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Wrestling with Divine Creatures and Marriage

Jacob's Religiosity and his Marriages¹

In the following, I relate Jacob's religiosity to the contemporary marital constructions that affected his and his wives' lives. We are reminded that marriage of atavist times could divert according to two main conditions: whether the woman follows her husband to his abode and joins his kin; or conversely whether the man joins his wife in her abode and attaches himself to her kin? Almost symmetrically, conflicting prerogatives and obligations are incumbent in these conjugal systems. The crucial conditions generally relate to location, relocation, claims unto the offspring by one's kin, exclusiveness of conjugal rights, prerogatives of dismissal, assets rights and rights to keep one's family's deity and the worship of ancestors' spirits.

The first system obliges the woman to relocate and follow her husband; she loses her assets and rights over her natal land; her husband claims exclusive rights unto her sexuality and her offspring are attributed unto his line and kin; rights of divorce are the sole prerogatives of the husband; and eventually a woman is expected to adopt the gods and spirits of her husband's household; though on the ground retaining one's natal gods may depend on the syncretistic degree of the local culture. This system of marriage is epitomised as *baal* marriage (*baal* in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic; *deega* in Cylon), and is identified with marriage of dominion. Such marriage is affiliated with marriage by capture, abduction or rape. However, between allies, mutual understanding supplants purchase for violence for the loss of a daughter and sister and her eventual offspring which otherwise are attributed to their line.

Conversely, as old as marriage by capture or purchase, we find atavist cultures practising conjugal systems which allow the woman to remain in her abode, while her consort commutes or joins the woman and her kin. Such marriage types are epitomised as *beena* (Cylon) or *mota'* (Arabia) and can

¹ The following article is part of a five-year research concerning forms of legitimate and illegitimate sexual relations and the way they loom large on culture, religiosity and society.

conceive of endogamous (of kin relations) or exogamous (unrelated) partners. These forms of marriage carry metronymic characteristics. On remaining on her natal land, woman may enjoy assets rights and inherit; her tent and abode are her conjugal territory; the husband does not always have exclusive claims on her sexuality and the woman may dismiss her consort at will; right of divorce is eventually the mutual prerogative of both woman and man; the woman and her kin retain claims over offspring, which also attribute the woman the right to naming them.

Metronymic patterns yield a picture of a societal picture in its own right. The metronymic aspects of both *beena* and *mota'* shed a sidelight on the conjugal meaning of the woman's tent. Allowing woman to remain with her kin and tribe, patterns affiliated with either *mota'* or *beena* have imbued the tent as a woman's conjugal domain where a husband "goes in" as a visitor. Echoing the concept of entering into the woman's abode, the biblical term *ba' 'eleihah*, *coming unto her* resonates connubiality (Gen 38:16). The Hebrew epitome *ba' 'eleihah* synonymously evokes the sexualised Arabic concepts *dakhlah* and *bana 'ahailah* meaning respectively: come in unto her tent and build a tent over one's wife. Under conceptualisation of *mota'*, a woman's autonomy over her residence endorses her initiative to receive or dismiss a partner at will without the intervention of her kin and guardians. It is the sense of the tent as a woman's domain that sheds a sidelight on the phenomenon where a woman may accept partners at leisure at her abode; she may engage several spouses alternatively, accepting or dismissing them at will without requiring any authority. Some of Jahiliya (pre-Islamic) women were known to endorse the custom of terminating a conjugal partnership by turning around the original opening of their tent, from west to east or vice versa; which would signal to a husband that he was no longer welcome neither in her life nor tent.² Eventually a metronymic woman keeps to her family gods, domestic spirits and eponymous ancestors of her household who often interchange.³

Scrutinising Jacob's conjugal relations, we surmise that Jacob's double marriage to Rachel and Leah infringes on various forms of conjugal structures: *baal* marriages by purchase when he labours for his wives in exchange for a bride price; endogamous marriage on being his wives' close kin and cousin;

² William Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Beacon Press: Boston 1903), 80-81; 198-202.

³ These forms are discussed throughout the book of Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 1903.

a metronymic pattern like *beena* when he resides with his wives, labours with their kin as a part of the organic household of his father-in-law and *pater familias* Laban; and metronymic marriage by allowing his chief wives to name all his offspring and requesting their permission to relocate. Jacob further emulates marriage by capture and abduction when he relocates his wives and offspring without their kin's consent. The final form to determine Jacob's conjugal relations alludes to *baal* marriage. It is *baal* marriage that allows Jacob to relocate his wives and claim his offspring to his line and kin. However, Jacob conspicuously rectifies his prerogatives as a *baal* husband by recurrent divine revelations endowed unto him with the exclusion of his wives; and of all forefathers, Jacob deems to need divine intervention most precipitately (Gen 29:27-28; 30:25-26; 31:16-18, 21, 26, 41).

