Post-Exilic Period: Any Relevance for African Women's Theologies?" *OTE* 26/1 (2013):141.

² Masenya (*Ngwan'a Mphahlele*), "The Dissolution of the Monarchy," 148.

³ Carol Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" *JBL* 133/1 (2014): 27.

⁴ Robert W. Connell, *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality* (The United Nations Expert Group Meeting, Division for the Advancement of Women; October 21–24 2023; Brasilia: UN, 2003), 4.

about gender equality. It is in this spirit that, in this article, I dialogue with Carol Meyers and Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele). In this discussion, I refrain from drawing conclusions and instead pose questions, which I believe can help deepen the discourse. Having expressed my sentiments, I proceed to Masenya's argument.

C GENDER PARITY WITHIN A PATRIARCHAL HOUSEHOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Masenya (*Ngwan'a Mphahlele*) is sceptical about the claim that the Pre-monarchic and Second Temple periods in the Old Testament provided some egalitarianism between men and women. This view states that women were actively involved in household and external activities for the welfare of the family, causing some feminists to recognise some egalitarianism between men and women. Masenya doubts "whether serving faithfully as household managers of a patriarchal household could be regarded as revealing some form of egalitarianism between women and men."⁵ She then remarks:

Given the active role which Israelite women played towards the overall welfare of the household unit, it occasions no surprise that scholars such as Meyers could claim that there was some egalitarianism between women and men during the settlement period. What is questionable though is the possibility of gender parity within a patriarchal household.⁶

The "possibility of gender parity within a patriarchal household" is of interest to this study. This question is asked in the context of the views of feminists such as Carol Meyers and Tamara Eskenazi, who claim that "there was some egalitarianism between women and men during the settlement period."⁷ Meyers comments on the Settlement Period of Israel: "While the exact character of Israelite cultures in this formative period is open to debate, it is clear from the material remains that it was a relatively "rustic" society, with little social differentiation and a relatively egalitarian (or non-hierarchical) setting."⁸ Tamara Cohn Eskenazi adds: "If Meyers's thesis correctly describes premonarchic Israel, I suggest that it also supports a measure of egalitarianism in postexilic Judah."⁹

In essence, Masenya does not dispute the argument that before the monarchy, the family led the community and women played pivotal roles "for

⁵ Ibid., 140.

⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Carol Meyers, "Early Israel and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L.G. Perdue; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; 2001), 161–186.

⁹ C. Tamara Eskenazi, "Out from the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Postexilic Era," *JSOT* 54 (1992): 33.

the successful running of a family household.”¹⁰ Commenting on the conditions Meyers refers to, she says: “... if understood first and foremost within the context of their own time, the issue of gender parity raised by Meyers might make some sense.”¹¹ However, not forgetting that the family was also patriarchal, she cautiously asks “whether serving faithfully as household managers of a patriarchal household could be regarded as revealing some form of egalitarianism between women and men...”¹² Patriarchy is the concern here. This discussion calls for some scrutiny of patriarchy, especially in the Scriptures and African traditions.

D PRE-MONARCHIC ISRAEL AND PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA: PATRIARCHY OR HETERARCHY?

In the broadest sense, concerning the Bible and gender, there are “those who accept the androcentric tendencies in the Bible as authoritative and normative and also ... those who are made uncomfortable or are outraged by them.”¹³ For the sake of our discussion, the former may be described as patriarchalists and the latter, feminists. The focus here is on the patriarchalists. Discussing the occasioning of “the appearance of full-blown patriarchal political theory” ... “by the turbulence of seventeenth-century English politics,” Melissa A. Butler says:

Patriarchalists insisted that God, nature and history were on their side. For proof, one need only consult the one true account of Creation, namely, the Book of Genesis. Not only was Genesis divinely inspired, it was also the oldest possible historical source and the best guide to man's nature. There, in the Genesis account, was the evidence that God had created Adam in His image – patriarch and monarch He created him.¹⁴

Butler continues: “In patriarchal theory, women held a distinctly subordinate position. Their inferior place in family, state and society was justified on the basis of scriptural exegesis.”¹⁵ Referring to a certain Sir Robert Filmer, who “was himself something of a model patriarch,” Butler says: “... Filmer's most important, most authoritative source was always scripture.”¹⁶ Butler then makes a profound remark that: “... the only way Sir Robert [Filmer]¹⁷ could be refuted

¹⁰ Masenya (*Ngwan'a Mphahlele*), “The Dissolution of the Monarchy,” 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, 138–139, fn.

¹³ Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2013), 24.

¹⁴ Melissa A. Butler, “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy,” *The American Political Science Review*, 72/1 (1978): 136–137.

¹⁵ Butler, “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism,” 141.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁷ My insertion.

was by destroying his scriptural base."¹⁸ I interpret this remark as meaning that, whatever confidence and righteousness Filmer felt in his patriarchal tendencies would be shattered by the destruction of his scriptural base.

