

A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY:

HUMAN SEXUALITY
IN THE BIBLE, THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND IN OUR OWN DAY

What does and what can the Bible teach us about human sexuality,
sex, love, man and woman, marriage, family, children, norms
and departures from the norms, etc.?

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Some references are incomplete at this time.

I regret this situation, but I hope that the bibliography will be of help in spite of its imperfections.
Please, report any mistakes and suggestions for improvements to me

The following, brief, selection (highly subjective) of books and articles may be used as an introduction to the subject. Most of the books and articles, which are listed here, provide useful bibliographies. The bibliography is limited to publications in English (with a sprinkling of titles in German)

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Birth Control in Jewish Law. New York, 1968.

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Reconciling the Sexual Self: Human Sexuality and Pastoral Counseling (A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Care and Counseling). Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology, 1985.

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“Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult,” *JBL* 17 (1898) 111-148.
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- Quesnell, Q.,
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- Rabinowitz, J. J.,
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Terrien, S.,
 “Toward a Biblical Theology of Womanhood,” *Religion in Life* 42 (1973) 322-333. -- preexilic and postexilic views.

Thomas, D. W.,
 “,” *ZAW* 57 (1939) 57-64.

Trible, P.,
 “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *JAAR* 41 (1973) 30-48.

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 “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread,” in C. P. Christ and J. Plaskow, eds., *Woman Spirit Rising*. Harper & Row, 1979. *Christianity Today* 13 (July 18, 1969) 7-10.

Williamson, H.,
 “Sodom and Homosexuality,” *Clergy Review* 8 (Aug. 1963) 507-514; 48 (Oct. 1963) 650-651.

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 “Homosexual Behavior in the Bible,” *One Institute Quarterly* 5 (1962) 10-19.

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 “,” *JBL* 73 (1954) 98, n. 4.

COMMENTARIES ON BIBLICAL BOOKS
 which are especially important for the subject of human sexuality.
 Only very few important commentaries and articles are listed
 (with an emphasis on Genesis)

GENESIS

Brueggemann, W.

Genesis. Interpretation--A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. John Knox, 1982.

Cassuto, U.

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961-1964 (2 vols.). - written by a famous conservative Jewish scholar; explains all the Hebrew phrases in plain English; the Hebrew words are transliterated. Excellent. BS 1235.3.C3. 2 Vols

Wenham, G. J.

Genesis 1-15. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987.

Westermann, C.

Genesis 1-11: A Commentary (transl. by J. J. Scullion, S.J.). Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 (1974). BS 1154.2B5

Zlotowitz, M. and Scherman, N.

(Translation and Commentary. Overviews by N. Scherman).

Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a commentary anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources. ArtScroll Tanach Series: A traditional commentary on the Books of the Bible. Vol. I (Genesis 1-11) Brooklyn, N. Y.: Mesorah, 1980 (1977). - A Jewish orthodox treatment. What a joy! None (practically none) of the concerns discussed in historical-critical commentaries muddle (? , ha!) this commentary. It is always sobering to realize that the way one looks at something (method) determines what one sees (content, meaning, truth)

A WORD ABOUT “TO HAVE DOMINION” and “THE IMAGE OF GOD.”

A Translation of Genesis 1:26 (Michel):

na-'aseh 'adam “Let us make/fashion humans (the human species)
be-salm-e-nu according to our image/vision/blueprint
ki-dmut-e-nu, as our likeness (representatives, ambassadors).”

The meaning seems to be: the image/vision which God has for humans, male and female (subjective genitive), namely, to be human (and not animals or plants or rocks or gods) and to serve God as God’s representatives in God’s creation like vice regents (Gen 1) or as cultivators (Gen 2) of God’s world in God’s stead, of course, always responsible to God for any human activity. This appears to be the plain meaning of the Hebrew text which is well known to anyone who knows Hebrew well.