With these assumptions we can relate Jacob's religiosity to his claims and the marital frameworks that determine them. Consequently it connects to his wives' religiosity and their marital rights. My thesis is that their respective religiosity conceives as confluent components that oscillate with the societal forms of marriage that condition their lives. The religiosity of Jacob and his wives commonly inheres in confluent atavist conceptions that conceive divinity as an organic experience of the family, rooted in location, local culture, domestic realm and the dominant form of marriage one is subject to. As forms of marriage determine the prerogatives and obligations of the partners, the one who relocates from his or her natal location has to leave behind one's kin, natal land and family gods and ancestors' spirits and precipitately adapt to those of his or her consort's household. This process does not go without discrepancies in the lives of both Jacob and his wives.

Jacob's religious expressions resonate not only in the form of revelations endowed unto him but also in the meaning they bear unto his societal and marital position. Anthropomorphic revelations in the Hebrew Bible vary; it may conceive as transcendental presence embodied in divine avatars, divine images and/or divine incarnate proper. Such anthropomorphic revelations can be categorised according to the nature of their conception. Divine presence can conceive as a dream revelation or an awoken vision, which equally affect the receiver. Furthermore anthropomorphic appearances may be perceivable by voice, by sight and rarely by tangible contact.⁴ Jacob consecutively receives all forms of revelations.

⁴ Gershom Scholem, *Elements of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (Daf-Chen Mossad Bialik: Jerusalem 1976), 26, 154.

The revelations endowed unto Jacob bear meaning onto his societal position which changes with the forms his marriages take. The first revelation occurs on the border between Jacob's natal land and the land of his exile. It is here, before entering the foreign location that will become his abode for twenty years, that Jacob receives a dream revelation comporting of angels descending and ascending a ladder to heaven where God stands. Jacob's family deity is thus revealed unto him through both avatars and divine presence proper, perceived by both sight and voice. God promises Jacob to remain with him in his exile years and safeguard his assets claims unto his natal land unto him and unto his future offspring on his home coming (Gen 28:12-15). Divine promises refurbish Jacob's prospects as a future *baal* husband, which will be ensued by claims unto the offspring born to exclusively claimed wives. The concomitant claims unto natal land are to be substantiated by the offspring promised in this divine vision.

However, these promises remarkably come before Jacob enters his future wives' territory where he will abide by a completely different form of marriage. For the following twenty years, Jacob will become a *beena* husband who has little claims unto his wives, offspring, property, land or assets rights; moreover he will presumably abide by the gods of his wives' family as a *beena* marriage conditions. As a corollary, during this long period, the deity of Jacob's family and fathers retreats to the background, though indirectly blessing Jacob's deeds and his wives' conception (Gen 30:27, 30). The extraordinary dream revelation that antecedes Jacob's *beena* marriage to Rachel and Leah therefore recruits God to assure that Jacob's inferior position as a *beena* husband will eventually revert back to *baal* position in the far future.

Twenty years pass before Jacob receives a direct revelation of any form again. Conspicuously however, on wishing to return to his natal land, revelations reappear before him, first by God's voice in an awoken vision, then through a voice of God's angel through a dream revelation. These revelations appropriate the prerogatives of *baal* marriage unto Jacob through Gods' voice "telling him to relocate." Inferentially, the revelations rectify Jacob's wish to remove his wives and offspring away from their natal land, gods and kin and relocate them over to his own land, gods and kin (Gen 31:3,11). Notwithstanding divine backing, Jacob asks his wives' permission to relocate, thus corroborating their metonymic statue and his subordination to them as a *beena* consort (Gen 31:10-16). In addition we see that God's ominous dream revelation recurs before Laban to hinder him from harming Jacob for having relocated his daughters and their offspring without his consent (Gen 31:29).

Jacob's following revelations recur underway to Canaan, on the same border between his natal land and the foreign land whence he sojourned. In a reverse direction this time, wishing to cross over back to his natal land, a revelation by sight is followed by a tangible revelation by touch, which is unique in the Hebrew Bible. First Jacob meets a host of angels whom he greets and erects a site for (Gen 32:2). In the following Jacob finds himself on the river Jabuk that embodies the bordering passage between his wives' land where he had spent twenty years and the land of his fathers whence he returns. It is in this limbo spot that Jacob receives his most tangible revelation; all night long until dawn rises, he wrestles face to face with an unnamed divine entity whose identity classically interchanges with God's anthropomorphic presence (Gen 18:2, 9-13, 16-21; Ex 3:2-6). We conclude that Jacob's divine contender is God incarnated from the divine personality's statement himself and from Hosea's intertextual reference (Gen 32:18-32; Hos 12:2-5). Post biblical exegesis, which draws a distinct line between God and angels, delineates the divine wrestler as Assau's guardian angel.⁵ Presumably defending Assau's territory against his invading brother, the angel is unable to free himself and defeat Jacob and eventually blesses him.