Leaving seventeenth-century England and coming to Africa, Adeola A. Adebajo says:

Patriarchal ideology ... permeates the political terrain in Africa ... Patriarchal ideology permeates state structures, institutions, and intergovernmental agencies such as African Union... Patriarchal ideology that holds sway in politics should be dislodged through gender-sensitive informal and formal education and reorientation of African people in order to change their mindsets so as to achieve gender-friendly and inclusive peace-building processes.¹⁹

I fully associate myself with Adebajo's sentiment that the patriarchal ideology in Africa must be dislodged and African peoples' mindsets must be changed. However, before I take Adebajo's remarks further, I need to extensively reference Bongani Blessing Finca's²⁰ view:

Very early in my life I recognized racism as evil and as contrary to the Christian way of life, and I enlisted myself in the struggle against it. Very early in my life I recognized classism and the class stratification of society as evil and as contrary to the Christian way of life, and I enlisted myself in the struggle for an egalitarian society. I rejected very strongly all forms of discrimination between people which our sick society was attempting to socialize us into accepting as a normal way of life — what was then called the South African way of life. But there was one notable exception: I remained a patriarch. Instead of challenging how African tradition defined the status of women, I found myself jumping to the defence of the status quo, blaming the colonial and missionary interpretation for misreading African tradition and culture. The Judaeo-Christian tradition, which had helped me so well to deal with other prejudices in my life, failed desperately to liberate me from my patriarchal biases.²¹

¹⁸ Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism," 137.

¹⁹ Adeola A. Adebajo, "Women and Peace Processes in Africa," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (ed. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and Toyin Falola; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 649-650.

²⁰ Minister of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). The quotations are from an adapted article from an address he gave at a World Council of Churches (WCC) Decade conference in East London, South Africa in 1994.

²¹ Bongani B. Finca, "The Decade: A Man's View," *The Ecumenical Review* 46/2 (1994): 191.

Finca further says: "We have to face the reality that women are discriminated against within the church and within the African tradition."²²

Finca highlights the collaboration between African tradition and biblical "tradition" in the exclusion of women. Back to Adebajo's remarks, the state of patriarchy in Africa that she describes is said to be justified by the Scriptures and African tradition. Echoing this sentiment, Urther Rwafa says: "The creation of man in the Bible is used by some African men to oppress women"²³ ... In African culture, a married woman is trained to respect and obey her husband as he is said to be the head of the family."²⁴ Like Adebajo, Rwafa remarks that "culture and religion ...can be challenged and deconstructed by people actively involved in finding alternative ways of defying gender inequalities in African societies."²⁵ Agreeing with Rwafa, I borrow from Butler that the only way patriarchalists in Africa can be refuted is by destroying their scriptural and traditional bases. My evaluation is that biblical and African traditional cultural justifications exonerate people from ethical responsibility for their actions.

At this juncture, I ask a question that I assume will invigorate the discourse. If the Bible and African traditional culture are considered "the most important, most authoritative source(s)" of patriarchy in Africa, suppose these ancient communities were not patriarchal in the first place? This question should not be understood as suggesting that there is no gender inequality. Rather, the question prompts us to consider the concept of heterarchy that has been raised by Meyers. Meyers argues that "the term 'patriarchy' is an inadequate and misleading designation of the social reality of ancient Israel ... As a far more flexible model than patriarchy, heterarchy is a heuristic tool that perhaps can better accommodate, at least for now, the complexity of gender dynamics"²⁶ Similarly, Christine Saidi *et al* point out: "In eastern and central Africa, power and authority are differentially held and distributed across families and generations in ways illustrative of heterarchy."²⁷ Although they do not mention the concept of heterarchy directly, Anna Lefatshe Moagi and Butholezwe Mtombeni express sentiments that evince their awareness of heterarchy. For example, they argue: "... women in pre-colonial southern Africa were not

²² Finca, "The Decade," 192.

²³ Urther Rwafa, "Culture and Religion as Sources of Gender Inequality: Rethinking Challenges Women Face in Contemporary Africa," *JLS/TLW* 32/1 (2016): 43–52.

²⁴ Rwafa, "Culture and Religion," 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁶ Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society," 27.

²⁷ Christine Saidi, Catherine C. Fourshey, and Rhonda M. Gonzales, "Gender, Authority, and Identity in African History: Heterarchy, Cosmic Families and Lifestyles," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (ed. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and Toyin Falola; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 1263.

trapped in domesticity but were free to participate in male-type activities.”²⁸ It will be helpful to present the views of Meyers and Moagi/Mtombeni in the next section.

E HETERARCHY AS A SOCIAL SCIENCE MODEL?

Meyers differentiates between patriarchy and what she calls heterarchy as a social science model to explain the gender dynamics of the pre-monarchic era. According to Meyers:

It is important to keep in mind that, like any model, the heterarchic one is a heuristic tool that cannot be deemed either true or false. Rather, its value lies in helping us *to* understand a society that cannot be directly observed by allowing us to interpret existing data in new ways.²⁹

Meyers introduces heterarchy to challenge the concept of patriarchy in making sense of the gender reality in ancient Israel. She contends that women probably had control over many important aspects of their life activities, albeit Scriptures do not explicitly state that. Whereas she describes patriarchy as hierarchical, heterarchy is viewed as heterarchical. My understanding of what Meyers says here is that patriarchy, being hierarchical, is one structure that goes up deploying people to different levels of power, authority and status as it goes higher. Heterarchy, on the other hand, consists of many “departments” with equal power, authority and status populated by different people who acquire the power, authority and status represented by those “departments.” She explains hierarchy as designating “an organizational structure in which, on the basis of certain factors, some elements are subordinate to others and are usually ranked accordingly. Hierarchies are often represented spatially as conical vertical structures, giving rise to phrases like “moving up in the hierarchy.”³⁰ However,

[Heterarchy] does not eliminate hierarchies, but rather recognises that there can be a variety of hierarchies that may or may not intersect with each other... A heterarchical society can be composed of various social units – including individuals, households, guilds of professionals, village communities, and kinship groups – that are involved in multiple horizontal as well as vertical relationships.³¹

Therefore, heterarchy “can account for the fact that past societies had multiple sources of power that did not necessarily line up in a single set of

²⁸ Moagi, Lefatshe Anna and Butholezwe Mtombeni, “Women in Pre-colonial Africa: Southern Africa,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (ed. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and Toyin Falola; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 18.