Note: *'adamah*, “ground” (cf. “humus”),
'adam, “groundling” (cf. “human”)

A selection of important articles:

Barr, J.,

“The Image of God in the Book of Genesis: A Study in Terminology,” *The John Rylands Library* 5 (1968) 11-26

Bird, Phyllis, A.,

“Male and Female He created Them’: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *HTR* 74 (1981) 129-160

Brueggemann, W.,

“Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gen 2:23a,” *CBQ* 32 (1970) 532-542

Clifford, Richard J.,

“Genesis 1-3: Permission to Exploit Nature?” *The Bible Today* 26 (1988) 133-137

Dumbrell, W. J.,

“Genesis 1-3, Ecology, and the Dominion of Man,” *Crux* (a Quarterly Journal of Christian Thought and Opinion. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College) 21 (December 1985) 16-26

Freedman, R. David,

“Woman, A Power Equal to Man: Translation of Woman as a ‘Fit Helpmate’ for Man is Questioned,” *BAR* 9 (1983) 56-58.

- *'ezer*, has the meaning “strength, power.” I suggest: “(powerful) ally, to be an ally.” God is called an “Ally” (“Help, Strength, Power”) thirty times in the Hebrew Bible! (check a concordance). The woman (as the symbol of the power of propagation, “Mother of all Living,” sexual power, a gift from God to animals and humans) is the only ally (not the animals) in the God given human task to care and cultivate the earth, instead of God, but only for God!

Hasel, G. F.,

“The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974) 81-102

Jobling, D., *”Dominion over Creation,” *IDB-S*: 247-248.

- exploitation is not the meaning of the two Hebrew verbs, but responsibility to God for the care of creatures.

Limburg, James,

“What Does It Mean to ‘Have Dominion over the Earth’?” *Dialog* 10 (1971) 221-223. - humans are expected to behave like a good king (anointed one=messiah, government) and not like a bad king.

Michel, W. L.,

“Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7,” *Exegete* A-I-5 (1975). - a brief exegesis on audio-tape - I did 17 exegeses in this series. Available at LSTC’s library.

Porteous, N. W.,

“Image of God,” *IDB* 2: 682-685. - read this article first, BEFORE you make ANY statements about the meaning of this expression.

Trible, Phyllis,

“Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread,” in *Woman Spirit Rising*. Christ, C. P. and J. Plaskow, eds. Harper, 1979, 74-83

ON CREATIONISM

Hyers, Conrad,

“The Fall and Rise of Creationism,” *The Christian Century* (April 24, 1985) 411-415. - this is the best response to and against “creationism” which I know.

LEVITICUS

Milgrom, Jacob,

Leviticus 1-16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. New York/London/Toronto/Sydney/Auckland: Doubleday, 1991. If anyone knows anything about Leviticus it is Milgrom!

HOSEA

Andersen, Francis I. and David Noel Freedman.

Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Garden City, New York: 1980. Read [this](#) commentary first.

SONG OF SONGS

Pope, Marvin H.

Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977. If anyone knows anything about Song of Songs it is Pope!

ON EVE AND THE GODDESS

ON EVE

Meyers, Carol.

Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Wegener, Judith Romney.

Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

In a discussion of women (in ancient times and in the Bible) as “property” or “chattel” the reading of this book is imperative. According to Wegener there were only a few, very restricted, situations in which one could view women as chattel. But, even so, in Biblical thinking humans are understood as being responsible to God for their treatment of anything in creation, including humans, property, etc.

ON THE GODDESS

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva,

In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth. New York: The Free Press (Macmillan)/Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada/New York/Oxford/Singapore/Sydney: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992.

This is a very important book. A couple of important quotes from the book follow:

“Finding a vision of sexuality commensurate with the significance of sex in people’s lives remains monotheism’s unfinished agenda.” (p. 212)

“A serious vacuum in biblical religion is caused by its denying or ignoring two important aspects of human experience, gender and sex. There is little gender talk in the Bible, and no sense of gender differences. It presents an ideology at variance with the social reality of people living in a world organized along gender lines. And the Bible offers little discussion of erotic attraction and sexual expression--again and example of disharmony with a world in which sexual attraction was obvious and the legal system sought to contain it.” (p. 213)

For almost 3,000 years those Hebrews, who organized the Bible, and their followers, Jews and Christians (and also Moslems), have tried to suppress THE GODDESS (which is the divinization of erotic, sexual attraction and expression-the whole spectrum of it!; cf. Song of Songs in the Bible). Has their “war” on THE GODDESS (THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN) been successful? How much misery has this war on THE GODDESS caused? Is much of human misery in sexual matters the revenge of THE GODDESS?