Either way, boxing with the divine creature culminates in a too-close-to-call match between divine masculine powers and tertiary ones; demonstrating the supremacy of both. The encounter transcends Jacob into a head of family, *pater familias*, which appropriates a *baal* husband. As a corollary, being endowed with a new name, Jacob is initiated as an eponymous ancestor, which validates a semi-divinised father of nation. Eventually, Jacob grows into a legendary hero in this episode. The wrestling match with the divine endows Jacob with an image of an invincible man that he conspicuously needs to refurbish his statue as a *baal* patriarch and eponymous father of nation, who unites his family in his natal land and under his family deity. Concomitantly, in the aftermath of relocating his wives and offspring to his natal land, Jacob delegates his family through a collective cleansing ritual of all foreign gods (Gen 35:1-7). We could adduce that the ceremony purports the inauguration of the Shechemite women taken captive by Jacob's sons presumably for wives (Gen 34:29). Inferentially, the ceremony also adduces the initiation of Rachel and Leah to Jacob's family deity and spirits of ancestors. Eventually, Jacob establishes his family deity as the dominant one. It is this family deity that in the first revelation had promised to rectify his prerogatives as *baal* husband,

⁵ I. B. Levner, *All Legends of Israel (Exegesis)* (Achiever: Jerusalem 1990), 155-156.

to reclaim a place in his natal land and reunite him with kin when he was fleeing his land.

The tied match with a divine being eventually negates Jacob's position as a *beena* husband. The extensive divine reinforcement refurbishes Jacob's claims unto a position as a *baal* husband and *pater familias* that conspicuously runs counter to his character and the little control he exerts over his family in reality. He shows propensity to run away from conflicts all his life. He evades his brother by running away to his uncle; and flees from Laban back to his natal family in Canaan; or complying with his daughter's abductors. Witnessing Jacob's inferior position in his household as a *beena* husband, his wives distribute his sexuality between them and their maids. Rachel conceals her natal gods on relocating to his natal land; his daughter goes out as she pleases; his slave wife and concubine Bilhah lies with his son Reuben, who conspicuously shows his lack of respect to him; and his sons disobey him all the way and eventually sell his beloved son Joseph (Gen 30:15; 31:32; 34:1,30; 35:22; 37:23-36).

The intensively divine intervention Jacob receives therefore rectifies his self-justifying claims as a *baal* husband unto his wives, offspring, land and family deity. Eventually, Jacob does resettle with his wives and offspring in his natal land, reinitiates the deity of his fathers as the family God, and once in his life claims the right to name his last son, notwithstanding that his dying mother had named him first or perhaps in the wake of her death (Gen 32:25-33; 35:1-4,18). We could conclude that Jacob's claims represent the ascent of *baal* marriage, notwithstanding the metronymic components it survives.

Rachel's family gods *Teraffim*

We saw comparative anthropology inferring that among customs incumbent in *baal* system, a woman is expected to give up her house gods on joining her husband's house and kin, which would be ceremonially carried out. Such initiation secures the protection of the husband's domestic and local gods unto the family and the offspring. Regarded as the child's nurturer, the woman and her kin may still claim the offspring unto their line without such procedure.⁶

On the ground, these assumptions remain inconclusive. Ruth makes her vows to Naomi's God based on being her son's *beula* wife. Voluntarily prolonging her obligations to *baal* marriage beyond her husband's death, Ruth leaves her

⁶ Staniland C. Wake, *The Development of Marriage and Kinship* (Toronto University Press, Chicago University Press: Toronto, Chicago 1967[1889]), 396-397.

natal land and kin, relocates, accepts her mother-in-law's authority and adopts her God (Ruth 1:16). Conversely, Salomon's wives and Jezebel Ahab's wife relocate from their natal land together with their gods on their marriage (1Kings 11:1-6; 16:31; 18:19). Nonetheless, these women's gods were engrained in the contemporary syncretism that their husbands and the Israelites shared and will share until post-exilic Israel.⁷ Moreover, this latter religiosity shows characteristics of a peripheral culture, which is incompatible with the domestic religiosity of a small nomadic group like that of Jacob and his wives.

The marriage of Rachel and Jacob actuates the anthropologic propositions concerning domestic religion; and while humanising these propositions, their marriage attests to the relation between socio-religious claims and patterns of marriage. In concomitant to Jacob claiming his family gods, Rachel steals her father's family gods, the *teraffim* (Gen 31:19, 38). Rachel's claim unto her family's *teraffim* conceives as a symmetrical counter-structure to Jacob's persistent evocation of his family deity. We saw that as Jacob approaches the land of his future wives; his dream revelation secures God's protection and additionally his claims unto assets rights and future offspring to substantiate future claim unto his natal land, notwithstanding that in reality he will have purchased settlement rights from the local Shechemite king Hamor (Gen 28:20-23; 33:19). Eventually on returning to Canaan his natal land, Jacob has reclaimed the protection of the God of his fathers for himself, his family and his forthcoming generations (Gen 32:10-13). From the recurrent evocation of Jacob's family deity, we can reconstruct Jacob's desperate need for religious support from his family deity, having had to adapt himself to his wives' household gods. Notwithstanding textual references to the persistent presence of the Hebrew God in Jacob's blessings and in his wives' conceptions; Jacob must have accepted the rule of his father-in-law's and wives' household gods. Inferentially, the offspring were claimed and protected under their mothers' family gods. We surmise that being adopted as a *beena* husband at Laban's house, Jacob's offspring were claimed by his metronymic wives and their kin. In corroboration of such metronymic prerogatives, we see that Rachel and Leah appropriate the right of appellation unto Jacob's offspring; and relocation occurs only with their permission.