²⁹ Meyers, “Rediscovering Eve,” 198.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

vertical hierarchical relationships.”³² She then concludes that “this alternative model makes the power and agency of women – senior women and also professional – more visible.”³³

Meyers clarifies that “eschewing the patriarchy model does not mean claiming that there was gender equality in ancient Israel.”³⁴ She refers to inheritance to demonstrate that gender inequality is not ruled out:

Israelite patrilineality, for example, clearly favored men in the transmission of a household's inheritance across generations through male lines, a pattern that underlies the male control of female sexuality that appears in biblical texts and also in ethnographic observations of traditional societies.³⁵

However, she qualifies her remarks by comparing patrilineality and patriarchy. In my opinion, this is not a trivial differentiation. She contends that “patrilineality is not the same as patriarchy.”³⁶ She explains that “male control of female sexuality does not mean male control of adult women in every aspect of household or community life.”³⁷ For example, “... senior women ... were hardly oppressed and powerless.”³⁸ She concludes: “In short, male dominance was real; but it was fragmentary, not hegemonic.”³⁹ I understand this last remark to mean that women still had significant roles and autonomy in various aspects of household and community life, thus, challenging the traditional view of ancient Israel as a strictly patriarchal society. Dishing out some food for thought, Meyers says: “It is worth contemplating that the unity and asexuality of the Israelite deity bore some relationship to the human community made in the image of that God.”⁴⁰ In other words, the asexuality of ancient Israel's God could be mirrored in ancient Israel which was made in the image of that God.

On Meyers' direct focus on gender and heterarchy, she says that: “With respect to gender, the heterarchy model challenges the notion of patriarchy by recognizing that certain systems associated with women, each with its own set of rankings, privileges, and statuses, would hold authoritative roles vis-à-vis other systems.”⁴¹ Further:

³² Ibid., 197.

³³ Ibid., 202.

³⁴ Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?” 26–27.

³⁵ Ibid., 26–27.

³⁶ Ibid., 26–27.

³⁷ Ibid., 26–27.

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

³⁹ Ibid., 26–27.

⁴⁰ Meyers, “Everyday Life,” 250.

⁴¹ Carol Meyers, “Hierarchy or Heterarchy? Archaeology and the Theorizing of Israelite Society,” in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on*

The awareness that many systems could coexist would counter the propensity to succumb to the interpretive tradition in biblical studies that tends to privilege male roles and assume anachronistically that the gender hierarchies present in biblically based Judaism and Christianity were already in place during the Iron Age.⁴²

Meyers concludes:

In other words, the conventional wisdom about male dominance in pervasive hierarchical structures affecting all domains of human interaction would be subverted and give way to the recognition that there were multiple systems and multiple loci of power, with women as well as men shaping society.⁴³

I qualify Meyers' last remark with an adapted insight from Carole L. Crumley that power and authority in heterarchy "change in response to the context of the inquiry and to changing (and frequently conflicting) values that result in the continual reranking of priorities."⁴⁴ I construe this statement to mean, given a change in circumstances, somebody of lower status, by demonstrating needed characteristics at that time, could be pushed into a position of power and authority. In other words, power and authority were distributed and context-dependent, rather than strictly patriarchal. In the next section, I would like to test the above sentiments by examining certain women in pre-colonial Southern Africa and the roles they played in production, religion and politics.

F SOME PRE-COLONIAL WOMEN

It will be helpful to start this section by restating Meyers's observation that "there were multiple systems and multiple loci of power, with women as well as men shaping society."⁴⁵ In this discussion, power is understood as the ability to cause others to do one's bidding whether through persuasion, coercion or other means. Broadly, it includes various forms of influence and control. Thus, influencing the outcomes of important decision-making processes, especially of national importance, is a function of power. That being said, we turn to Elizabeth A. Eldredge's report about a sixteenth-century Zulu royal woman who exhibited power. Nozidiya was the wife of Chief Malandela of the amaZulu "and mother

Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever (ed. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 251.

⁴² Meyers, "Hierarchy or Heterarchy?" 251.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Carole L. Crumley, "Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies," *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 6/1 (1995): 3.

⁴⁵ Meyers, "Hierarchy or Heterarchy?" 251.

of the AmaZulu progenitor, Zulu himself and his elder brother Qwabe."⁴⁶ According to Eldredge:

Nozidiya is said to have cultivated and sold enough sorghum [*amabele*] that people used to come and buy from her. In exchange for the sorghum, Nozidiya acquired her own cow and then a small herd of cattle, some of which she gave to her favored (*sic*) son Zulu, although not to Qwabe, who thus moved away with his followers.⁴⁷

Eva Aletta Jackson has a slightly nuanced version of this anecdote. Citing Keletso Atkins, she says:

After the death of her husband, Malandela, we are told, the widow Nozinja found consolation in industrious work and thrift. The sale of surplus sorghum (*amabele*) brought her a goat, and before long the goats became a cow, which eventually increased to a herd of all white kine. The covetous Qwabe, Malandela's principal son, sought to wheedle them [the cattle] from out of his mother but was sharply rebuffed: "No!" was her reply. "And you are the heir to all your father's cattle! What then is my child, Zulu, to receive?" Her refusal to yield to Qwabe's pressure apparently produced a rupture that ultimately forced Nozinja to move away to establish an independent kraal near her father's home, together with her son and a man-servant. Zulu, the youngest son for whom Nozinja labored (*sic*) to build an inheritance, was none other than the progenitor of the Zulu people.⁴⁸