It is quite clear that THE GODDESS was very well known and worshipped by the people of Israel in opposition to the preaching of the prophets.

Read, e.g., Jer 44:15-19. Remember! That’s after 586 BCE!

For a relevant book on this subject see, e.g.,

Patai, R.

The Hebrew Goddess. New York, N. Y.: Avon Books, 1978 (1967). BM 530.P28

One of the strongest denouncements of THE GODDESS comes from Job, who declares (Job 31:1) that he has made a covenant, an oath, in God's presence that he has never looked at, i.e., worshipped, THE GODDESS.

In the Canaanite area the name of THE GODDESS was Anath, the consort/sister of Baal. One of her epithets was *bethulah*, "THE VIRGIN (VIRGO)." For an article on this subject see Michel, Walter, "BTWLH, 'Virgin' or 'Virgin (Anat)' in Job 31:1?" *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982) 59-66. Cf. Pope, M., *Job*. AB. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973, pp.228-229.

My daughter (a 22 year old civil engineering student at the Univerisy of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana), recently, asked me to read the following book:
Robbins, Tom, *skinny legs and all*. New York/Toronto/London/Sydney/ Auckland: Bantam Books, 1990.

I was a little surprised to find a section on Jezebel and THE GODDESS in the book.

"Queen Jezebel never worshipped Baal. *Baal* was the ancient Semite word for 'lord' or 'husband'. The god referred to by the Bible as Baal had divine status primarily because he was husband to **Astarte**. It was Astarte whom Jezebel worshipped.

Who was Astarte? She was a goddess; rather she was the Goddess, the **Great Mother**, the **Light of the World**, the most ancient and widely revered divinity in human history. Shrines to her date back to the Neolithic Period, (i.e., about 8000-4000 BCE, my addition) and there was not one Indo-European culture that failed to remove with its kiss the mud from her sidereal slippers. In comparison, 'God', as we moderns call Yahweh (often misspelled 'Jehovah'), was a Yahny-come-lately who would never approach her enormous popularity. She was the **mother of God**, as indeed, she was **mother of all**. As beloved as she was for her life-giving and nurturing qualities, the only activities of hers acceptable to the patriarchs, she was mistress over destruction as well as creation, representing, according to one scholar, 'the abyss that is the source and the end, the ground of all being.'

In Jezebel's native Phoenicia, the Goddess's name was **Astarte**. In Babylon, she was **Ishtar**; in India, **Kali**; in Greece, **Demeter** (immature aspect: Aphrodite). If Saxon was your indigenous tongue, you would address her as **Ostara**; if Nordic, you'd say **Freya**; if Egyptian, **Isis**--or **Nut** or **Hathor** or **Neith**. Oh, the Goddess had many names, and many roles. She was virgin, bride, mother, prostitute, witch, and hanging judge, all swirled into one. She had more phases than the moon. She knew the dark side of the moon like the palm of her hand. She shopped there." (pp49-50)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has produced an excellent guide for the study of the tension between Biblical, Christian, and Lutheran attitudes towards human sexuality and the evidence of the activities of THE GODDESS in the lives of modern peoples, including Jews and Christians, namely, *Human Sexuality and The Christian Faith*. A study for the church's reflection and deliberation. Minneapolis, Minnesota: ELCA, 1991.

I consider this study a significant beginning and a response to Tikva Frymer-Kensky's argument that "Finding a vision of sexuality commensurate with the significance of sex in people's lives remains monotheism's unfinished agenda." (p. 212)

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