These assumptions elucidate the extensive revelations, vows and re-inaugurating rites that Jacob requires to maintain his family's God against all odds.

⁷ Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Ktav: New York)

On returning to Canaan, Jacob's claim unto the statue of a *pater familias* and *baal* husband relies on his ability to unite his family members under his family deity. It is the covenant of his family deity that he repeatedly reclaims in revelations and rites evoking the power of this deity to protect his fathers and their families (see above). To rectify his position as a *baal* husband, Jacob's family deity must henceforth become that of his household. Whence Jacob locates his household, his familial deity will dwell with them. It is this family deity who will substantiate the family's claims unto their natal land on relocation, appropriating assets rights of the offspring destined to perpetuate them.

In this light, Rachel's claims unto her family's gods, the *teraffim*, seem more than a flimsy theft; it conceives as a multifaceted structure. On the religious strata, Rachel's religiosity witnesses to the syncretistic culture of her father's house and period. There seems to be little sense of contradiction for Laban's contemporaries in recognising different deities. Conspicuously, the text remains ambiguous about Laban's syncretism. Laban calls the Hebrew God, the deity of Jacob's father and fervently searches after his household idols that Rachel had stolen; yet he places the Hebrew God as a witness between him and Jacob; he eventually swears peace with the respectively different gods of their grandfathers Abraham and Nehor (Gen 31:29; 49-50; 53). As a corollary, the text remains neutral about Rachel's *teraffim*. While she fames herself for stealing her father's house gods, the *teraffim* (Gen 31:19; 38); Rachel and her sister Leah have consistently acknowledged Jacob's God. They claim that whatever God had spared belong to them and to their offspring, and tell Jacob to follow the call of Hebrew God to return to Canaan (Gen 31:16). Rachel's attachment to her own household *teraffim* does not seem to clash with her acknowledgement of the Hebrew God proper. On relocation to her husband's land, Rachel's claims unto her family gods forms a pertinent symmetric parallel with Jacob's reclaiming his familial deity on relocating to his wives' natal land, while presumably abiding by his wives' gods during his sojourn in the house of their father Laban.

On the socio-cultural level however, Rachel's attachment to her household gods yields another interpretation. While Rachel's adherence unto the *teraffim* alludes to contemporary religious syncretism; it sheds a sidelight on the prerogatives and obligations incumbent in marital systems. On the socio-cultural level, just as Jacob had to accept the reign of the household gods of his father-in-law and wives on being adopted midst their kin and sojourning on their natal land, so is Rachel expected to yield to her husband's family's deity on moving to his natal land. Jacob however is not said to have abandoned his

family deity notwithstanding his subordinated status in his father-in-law's house as his daughters' *beena* husband. Here we adduce the parallel structure. Rachel shows the same reluctance. Notwithstanding her original statue as a metronymic wife and her voluntary consent to follow Jacob her husband to his natal land; on relocating from her father's natal household, Rachel binds herself unto *baal* marriage type, which brings with it different prerogatives and obligations. Like her husband Jacob, Rachel's adaptation does not go without facing conflicting imperatives.

In this light, we see that Rachel does not hide the *teraffim* she stole only from her father; she conceals them from her husband as well (Gen 31:31). Rachel's *teraffim* engrain her identity and rights as a metronymic wife, not so much for religious autonomy as for societal one. However, on relocation, her statue resembles Jacob's position as a *beena* husband that has presumably demanded his assimilation notwithstanding his reluctance. Cleaving unto her household gods the *teraffim*, albeit by theft and deceit, harbours Rachel's defiance of *baal* system, as it demands her assimilation into her husband's land, kin and family deity and most of all the surrender of her offspring to his paternal line. Eventually, in attaching her familial gods literally to her body as she sits on them (Gen 31:34), Rachel rectifies the autonomy of her tent against her father and inferentially her husband. Just as Jacob rectifies his *baal* statue by revelations and initiation rites, so does Rachel reclaim her metronymic prerogatives and pride, which she seems determined to maintain. As a corollary, metronymic prerogatives engrain her claims to attribute her offspring unto her line; which she ensues by claiming the right of appellation. With her last breath, she names her newborn Ben Onni (Gen 35:16-20). Conspicuously, Rachel entitles her newborn "son of my grief," *Ben Onni* (Gen 35:18); *Ben Onni* however also means "son my strength" (Gen 49:3; Deut 21:17).⁸

It is the socio-cultural stratum that elucidates that notwithstanding her initial consent to relocate, Rachel circumvents her duty as a *beula* wife to give up her natal house gods on leaving her natal home, kin and land for those of her husband. Eventually, Rachel is left exposed in a limbo terrain. Her own house gods can not protect her on entering her husband's house and land; while the territorial protection of Jacob's family deity is barred for her by the presence of her own family gods whom she fails to relinquish. Where gods are bound

⁸ Umberto Cassuto / A. S. Hartom, *Hebrew Bible Commentary: Genesis (commentary)* (Yavneh: Tel Aviv 1962), 131; Ariel Shlomo Ariel, *Addi, Torah, Neveim, Ketuvim* (Yediot Acharonot: Tel Aviv 1971), 58.

to location, domestic household and natal family of the land; relocation of her family gods leaves Rachel unprotected. Rachel becomes an “abject” woman who is arrested in a limbo state; the abject on whom the subject, Jacob, irrevocably depends. While the subject’s identity depends on his abject, the abject challenges the subject’s borders but remains in limbo.⁹ Concomitantly, in atavist culture, where death and disaster are attributed to the absence and diminished presence of one’s familial deity, premature death comes unto Rachel as she wavers unprotected between her household gods and her husband’s family deity.