Three things invite notice in this anecdote. The first is that Nozidiya could accumulate wealth of her own. The second is that, according to tradition, as the elder son, thus the heir, Qwabe was entitled to all the inheritance. However, Nozidiya was in control of her property and gave her cattle to Zulu, her favourite son. She dispensed of her cattle as she wished, refusing to be constrained by tradition. The third one is that Nozidiya (otherwise known as Nozinja,⁴⁹ "favored (*sic*) Zulu such that Qwabe took offense (*sic*) and migrated away with his own followers to form his own separate chiefdom."⁵⁰ These actions and decisions of Nozidiya had a direct impact on the social and political dynamics of her time, as evidenced by Qwabe's decision to form his own separate chiefdom and the support of Zulu who turned out to be the progenitor of the amaZulu nation. In my opinion, Nozidiya's action is an illustration of how women exercised

⁴⁶ Elizabeth A. Eldredge, *Creation of the Zulu Kingdom, 1815–1828: War, Shaka, and the Consolidation of Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 178.

⁴⁷ Eldredge, *Creation of the Zulu Kingdom*," 178.

⁴⁸ Jackson, Eva A, *Four Women, Four Chiefships: Case Studies in the Divergent Choices and Negotiations with Power of Amakhosi in Nineteenth Century Natal* (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2014), 56.

⁴⁹ Jackson, "Four Women, Four Chiefships," 57.

⁵⁰ Eldredge, *Creation of the Zulu Kingdom*," 178. According to Jackson, it was Nozidiya who left with Zulu who later became the progenitor of amaZulu nation.

authority and shape society alongside men, supporting the concept of heterarchy in which power and authority are distributed across multiple loci.

The second woman of interest is the eighteenth-nineteenth-century Zulu royal woman who also exhibited immense power, Princess Mkabayi kaJama. Introducing her story, Moagi and Mtombeni say:

Prominent women ruled powerful empires and ethnic groups, in some cases, with the assistance of their male counterparts. Royal women in the Zulu Kingdom played pivotal roles in managing ritual spheres and decision-making. They even mediated in succession disputes and solved people's problems ... Queen⁵¹ Mkabayi is one of such great female leaders in the pre-colonial KwaZulu Natal (KZN) whose name towers above them all.⁵²

When the wife of Chief Jama of amaZulu died, she had only borne him daughters, Mkabayi and "her twin sister," Mmama. Mmama is reported to have "ruled Osebeni military harem."⁵³ Having only daughters created a crisis for King Jama who needed a son to be the heir to the throne. Therefore, Mkabayi sought for a Tsonga woman, "Mthaniya to marry King Jama and bear him an heir."⁵⁴ Through this arrangement, King Senzangakhona, who became King Shaka's father, was born.⁵⁵ According to Ayanda A. Masango, this "well-planned strategic move by Mkabayi ... earned her heroic status among the Zulu people."⁵⁶ Maogi and Mtombeni note that, "After the death of her father, she imposed herself on the Zulu throne as the regent for Senzangakhona. This move attracted criticism among influential Zulu men who later succumbed to her domineering character."⁵⁷ Another nuanced version depicts her thus:

... a royal servant who was only carrying out the orders of the departed king, who left clear instructions for her to look after the kingdom and her younger brother ... the dying king chooses to leave the kingdom in Mkabayi's hands ... In this case, Jama had seen that her daughter is not only trustworthy, but she is as good and capable a leader as anyone else would be in the kingdom.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Mkabayi was not the wife of King Jama but his daughter. Therefore, I consider her proper title to be Princess and not Queen.

⁵² Moagi and Mtombeni, "Women in Pre-colonial Africa," 11–12.

⁵³ Ibid., 13

⁵⁴ Ayanda A. Masango, *Mkabayi KaJama as a Woman Leader as Portrayed in Selected IsiZulu Literary Works* (Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 2021), 76.

⁵⁵ Masango, "Mkabayi KaJama," 76.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Moagi and Mtombeni, "Women in Pre-colonial Africa," 13

⁵⁸ Masango, "Mkabayi KaJama," 78. In the mid-to-late eighteenth century, a woman serving as regent was fairly common. There are multiple examples of Nguni-speaking

When Senzangakhona came of age, Mkabayi stepped down for him to rule. Citing Sibiya, Masango remarks that, "Mkabayi peacefully steps down as ruler once Senzangakhona becomes of age. It would be expected for her to fight for the throne if she were as power hungry and as ruthless as other accounts paint her."⁵⁹ Caellagh D. Morrissey notes that, "there is an agreement about the depth to which Senzangakhona literally owes his rule to Mnkabayi (*sic*)."⁶⁰

Masango reports that "during Senzangakhona's reign, Mkabayi is said to have played a bigger role as a wise counsellor."⁶¹ Her performance led to the common Zulu saying, '*Buzani kuMkabayi*' ('Ask Mkabayi'), which some scholars attribute to her wisdom and others to her leadership as one who had the final say.⁶² Masango recalls when Senzangakhona rejected Nandi, "after falling pregnant with her child (Shaka)," the child who would later be the greatest king of amaZulu, it was Mkabayi who persuaded him to accept Nandi. Moagi and Mtombeni report that "Mkabayi protected Tshaka (*sic*) ... when he was young, and Senzangakhona had ordered that he must be killed."⁶³ They further outline the happenings after the death of Senzangakhona thus:

After the death of Senzangakhona, she paved the way for him (Tshaka) because the masses did not like Sigujana (Tshaka's half-brother). Thus, her bravery and obstinacy became apparent when she killed the powerful Sojiyisa (an illegitimate son of Jama: Jama married a Tonga woman who was already pregnant with Sojiyisa) who posed a serious threat to Tshaka's accession to power. This shows that she had attributes of a great leader who boldly took action to influence things and at the same time listened to the concerns of her people.⁶⁴

Thus, "[w]hen Tshaka became uncontrollable and ruled his people with an iron hand, Mkabayi indicated her displeasure to her nephews, Dingani and Mhlangana."⁶⁵ Moagi and Mtombeni further report that amaZulu were fed up with Shaka's ruthlessness, and Mkabayi became their savior (*sic*), plotted his assassination, and later killed Mhlangana to pave way for Dingani."⁶⁶ They conclude that:

communities where an *inkhosikazi* served as regent to a young chief; cf. Caellagh D. Morrissey, *Fugitive Queens: Amakhosikazi and the Continuous Evolution of Gender and Power in KwaZulu-Natal (1816–1889)* (Eugene: University of Oregon, 2015), 35.

⁵⁹ Masango, "Mkabayi KaJama," 78.

⁶⁰ Morrissey, *Fugitive Queens*, 36.

⁶¹ Masango, "Mkabayi KaJama," 80.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Moagi and Mtombeni, "Women in Pre-colonial Africa," 13.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Under the leadership of Dingani, she retained her political influence and leadership of the Qulusi military kraal. This brief history reveals that Mkabayi was a kingmaker who was endowed with great negotiating skills. She understood the ABCs of the then political terrain, which helped her to outmaneuver her rivals and position herself as the most able regent in the Zulu history.⁶⁷

Masango describes her as "an undefeated serial ruler of the Zulu nation, Mkabayi, who is recognised as the mastermind behind the unity of the Nguni tribes under the Zulu nation; a feat often, only wrongly attributed to Shaka the Zulu king."⁶⁸

Mkabayi's praises notwithstanding, an analysis from a patriarchal lens may dismiss them as fallacious since Mkabayi could not be king. She always had to give way to young males who were weaker than her. However, a heterarchical lens may view the situation differently, that is, in the light of Meyers' multiple loci of power. Mkabayi was a princess whereas the others were kings. These were two different loci of power, with both women and men shaping society. When circumstances demanded, Mkabayi would cross over and assume the role of king until the situation stabilised. From her position as princess, she could arrange that things turn out her way, thus, exhibiting immense power. In fact, as Moagi and Mtombeni have observed, she was a kingmaker. Those kings were made by her. She decided who could be king and who could not. Even when her favourite appointee, Shaka, deviated from her wish, she removed him and replaced him with Dingaan after eliminating Dingaan's collaborator to clear the way for Dingaan.

Although much has been said about politics, it would be unfair not to mention Queen Lozikeyi, even if it is in passing. According to Paidamwoyo Prisca Hakutangwi, Queen Lozikeyi⁶⁹ was "the second queen of the Ndebele people, and as King Lobengula's favorite (*sic*) wife, she also contributed to the ruling of the Ndebele kingdom."⁷⁰ She was the second queen because "Princess Umcencene was referred to as both the First Queen and royal Princess as the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Masango, "Mkabayi KaJama," 67.

⁶⁹ "Queen Lozikeyi and King Lobengula were some (*sic*) of Zimbabwe's most famous indigenous leaders. They led the Anglo-Matabele war (1893–1894), a war against British colonial rule and land dispossession of the Ndebele people. As such, Lozikeyi is most notable for being the intellect behind one of the most effective anti-colonial revolts"; Paidamwoyo Prisca Hakutangwi, *Peripheral Power: A Gendered Critique of Indigenous Patriarchy in Southern Africa* (Miami University, 2022), 1.

⁷⁰ Paidamwoyo Prisca Hakutangwi, *Peripheral Power: A Gendered Critique of Indigenous Patriarchy in Southern Africa* (Ohio: Miami University, 2022), 1.

sister of Lobengula. Amongst her tasks was that of supporting Lobengula in ruling the Ndebele kingdom.⁷¹

After her husband's disappearance, Queen Lozikeyi, remained a power in the land and took it upon herself to speak for the Ndebele people. During the 1896 Uprisings, she was consulted by the Ndebele people and chiefs as a woman of considerable importance and a large measure of influence. She is also said to have supplied the Ndebele armed forces with guns from Lobengula's armory. She was a contributor to the welfare of the local people.⁷²

The fact that she was consulted by the people and chiefs speaks volumes about her status among amaNdebele. That she provided guns during uprisings against the colonisers says much about her valour. Power and authority in this community were distributed across multiple loci since she was not the king but the queen. This follows the concept of heterarchy which recognises multiple loci of power.

In pre-colonial African societies, women often held significant power and authority, challenging traditional patriarchal norms. Shifting to the religious sphere, the Balobedu people of Limpopo in South Africa had a powerful Rain Queen, Modjadji, whose position was hereditary.⁷³ According to Moagi and Mtombeni, "in some pre-colonial societies, it was universally believed that the universe (*sic*) rainmaker was a woman."⁷⁴ Alongside the offices of kings and other authorities, this was another locus of power. Citing Tebogo George Mahashe, Moagi and Mtombeni assert that "Tshaka and other Kings from southern Africa paid tribute to Queen Modjadji to supplicate for rain."⁷⁵ In a 2009 VOA newscast, the Royal Family spokesperson, Mathole Motshekga recalled: "In fact, Shaka used to send black cattle to pay tribute to Modjadji One, and he called her the rainmaker of rainmakers. Not only Shaka. Moshoeshe [of Lesotho], the Swazis, all of the kingdoms in southern Africa paid tribute to her."⁷⁶ Interestingly, "This tribute was in the form of women who were given as wives to the Queen."⁷⁷ Two issues are noteworthy from this account. The first one is that Queen Modjadji, despite being a woman, was a powerful person to whom even kings bowed. According to Christine Saidi *et al.*, in pre-colonial Africa, gender was "not the most critical marker of identity."⁷⁸ In many Bantu-speaking communities, people "saw the flow of power and authority as

⁷¹ Hakutangwi, "Peripheral Power," 1.