Contingently, Rachel’s limbo state ramifies to her newborn. In this light we surmise that notwithstanding the fact that Rachel had named their newborn Ben-Onni, Jacob renames the boy after a name of his choice, to draw unto their newborn the divine protection of the local family deity. Conspicuously empowering the newborn as Benjamin “son of right hand” Jacob reclaims the newborn to his kinship, rectifying his place to perpetuate his claims unto land and line (Gen 35:18). In corroboration, we see that Jacob will reclaim to his line Joseph’s two sons. Joseph’s sons were presumably first claimed by their Egyptian mother and her maternal kin into whom Joseph had married as a *beena* husband (Gen 32:16-20; 48:5).¹⁰ Whilst Jacob ensures the protection of his family deity on renaming Rachel’s newborn, he nonetheless circumvents Rachel’s metronymic prerogatives. Inferentially, he rectifies his paternal claims unto the newborn against the metronymic claims of his mother, her line and her kin.

Rachel’s claims unto metronymic statue can be read as a classic tragedy. A classic tragedy delineates a person of nobility and beauty led by an erroneous choice, miscalculation or some humanly blind decision that Aristotle entitles *Hamartia*. *Hamartia* eventually precipitates the inevitable fall of the tragic character. Representing both common humanness and exceptional humanity, the tragic character arouses cathartic pity and fear when meeting his/her demise, because he or she conceives as good, and while being human like us is elevated above us. We fear for the tragic hero who humanly relates to us; and we are aroused to feel pity for the tragic character feeling that such person

⁹ Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” in: *Powers of Horror: an essay on abjection* (Columbia University Press: New York 1982), 1-32.

¹⁰ Julian Morgenstern “*Beena* in (Matriarchat) Ancient Israel and its Historical Implications,” in: ZAW 47 (1929), 91-110, ZAW 49 (1939), 46-58. Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 207.

is elevated above common humanity. It is for this reason that our compassion is aroused feeling that representing goodness, the suffering and demise befalling that person is so grossly unjust and undeserving.¹¹

Rachel's course of action and character tracks become her *Hamartia*, precipitating her tragic demise. Her desperation for sons mars her relations with her closest and dearest, her sister and husband alike. Her desperation builds up as a tragic *Hamartia* that eventually brings her premature death. As a corollary to demanding sons of Jacob or she dies; giving birth to her son precipitates her death, which deems to be wrought upon by her erroneous claims and unyielding passion (Gen 30:1).

Relocation precipitates Rachel's *Hamartia*, irreversible course of action and miscalculated decision. Voluntarily opted for, it becomes her tragic fall. Eventually relocation culminates in the collapse of her metronymic statue and promise of perpetuation; it materialises in conflict, alienation and premature death. On the one hand she follows her husband to his natal land like a *beula* wife, expected to assimilate to his household, line and family's deity; on the other hand she remains attached to her household gods attempting to rectify her statue as a metronymic woman. Rachel consequentially renders herself unprotected by both her natal gods and the deity of her husband. Rendered exposed, Rachel becomes an abject and tragic hero whose *Hamartia* classically delineates the exposure, alienation from society of a strong personality and eventual death.¹²

Rachel's tragedy moves from its emotive level further into the societal strata with the motif of maternal naming. As a prerogative of her metronymic statue, Rachel claims her newborn to her line by naming him at her will, as she did on the birth of her first son Joseph and the two offspring of her surrogating maid Bilhah. In the act of appellation, Rachel claims her right to perpetuate her line and name, which is the prerogative of metronymic mothers. That women could consider themselves perpetuated by their offspring is alluded in the epitome *bana*, to build, which they attribute to offspring they procreate either themselves or by surrogating women (Gen 16:2; 30:3; Ruth 4:11).

¹¹ Aristotle, "On the Art of Poetry," in: Aristotle, *Horace Longinus: Classical Literary Criticism* (Penguin: Middlesex 1965), 48. Northrop Frye, *Theory of Modes* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ 1973), 36, 38-41. cf. Leon Golden, *Aristotle on Tragic and Comic Mimesis* (American Philological Associations: Philadelphia 1992).

¹² Frye, *Theory of Modes*, 36, 38-41.

Rachel's tragedy becomes multifaceted. Her tragedy emanates from the unyielding imperatives imposed on a woman of her time from her cradle to her grave as a daughter to a ruthless father, living a divided life as a sister to her co-wife, wife and mother. Her decision to follow her husband and relocate to his land disintegrates her metonymic statue losing her its prerogatives. Her passion for sons has drained her life, battling with barrenness; eventually she loses her newborn as she dies on giving birth to him. In naming her son: son of my strength son of my grief, Rachel delineates the enclosure of her life; her passion to bring life turns into pains of death, having depleted her strength in childbirth. Eventually, Rachel's passion for sons deems her tragic *Hamartia* and her tragic demise; her strength and grief in premature death. While a son was women's only promise of livelihood and perpetuation, it becomes Rachel tragic demise. Posthumously Rachel loses her claims to have her son attributed to her line as Jacob his father renames and reclaims him.

Marred by conflicts and culminating in premature death, Rachel's story can be read as a moral superimposition induced by a deductive authorship. However, archetypal reading could conceive Rachel's story as neither moral nor immoral but rather amoral.

Rachel's figure touches pertinent motifs resurfacing in folktales, etiologic tales and collective myths which antecede deductively moralised texts; such motifs may fall under amoral categories. They reflect the recurrence of archetypes incumbent in wishful dreams and folktales and are inherent in the collective unconscious of the mind and of the group. Bordering on a legendary reality, myths and etiologic tales interweave around familial saga of origin, natural phenomena or existing land marks wanting for explanation and meaningful coherence; archetypal patterns provide meaningful coherence that deem to satisfy human wishes. It is for this reason that archetypes resurface in folktales and myths but also in wishful dreams evoked by the unconscious. Accordingly, few thinkers interline between archetypal images of the unconscious and motifs of myths or their equivalents. Furthermore, thinkers distinguish between the structural pattern of archetypes and their narrative content. Such distinction draws a line between unconscious archetypes aggregated according to structural patterns, functional roles on the one hand; and on the other, the narrative content that such archetypal images acquire as they ramify in myth and folktales or dreams for that matter. The narrative content that archetypes en flesh is fluent, actuated in time and place, personalised and particularised. Conversely, structural analysis infers that archetypes precipitate functional roles inherent in the structural capacity of the unconsciousness or the formulaic talent of human

mind. The structural form of the archetypes is stable, recurrent and commonly general; resurfacing in confluent variants, archetypes are thus deductible from their variable ramification in tales, myths and even dreams. Eventually, archetypes and their equivalent mythical motifs can be crystallised into subliminal type patterns.¹³

In this sense, the biblical text actuates Rachel as a woman of her time and place, while turning her into an archetype more closely associated with amoral features of natural myths and etiologic folktales than deductive texts. We henceforth need to deconstruct the archetypal and etiological elements allied with Rachel and decode their meaning.

Rachel's story culminates in an etiologic landmark of her premature death as Jacob erects a memorial gravesite for her. It functions as a landmark of collective memory "standing there until our time" (Gen 35:19; 1 Sam 10:2). Rachel further resurfaces in Ruth (4:11) and Jeremiah (31:15, further quoted in Mathew 2:18). The etiologic landmark of Rachel's grave relates to the later texts in a web of connotations that are both literary and societal. In Ruth 4:11, Rachel's claim unto her metronymic line is redeemed as the text pronounces her an eponymous matriarch of line and founder of the house of Israel, together with Leah. As a corollary, having named her newborn Ben Onni, son of my grief, son of my strength as she dies in childbirth, Rachel expresses the maternal consciousness that power to give life engrains the helplessness to protect it or herself. While her name connotes the eponymous motif of "lactant ewe", Jeremiah ramifies Rachel's personal tragedy to encompass the disasters of her people, as he elevates her to a mother of nation whose eponymous maternity embraces their lot seeing their houses demolished and suffering massacres and exile, which she could not prevent. Raised to a collectively mythical metaphor of maternal grief, Rachel embodies the ubiquitous *stabat mater* mourning the disasters of her people who are her children. While unable to protect them, her mourning evokes divine compassion and promises of messianic hopes of revival uttered by a deity who like a mother in labour proves unable to protect his people from atrocities:

¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols," "The Structural Study of Myth," Chapters in: *Structural Anthropology* (Basic Books: New York, London 1963), 201-205; 207-213. C.G. Jung, "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconsciousness," in: *Über die Psychologie des Unbewussten, ha-psichologia shel a-lo-mudah*, Hebrew tr. Isaac Chaim (Devir: Tel Aviv 1975), 77-99.

“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were no more. Thus says the LORD: ‘Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the LORD, That *your* children shall come back to their own border.’” (Jer 31:15-17).

Mythically ascending her, Jeremiah interlines Rachel with an etiologic tale that has either generated a mythical metaphor or has sprouted from it. The metaphor of *stabat mater* transcends the tragedy of the tertiary woman to mythical heights, which engrains its emotive power. It is such elements that eventually rectify Rachel’s statue as both metronymic woman and archetypal matriarch. Revered as a mother of nation, Rachel alludes to intertextual relations between imperatives of society, classical tragedy, etiological collective memory, a folk-tale, an amoral myth and an eponymous ancestress who will have become most beloved unto the Hebrew people through medieval times until our time.