⁷² Ibid., 29–39.

⁷³ Moagi and Mtombeni, "Women in Pre-colonial Africa," 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ VOA News, "South African Balobedu People Crown 'Rain Queen.'" *VOA News* (2009): <https://www.voanews.com/amp/a-13-a-2003-04-11-7-south/393407.html>.

⁷⁷ Moagi and Mtombeni, "Women in Pre-colonial Africa," 16.

⁷⁸ Saidi *et al.*, "Gender, Authority, and Identity," 1261.

outgrowths of knowledge specialization and elderhood/age seniority.”⁷⁹ In this sense, Modjadji's power can be explained on the basis of knowledge specialisation. The second point is that, despite being a woman, Queen Modjadji had wives of her own.

If I may digress a bit, I am reminded of Mkabayi, who “is said to have assumed the masculine salutation ‘*Baba*’ which directly translates to father or mister and which is a masculine title and respectful gesture towards someone who is male and commands great respect.”⁸⁰ Ifi Amadiume asserts that “in the indigenous society ... biological sex did not always correspond to ideological gender.”⁸¹ Therefore, “women could play roles usually monopolized by men, or be classified as ‘males’ in terms of power and authority over others.”⁸² “Such roles were not rigidly masculinized or feminized,” she argues, therefore, “no stigma was attached to breaking gender rules.”⁸³ A patriarchal lens may dismiss these male references to powerful women as another way of humiliating women generally, refusing to acknowledge that they have the capacity for such achievements, hence, those who made it must be projected as male. A heterarchical lens may have a different view. As Saidi indicated above, gender was not the most critical identity marker in pre-colonial Southern Africa. Saidi offers some helpful insights here:

In social, religious, and political contexts, individuals who were anatomically of one identity could, through social actions or spiritual transitions, embody various roles, intersecting between one world, one life stage, or one social title and the next. Gender, as broadly construed by Bantu-speaking peoples, is not fixed in the same way that it is in the West. This kind of gender flexibility is counter to binary gender concepts which classify gender into two separate, opposite, and rigid forms of masculine and feminine.⁸⁴

Meyers argued above that in heterarchy, hierarchies may or may not intersect with each other. Queen Modjadji and Mkabayi, while anatomically female, due to their spiritual transition and social actions, respectively, embodied the roles of a husband (Modjadji) and father (Mkabayi), intersecting between being daughters on the one hand and being husband and father, respectively, on the other. This gender flexibility was allowable, as Amadiume indicated above that “in the indigenous society ... biological sex did not always correspond to ideological gender.”⁸⁵ Rather, as Saidi *et al.* indicated, “through practices of

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1262.

⁸⁰ Masango, “Mkabayi KaJama,” 67.

⁸¹ Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (Adobe Digital Editions; London: Zed Books, 1987), 231.

⁸² Amadiume, “Male Daughters, Female Husbands,” 231.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

heterarchy, familial relations, and life stages, women wielded authority equal to and often greater than men."⁸⁶ In this instance, familial relations can explain the situation best. Due to matriarchy, Modjadji acquired power. According to Amadiume:

A flexible gender system encouraged the institutions of 'female husband' and 'male daughter'. This meant that certain women could occupy roles and positions usually monopolized by men and thereby exercise considerable power and authority over both men and women.⁸⁷

In a similar vein, Mkabayi acquired power through regency. I am reminded of *sangomas* (traditional healers) who are called *gogo* (grandmother), whether male or female. Interestingly, even the clothing of female and male *sangomas* is basically the same. Due to matriarchy and regency, Modjadji and Mkabayi, respectively acquired power. According to Amadiume, "a flexible gender system encouraged the institutions of 'female husband' and 'male daughter.' This meant that certain women could occupy roles and positions usually monopolised by men and thereby exercised considerable power and authority over both men and women. We now turn to the story of Deborah, a pre-monarchic biblical woman who also wielded immense power.

G DEBORAH: A FIERY WOMAN

Joshua 4:1–3, which is the Deuteronomistic theological "trademark,"⁸⁸ introduces the story of Deborah. Verse 4 states as follows: ודבורה אשה נביאה אשת לפידות (Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time [ESV]). Deborah was a prophet and a judge. However, there is an exegetical problem with the designation "the wife of Lappidoth." I will return to it later. Verse 5 states as follows: "והי יושבת תחת־תמר" (She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment). On verse 5, Carolyn Pressler comments:

Unlike other leaders in the book, however, Deborah seems to "judge" Israel in the technical sense of rendering legal decisions (v. 5). For a woman to "judge" in this forensic sense is unexpected. The biblical or ancient Near Eastern legal materials do not indicate that women

⁸⁶ Saidi *et al*, "Gender, Authority, and Identity," 1257.

⁸⁷ Amadiume, "Male Daughters, Female Husbands," 67.

⁸⁸ See Judg 2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1; 1 Kgs 11:6; 14:22; 15:26, 34; 16:25; 22:52; 2 Kgs 3:2; 8:18; 8:27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 16, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19 and Jer 52:2.

could preside over court cases. The story gives no indication, however, that Deborah was doing something unusual.⁸⁹

It is important to note that while the ancient sources do not indicate that women could "judge" in a forensic sense, the story also does not indicate that Deborah was doing something unusual. What, then, do we make of this? My opinion is that, in such a case, the story must be given priority. For the writer, nothing was unusual about it. There might have not been women judges in a forensic sense before Deborah, but it could be that power and authority were more distributed and context-dependent, rather than strictly patriarchal, hence, no surprise from the author. As in pre-colonial Africa, gender might have not been "the most critical marker of identity"⁹⁰ and as in many Bantu-speaking communities, some pre-monarchic people, like this author, could have seen "the flow of power and authority as outgrowths of knowledge specialization ..."⁹¹ In the mind of the author, then, biological sex might have not always corresponded to ideological gender.⁹² Whatever the case might have been, one thing is certain, unlike the rest of us, the author shows no surprise at a woman who "judges" forensically.

Pressler continues to make interesting remarks. She says: "While Judges gives no indication that a woman judge or prophet was socially unexpected, Deborah's presence as the general [Barak] goes to muster his troops is a surprise. The book clearly portrays battle as a male sphere."⁹³ To support her assertion that "the book clearly portrays battle as a male sphere," she recalls Judg 9:53–54. The verses say:

And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.⁵⁴ Then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, 'Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.' And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

My question is: If Abimelech has patriarchal tendencies, can the author of Judg 4 also be said to be patriarchal by necessity? Above, I indicated that Dtr found finished stories and added the Deuteronomistic theological formulae. These stories were traditions about community heroes from different ethnic groups. For example, Ehud was a Benjaminite, Deborah was an Ephraimite, Gideon was a Manassite, Abimelech associated himself with Shechem and Samson was a Danite, etc. The stories, thus, originated from different contexts

⁸⁹ Carolyn Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 156.

⁹⁰ Saidi *et al*, "Gender, Authority, and Identity," 1261.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1262.

⁹² Amadiume, "Male Daughters, Female Husbands," 231.

⁹³ Pressler, "Joshua," 156.

and Dtr brought them together. I do not think, therefore, that Abimelech's attitude is authoritative for evaluating the attitude of the author of Judg 4.

Thus far, the author of Judg 4 keeps on surprising us who think patriarchally. Let us now consider the designation "wife of Lappidoth" that I have described as an exegetical problem. Pressler's comment on this designation is thought-provoking:

Married Israelite women were normally identified by the name of their husbands. Deborah is the "wife of Lappidoth." The word translated "wife" also means "woman"; "Lappidoth" literally means "torches." The phrase translated "wife of Lappidoth" could thus also be translated "fiery woman." (The New English Bible translates it "woman of spirit.") The storyteller's audience would have heard both meanings and would have enjoyed the play on words identifying independent, spirit-filled Deborah.⁹⁴

While admitting that אִשֶּׁת לַפִּידוֹת (*ēshet lappidoth*) can be translated as "fiery woman," Pressler does not reject the idea that Deborah could be Lappidoth's wife. I contend that Deborah was an independent woman not attached to a man, if my understanding of the author of Judg 4:4 is something to go by. In an article titled, "Now Deborah, A Prophetess, A Fiery Woman..." A Gendered Reading of Judges 4:4, I have examined this issue extensively.

There are primarily three ways in which the gender of a noun can be determined, namely, morphologically, syntactically and semantically. Morphologically, the arrangement of alphabets in *lappidoth* resembles a feminine plural noun of *lappid*, meaning "torches." Syntactically, the name Deborah is female, so it is in order that *lappid* takes a feminine form. The semantic explanation is a bit complex. Let me illustrate with the nouns "father" and "woman" in Hebrew, אב (*av*) and אִשָּׁה (*ishah*), respectively. In the plural, the arrangement of their alphabets resembles feminine and masculine, respectively, thus, not corresponding with the real-life sex of fathers and women. In other words, morphological and syntactic analyses are not helpful in this case. One may argue that this is similar to the case of *lappidoth*. Nonetheless, we have real fathers and women in real life whose gender can be determined by looking at them. In such a case, grammar must succumb to the real-life evidence. However, with *lappidoth*, what can we look at to confirm the gender? All that exists is a controversial translation. In such a case, I will adhere to the grammar. Additional information in favour of grammar is that in Judg 15:4, the noun *lappid* corresponds to Samson who is male. Therefore, it is masculine plural, *lappidim*, corresponding to the *lappid* in Judg 4:4. Further, the construct אִשָּׁה (*ēshet*), as already indicated, can be translated as "woman of." Ten percent of all the uses

⁹⁴ Ibid., 156.

of this construct in the Old Testament are translated as "woman of."⁹⁵ Traditionally, a man is introduced as a "son of ..." in the Bible as in the case of Barak (v.6). It is, therefore, unusual that the so-called Lappidoth is mentioned without the typical "son of ..." introduction and then never heard of ever again, not in the Bible or anywhere else.