Rachel’s tomb has been favoured as one of the most beloved sacred sites for Jews through the ages. A 13th century text entitled *Yalkut* witnesses to the long tradition of activities around Rachel’s tomb. Smacking of saint culture, the text relates of an annual pilgrimage on the assumed date of Rachel’s death. Days of informal prayers are conducted at the vicinity of her grave outside established authority and formal worship. I bring forth a quotation from this text which I translate here from Hebrew:

“Every year (on the date of Rachel’s death and Benjamin’s birth), many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem – especially Zion’s precious daughters – go to visit Our Mother Rachel (*Rachel Imeenu*), and pour their hearts out. And Our Mother Rachel attentively listens, gathers and retains all the prayers that are pronounced, collects all the tears and reaps all the sighs. And when the shadows of evening descend, and by and by all her daughters and sons leave her, then Rachel our Mother comes before our Father in Heaven and hands to him prayers, pleas, tears... ‘a voice is heard on the heights in Ramah,’ Rachel’s voice comes before our Father in heaven.”¹⁴

Entitled *imainu*, our mother, Rachel is especially visited by women who deem to have Rachel attend to their pleas, as she lived and suffered herself as a woman and mother. Extensive songs of praises have been written through the

¹⁴ Shragga Weiss, *Holy Sites in Israel* (Reuben Mass: Jerusalem 1986), 2.

centuries for Rachel, prolonging a tradition of informal liturgy around the graves of ancestors and holy righteous. A traveller from Prague in 1650 recounts the following: “During the days of Passover, Jews of Jerusalem, men and women, old with young, are accustomed to visit Rachel’s grave, on foot or riding, and they pray a lot and also compose homilies; and they dance around the grave, and eat and drink there.”¹⁵ Dedicated to the matriarch Rachel, the following prayer is found in a text from 1872, which I translate in the following:

“Peace to you generous Rachel our mother. May your soul be bound in the wreath of the living souls. Peace upon your God. Peace on you and on your resting place. Be blessed in this present world and be happy in the next world. Be blessed; as you have been found worthy to follow your creator’s path and invited to lead us to the life of the next world, as you are sitting on the heights where righteous women sit, with the holy angels, over there amongst the superior beings. The Merciful One will speed your resurrection so that we would be entitled to see your shining face glowing like the light of sky. Your merits will work on our behalf; peace will come unto your resting place and on the holy women your friends who rest in the earth...”¹⁶

Practised still in our days in modern Israel, the activity around Rachel’s tomb valorises the culture of honouring eponymous ancestors as saints. Classical of folk religion, women perform unwritten customs. They raise their voices in unrestraint weeping and lamenting whilst clutching to Rachel’s gravestone. Deeming to insufflate and relive the image of *stabat mater*, the lamenting Mother, Rachel’s votaries echo Jeremiah’s verse quoted above: “A voice is heard on the height of Ramah, bitter weeping and lamentation” (Jer 31:15).

As a corollary, the key to the gate to Rachel’s tomb carries cultic charm. Brought to a woman undergoing a difficult delivery it is tucked under her mattress to speed and alleviate delivery. Pilgrimages to the grave may comport of sharing food believed to be magically recharged at the vicinity; it can ramify to reading the Torah scroll, learning of rabbinical literature, recitation of psalms in addition to established and non-established prayers outside the vicinity of the synagogue, and free of religious authority.¹⁷ During the sacred ten days lapsing between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement, visitors

¹⁵ Weiss, *Holy Sites in Israel*, 7.

¹⁶ Zeev Vilnai, *Holy Gravestones in the Land of Israel* (Morasha Ha-Rav Kuk: Jerusalem 1952), 156.

¹⁷ Weiss, *Holy Sites in Israel*, 2-15.

come to prostrate themselves over Rachel's grave and light candles for missing relatives or soldiers at the tomb. Outside formal ceremonies, people plead their poor state and troubles; women pray to become pregnant or for the recovery of the sick. They would circulate the gravestone with red threads and cut them into pieces to tie around their children's wrists for amulets. The blessed thread is usually red for protection against the Evil Eye and is also tied around an aching limb for healing and around a woman's belly to instigate pregnancy. The same custom is conducted at the prophetess Hulda's gravesite and similar sites; such red threads are sold or made at the Myron Mountain in the north of Israel on the great *hillula*, the annual saint cult festivity of May around the righteous dead buried there.

Running parallel to vicinities of ancestress or saints, Rachel's tomb embodies a magically charged environment, where natural laws deem to bend and waive on behalf of human pain and wishes. This sequestered environment deems to be elevated above the natural environment. Rachel's gravestone conceives as both divinised and human heart that hears her votaries' grief; whilst her spirit ascends to the high to plead for humans before God.