At this point, it might be enlightening to consider Karla G. Bohmbach's insight that:

In the ancient world generally, a name was not merely a convenient collocation of sounds by which a person, place, or thing could be identified; rather, a name expressed something of the very essence of that which was being named. Hence, to know the name was to know something of the fundamental traits, nature, or destiny of that to which the name belonged.⁹⁶

Deborah's name means "a bee." The bee is a symbol of pursuit in a war-like situation by the adversary (cf. Deut 1:44; Ps 118:12; Isa 7:18). Interestingly, the "BDB translates *lāppid* as torch. It then describes it in many ways: simile of conquering power of chiefs of Judah; simile of eyes of angel in vision; simile of flashes reflected from darting chariots."⁹⁷ Thus, "If Deborah, that is the bee, is associated with pursuit in a war situation and *lāppid* is associated with conquering power and flashes and darting chariots, it is not unreasonable to associate Deborah with lightning or flames rather than wife."⁹⁸ On this basis, I concur with Meyers that: "The need to have a woman identified in relation to a man, rather than the acknowledgement that a woman's identity could in some instances stand alone, apparently influenced virtually all modern and ancient translations."⁹⁹ She further says: "Yet the several roles Deborah plays as an autonomous woman in national life would warrant her name appearing with the epithet 'fiery woman' and without reference to a man."¹⁰⁰ I understand Judg 4:4, therefore, as another surprise by the author that means: "Deborah, a prophetess, a fiery woman" and not "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth."

In the Septuagint, the first translation of the Hebrew Bible, the rendering is not unambiguous. It can either be wife of Lappidoth" or "woman of Lappidoth." Joy A. Schroeder interprets the phrase "with the possibility that the

⁹⁵ Ntozakhe S. Cezula, "Now Deborah, A Prophetess, A Fiery Woman... A Gendered Reading of Judges 4: 4," *STJ* 7/1 (2021): 15.

⁹⁶ Karla G. Bohmbach, "Names and Naming," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. D.N. Freedman, A.C. Myers, and A.B. Beck; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000).

⁹⁷ Cezula, "Now Deborah," 18.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁹ Carol Meyers, "Deborah," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. D.N. Freedman, A.C. Myers and A.B. Beck; Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 2000), 331.

¹⁰⁰ Meyers, "Deborah," 331.

translator regarded 'Lappidoth' as a place name.¹⁰¹ Since the Vulgate translated אִשֶּׁת לַפִּידוֹת (*ēshet lappidoth*) or γυνή Λαφιδωθ (*genē Laphidoth*) in Greek, unambiguously, as "wife of Lappidoth," "Schroeder then remarks that most Christian translations follow the understanding of the phrase as found in the Vulgate."¹⁰² The explanation for the Vulgate's translation is as good as any. However, I cannot help viewing it as a clash of heterarchical and the patriarchal thought-patterns with the patriarchal translator, having the upper hand. In the article I referred to above, I examined the culture of naming married women after their husbands among the English, Afrikaans and Xhosa communities in South Africa and concluded that the Vulgate translation corresponded with this culture and, therefore, was easily accepted without qualms.¹⁰³ According to my observations, the story of Deborah depicts a heterarchical context rather than a patriarchal one.

H CONCLUSION

The discussion began with the author's reservations about gender discourse. The discussion raised the question of whether there is a possibility of gender equality in a patriarchal household. In an attempt to respond to the question, the article examined the appearance of a full-blown patriarchal theory in seventeenth-century English politics and the prevalence of patriarchy in Africa. It concluded that the patriarchalists seem to hide behind Scriptures and African tradition to justify their patriarchalist tendencies, thus avoiding taking ethical responsibility for the consequences of their patriarchal actions. Subsequently, it was concluded that, to refute patriarchy, its scriptural and traditional bases need to be challenged. In this vein, Carol Meyers' suggestion of heterarchy as a social science model to explain gender dynamics in pre-monarchic Israel was presented. Additionally, pre-colonial African gender dynamics were explored by examining certain pre-colonial African heroines. The story of Deborah, a pre-monarchic heroine, was also explored. It was observed that both pre-colonial Africa and pre-monarchic Israel did evince elements of heterarchy. Now the question is: How can a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics, such as the concept of heterarchy, help the struggle for gender equality?

Essentially, this is a question to which this essay cannot boldly respond. However, the essay can reflect on the discussion so far. The point of departure is to offer an example. The conquest of Canaan, especially Josh 6:21, evaluated from a modern ethical-normative point of view, is one of the most horrible happenings in the Hebrew Bible. However, in Christian circles, it is a heroic event because it reflects obedience to God. This understanding, for example, contributed to the mentality of the Crusaders during the Middle Ages. According

¹⁰¹ Joy A. Schroeder, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.

¹⁰² Cezula, "Now Deborah," 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 12.

to Michael Prior, this "biblical account has been used to justify the conquest of land ... focusing on the Spanish and Portuguese colonization and settlement of Latin America, the white settlement in southern Africa, and the Zionist conquest and settlement in Palestine."¹⁰⁴ The point is that, even if an act, from a modern ethical-normative point of view, is horrible, if it is justified by an authoritative source, it is justified without taking any ethical responsibility. However, if the justification by authoritative sources is proved fallacious, the culprits must take personal responsibility. One who justifies his or her view by authoritative sources, or a Canon, if I may use the word, is unlikely to change his or her ways. However, those who take personal responsibility for their actions think twice before they act. It is in this light that this essay views the situation of patriarchy and heterarchy in the Scriptures and in African tradition. Those who demonstrate patriarchal tendencies based on the pretext of the Canon are highly unlikely to change their ways. However, those who take personal responsibility for their actions are likely to reconsider their ways. That is the logic behind Butler's proposition that "... the only way Sir Robert [Filmer]¹⁰⁵ could be refuted was by destroying his scriptural base."¹⁰⁶ It is the same logic behind this article's consideration of the idea of heterarchy. One wonders whether future research will confirm the presence of heterarchy in, at least, pre-monarchic and post-exilic periods in a way that will change the ideoscape of the gender equality discourse. Since I am not a direct victim of patriarchy, my task is only to ask: Is this a worthy exercise?

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¹⁰⁴ Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 11.

¹⁰⁵ My insertion.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism," 137.

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