In this sense, Rachel's tomb reverberates with cults of animism imbued by atavist motifs around stones with unusual texture and colour, like meteorites or consolidated lava; their enigmatic presence arouses awe, weaving etiologic folktales and ensuing worship. As a corollary, mythically archetypal motifs around sacred stones affiliate femininity and female fertility with rocks and gravesites.¹⁸

Concomitantly, since the sixteenth century in Seffat a northern town in Israel, a mystical community has assembled in the spirit of the Cabbala. This community have developed an ecstatic mystical ritual of *Tikkun Hazot*, a midnight amendment meant to create a mystic union of souls with Rachel and Leah. Conceived as a ritual of ecstatic devotion, the rite comports of praying, weeping, singing and mourning culminating in rejoicing for hopeful messianic redemption and amendment of all wrongs of the world. The sisterly matriarchs personify two faces of the *Shekhina*, the female spirit of God, with whom the mystic's soul unites. Rachel who had suffered the agony of death in childbirth, enfleshes the *Shekhina's* mourning over the destruction of the temple and the massacre, exile and suffering of Her People. Weeping, mourning and pleading for Rachel, the ritual represents a mystical union with Rachel as an embodiment

¹⁸ Dov Noy, *Hasipur Haamami baTalmud u-vaMidrash (The Tradition of Foltale in the Talmud and Exegesis)* (Jerusalem University: Jerusalem 1969), 20-54.

of the grieving and mourning *Shekhina* who confines herself to exile with her people and suffers with them. Concomitantly, Leah, who was fertile and lived to see her offspring grow, incarnates the other face of *Shekhina*. Leah enfolds the messianic hopes for affluence, rejuvenation, redemption and resurrection from the dead. The rejoicing that follows in the wake of weeping and mourning for Rachel precipitates ecstatic moods and singing for Leah who embodied a mystical union with the power of the *Shekhina* to bring blessings and messianic redemption. As a dual-faceted *Shekhina*, Rachel and Leah enflesh the mystically erotic union of God with His feminine divine on all Her multifaceted diversity.¹⁹

Rachel conceives as a commonly shared figure of tertiary womanhood. Nonetheless, Rachel also posits as an elevated figure of phantasmatic romances, myth and legends of saints. As such she is mimetically elevated beyond common humanity possessing transcendent action power to influence the divine on behalf of humanity. Rooted in humanness while reaching for the divine, Rachel bridges the gap between the tertiary world and the metaphysical one. Functioning as an intermediate figure, her mediating position allows emphatic transmission of human pain which she had experienced herself, to the divine. Here the female divine and tertiary womanhood resolve their discrepancies.

Conclusion

I wish to dissociate both my research and search for the Jewish female divine from primal drives to denounce, denigrate, project, substitute or compete with female divinity of other theologies, be they Christian, Hindu, Muslim or Pagan. The need to define oneself by antithesis shows us to stagnate in immature adolescence that falsely derives self-definition by rejecting others. Judaism has grown from an enclave family religion whose rules were enforced by and for its kin group members; which is classical perhaps of family religions rather than state cults. As a family religion, Judaism neither asked for recognition nor aspired to substitute theologies for other group members; notwithstanding its antagonist history with other religions. This manifesto is aimed at feminist ideas, having become populist, that Judaism has quenched the life of the atavist goddess. We the Jews did not kill the goddess. We taught her to read and write; to take preconceptions to see that if she opts for nakedness, unmitigated nature and indiscriminate sex, she will not get pregnant unless she wishes to;

¹⁹ Grshom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 135-145.

and not to prioritise motherhood over development. Concomitantly, since the *ruach*, the feminine spirit of God through Asherah and Wisdom His biblical consorts and up to the *Shekhina*, the *Shabbat*, eponymous Rachel and Leah or the Torah as divine consorts in the Cabbala, the Jewish mystical thought, the atavist Hebrew goddess has been re-insufflating her archetypal myths being both consistently indigent and general. I conclude with Micha's apocalypse:

“And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more... For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever” (Micha 4:3,5).

Zu atavistischen Zeiten konnte eine Ehe verschiedene Formen annehmen je nach den zwei Hauptvoraussetzungen: entweder folgt die Frau ihrem Ehemann in sein Haus und schließt sich seiner Sippe an; oder im umgekehrten Fall folgt der Mann seiner Ehefrau in ihr Haus und schließt sich ihrer Sippe an. Die Wahl der Form der Ehe ist sowohl für den Mann als auch für die Frau von entscheidender Bedeutung, bestimmt sie doch ihre Stellung in der Familie und ihre Beziehungen zu ihrer Familiengottheit. Der Artikel stellt eine Verbindung her zwischen den Formen der Ehe und dem Leben und den Entscheidungen von Jakob und Rahel und der Art und Weise, in der ihr Leben durch die Beziehungen zwischen Ehe und Religion beeinflusst wurde.

En tiempos atávicos había dos tipos de matrimonio, dependiendo de si la mujer se iba a vivir con el esposo a su morada y se unía a su clan o si viceversa el hombre se iba a vivir con la esposa a la morada de ésta y se unía a su clan. La decisión es de importancia trascendental tanto para el hombre como para la mujer, porque de ello depende qué posición van a ocupar en la familia y cómo va a ser la relación con la deidad de la familia. En este artículo se ponen en relación los tipos de matrimonio con la vida y las decisiones de Jacob y Raquel y se describe cómo la relación que existe entre el matrimonio y la religión influye en sus vidas.

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